

# THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

From Conflict Resolution to  
Conflict Management

Edited by  
Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov

Produced in cooperation with  
*The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies*



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## INTRODUCTION

*Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov*

The violent clashes that erupted in September 2000 between Israel and the Palestinians developed into a protracted low-intensity confrontation. The confrontation exacted a heavy human toll on both sides, inflicted severe economic damage, and raised the level of mutual enmity and mistrust to levels that are hampering dialogue, not only with regard to the resolution of the conflict but even about its very management. Neither side expected that it would last so long or escalate so fiercely; it did so because of the failure of both sides to conclude it rapidly or even to moderate its intensity. International peacemaking efforts were equally fruitless. The conflict again entered the realm of the intractable, dominated by uncontrolled violence.

The failure of the Oslo process, the reversion to violent confrontation, the sense of impasse, and the failure of the efforts to terminate the violence or at least to diminish its intensity prompted the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies to examine the management of the confrontation by the sides during the five years of its duration (2000–2005). The research team examined the causes of the confrontation, the goals of the sides and their perceptions of the confrontation at different stages, the distinctive characteristics of the confrontation as a low-intensity conflict, the management strategies adopted by the sides, and the reasons for the failure of the efforts to terminate or moderate the confrontation. Consideration was also given to more controlled alternatives to manage the conflict and facilitate a transition from management to resolution.

A distinguished research group consisting of experts from a range of fields conducted the project: Prof. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal, Dr. Yossi Ben-Ari, Ephraim Halevy, Prof. Tamar Hermann, Prof. Ruth Lapidoth, Ephraim Lavie, Dr. Kobi Michael, Dr. Yitzhak Reiter, Prof. Ezra Sadan, Prof. Dan Zakay, and Dr. Yifrah Zilberman.

Beginning in November 2003, the group met on a regular basis, and this book is the product of their endeavors. Between the meetings a dynamic process developed, manifested in exchanges of ideas, first drafts of papers, closed workshops, and symposia.

The book's nine chapters are divided into three sections. The first section consists of two theoretical chapters, which address the dialectical interaction between conflict management and conflict resolution and the influences of heuristic thinking and group dynamics on the management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second section consists of the central chapter, which analyzes the Israeli-Palestinian violent confrontation with special reference to the transition from conflict resolution to conflict management. The third section, with five chapters, considers the impact of the violent confrontation on the two societies: the reciprocal relations between the political echelon and the military echelon in Israel in the course of managing the confrontation; the changes in the official security policy and in the attitudes of the Jewish public in Israel toward the management of the conflict; attitudinal shifts of the Jewish society in the wake of the Camp David summit and the violent confrontation; the ethos of the conflict as portrayed in the Israeli media throughout the confrontation; the Palestinian society in the confrontation and upon the death of Yasser Arafat; and the Israeli disengagement plan as a strategy of conflict management.

In the first chapter—"Dialectic between Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution"—Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov addresses the transition from conflict resolution to conflict management in the Israeli-Palestinian case. A transition from a process of conflict resolution to the resumption of violence is a crisis of severe proportions, though not rare in the history of international conflicts. It reflects the failure of the political process and indicates that the sides' conception of peace has collapsed, with all its basic assumptions. Almost inevitably, the upshot of a failure of this kind is that the conflict reverts to its natural state, becoming protracted, intractable, and irresolvable, and escalating to new levels once its ostensibly irresolvable nature becomes manifest. This, in turn, necessitates the construction of a conception relying on new strategies and tactics; each side seeks to advance its interests within the framework of the resurgent violence: to punish the adversary for violating the agreement and initiating the violence and deny it military and political gains.

The idea of conflict management remains elusive in the literature on conflict research. As a rule, it is applied to conflicts that defy resolution for one reason or another, leaving management as the

default option. At the same time, a conflict's management is usually also perceived as an incipient stage toward resolution, with the particular mode of management likely to be relevant in the transition to resolution. Different levels of conflict management and different types of actors can be discerned in connection with different goals (prevention, control, or termination of violence), as can different management strategies. Similarly, a distinction can also be drawn between three types of management: unilateral, joint, or external. The management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the five-year confrontation was characterized by unilateral strategies that resorted to threats and force but not promises or incentives. Attempts at joint management of the conflict were vitiated by mutual mistrust, which also left the parties to the conflict unable to control or moderate the violence. Other factors also played a part in this regard: the distinctive character of a low-intensity conflict, the asymmetry in the strength of the sides, the fact that the Palestinians are a non-state entity and are made up of numerous actors and organizations that are not subordinate to one authority, and the absence of political expectations. Efforts at joint management also failed due to insufficient investment in the process and because the sides were not amenable to effective external intervention.

In the second chapter—"The Influences of Heuristic Thought and Group Dynamics on the Management of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"—Dan Zakay discusses several central processes of heuristic thought and group dynamics on both the Israeli and the Palestinian side that were factors in the conflict's escalation. Although these are not the major causes militating against the conflict's management and resolution, they contribute to the toughening of attitudes and reduce the prospects of cooperation that could lead to joint management of the conflict. Heuristic thought processes, which are part of the fashion of intuitive thinking, are resorted to, when it becomes necessary to make assessments and judgments in certain situations, such as the uncertainty that accompanies violent confrontations. In such cases these processes challenge the ability of rational thought to provide explanations. Heuristic thought and group dynamics inhibit conflict management and resolution. A cogent source of biased thinking and distorted conceptions, they forge and stimulate national myths and a national ethos, become a barrier to changes of attitudes and beliefs, work against confidence building, and reduce the possibility of finding a joint formula for the conflict's moderation and resolution. Conflict transformation therefore requires the sides to make a joint effort to overcome these inhibitors, with the aid of external mediation.

In the third and central chapter of the book—"The Israeli-Palestinian Violent Confrontation: An Israeli Perspective"—Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Ephraim Lavie, Kobi Michael, and Daniel Bar-Tal analyze Israel's management of the peace process and then of the violent confrontation from the start of the Oslo process in 1993 until 2005. The chapter contains five sections: (1) the Israeli conception and the basic assumptions of Israeli policy from 1993 to 2000—from the inception of the Oslo period until the collapse of the process in September 2000; (2) the development of a new Israeli interim conception in the violent confrontation, from the start of the confrontation until the fall of the Barak government; (3) the new conception in the period of the Sharon government; (4) interim balance-sheet analyzing the violent confrontation from several perspectives (political, strategic, and operative); and (5) examination of an alternative policy for managing the conflict, based on physical separation of which the main elements are the separation fence and the disengagement plan.

The Israeli management conception in the confrontation evolved gradually: from an attempt to contain the confrontation and thereby enable the continuation of the political process, to gradual escalation in view of the low effectiveness of the Israeli management strategy in coping with Palestinian violence and especially with the suicide bombings. A paramount factor in the fall of the Barak government and the rise of the Sharon government was the failure of the Oslo process and the escalating violence. Israel's strategy of managing the confrontation was modified in the Sharon era, in response to the escalation of the violence and the rise in the casualty rate, and to the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, which had the effect of according internal and external legitimization to escalate the confrontation with the aim of quelling terrorist violence more effectively. In line with this strategy, Israel spurned Yasser Arafat as a partner for moderating and resolving the conflict and launched a military offensive in which the West Bank was reoccupied. This escalation significantly lowered the casualty rate but did not affect the Palestinians' motivation to continue the confrontation. Israel thereupon adopted a new strategy to manage the confrontation, which was more defensively oriented and based on physical separation. Specifically, it involved building a separation fence and disengaging from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria. As these changes were taking place, Arafat's death enabled moves to be undertaken toward the joint management of the conflict, with the potential to moderate and perhaps even conclude the present chapter of the violent confrontation.

In the fourth chapter—"The Interaction between the Military Echelon and the Political Echelon in the Management of the

Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation”—Kobi Michael examines the “discourse space” between the two echelons, the political and the military, in conditions of a protracted violent confrontation. The author argues that the political echelon, in failing to issue clear directives and lacking staff work, cannot exercise effective civil control over the military echelon. Because the military echelon is responsible for immediate security responses and also controls the sources and analysis of information—through its intelligence and planning branches—it wields immense influence in shaping the political-security conception and the concrete security situation. In a situation calling for the management of a violent confrontation, the imbalance between the two echelons is liable to be aggravated because of the political echelon’s traditional structural weaknesses. Thus the political echelon is unable to offset or regulate the military echelon’s influence on the confrontation environment. In the period under discussion this was manifested in various ways by the army’s behavior: its laxness in carrying out orders of Prime Minister Ehud Barak to contain the violent confrontation in its initial stages, its encouragement and promotion of a conception casting doubts on the prospect of reaching a final-status settlement with the Palestinians and rejecting Arafat as a partner even for the conflict’s management, and its development of a system theory defining the goals of the confrontation, notably the idea of “burning into the Palestinians’ consciousness,” and also incorporating the concepts of deciding the campaign, military victory, and political victory.

In the fifth chapter—“Changes in Israel’s Official Security Policy and in the Attitudes of the Jewish Public toward the Management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (2000–2004)” —Tamar Hermann considers the complex interactions between the decision-makers and the public in Israel with regard to the changes in Israel’s security policy in connection with managing the conflict. This also involves interpreting where the responsibility lies for the failure of the Oslo process and for the eruption of the violent confrontation. The chapter’s central thesis is that we should not assume that the line of influence between the decisions made by the political echelon and the attitudes of the public is vertical and one-directional. Three areas of noncongruence were found between the decision-makers’ official line and the public’s attitudes: (1) At both levels, leadership and public, the attitudinal changes were not concurrent: on some issues the shift of opinion by the general public preceded public statements by decision-makers about policy changes, while in other cases the leadership was ahead of the public in changing its approach; (2) the public and the leadership did not fully agree about the underlying issues of the conflict or about

how to manage it; (3) because different sectors reacted to the changes in different ways, it is impossible to talk about a clear and uniform public opinion shift. The complexity of the interactions between the decision-makers and the public in Israel has important implications in a number of spheres. First, it seems to suggest the existence of an inconsistent cognitive and political process with regard to managing the conflict. Despite widespread agreement that “Oslo is dead” and that “there is no one to talk to,” and despite a rightward electoral thrust, there has been a clear and significant increase in public support for the “two states for two nations” formula and for readiness to make territorial and other concessions, including support for the unilateral disengagement plan. Second, in the case of Israel the empirical discussion can contribute to the theoretical discussion about the public’s active input in shaping foreign and security policy.

In the sixth chapter—“A Psychological Earthquake in the Israeli-Jewish Society: Changing Opinions Following the Camp David Summit and the Al-Aqsa Intifada”—Daniel Bar-Tal and Keren Sharvit analyze the psychological changes that were fomented in the Israeli society by the failure of the Oslo process and by the violent confrontation. Their analysis is based on the concept of “transitional context,” which refers to the temporary physical, social, political, economic, military, and psychological conditions that create the environment in which individuals and collectives act. Major societal events (such as revolution, war, or a peace treaty) and major societal information (supplied by an authority wielding determinative influence) can be crucial elements in the creation of a transitional context. During the period under discussion, a transitional context developed that included major events (the Camp David summit and its failure, the violent confrontation) and major information supplied by Israeli policymakers (Israeli readiness for far-reaching concessions at Camp David, the Palestinians’ refusal to resolve the conflict, Arafat’s advance planning of the violent confrontation). The resulting psychological conditions profoundly affected the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the Israeli Jews. Among these conditions we can note a heightened threat, a greater fear, a sense of victimization, a self-centered focus, support for the use of violent means in dealing with the Palestinians, backing for a leader who projects force, support for measures of unilateral separation from the Palestinians, one-directional thought regarding the adversary and the conflict and its resolution, internal pressure for conformity, readiness to impose sanctions on dissident members of the society, and rejection of external criticism. The psychological repertoire that developed since the fall of 2000 became a

prism through which Israelis interpret the reality around them and on the basis of which they act. This repertoire is likely to change only in conjunction with the emergence of a new transitional context, which is dependent on new major societal events.

In the seventh chapter—“Ethos of the Conflict in the Israeli Media during the Period of the Violent Confrontation”—Keren Sharvit and Daniel Bar-Tal examine the role played by the media in disseminating and consolidating the ethos of the conflict in the Israeli society during the period covered by the book. The media has always played a large role in imparting the conflict ethos, which is made up of societal beliefs about the rightness of the goals in terms of security, delegitimizing the Other, positive self-image, self-perception as victim, patriotism, unity, and peace. The political establishment viewed the media as one of its branches, which could be used to promote ideological and national goals in the conflict, while the media, for its part, accepted that role and cooperated with it. Even though, in contrast to the early years of the state, the media was now largely a commercial enterprise and relatively free of close establishment supervision, its manner of transmitting the values of the conflict ethos recalled its approach in those early years. Viewing itself as being mobilized in the national effort of the struggle against the Palestinians, the media usually supported government policy and helped disseminate the messages of the political and security establishment.

In the eighth chapter—“The Palestinian Society in the Wake of the Violent Confrontation and Arafat’s Death”—Ephraim Lavie analyzes the developments that occurred in the Palestinian society in the decade since Oslo, during the violent confrontation, and in terms of the challenges posed by the Palestinian society to both the Palestinian Authority and to Israel. The violent confrontation, which began as a nonviolent popular uprising and developed into an armed confrontation, created a duality of thought among the Palestinians: along with broad recognition of the damage done to the Palestinian society and to the national cause by the armed confrontation, there was support for the confrontation and for the armed militants who were its spearhead. The violent confrontation proceeded without clear goals being set at the national level and reflected the growing dispute between the national camp and the Islamic-religious camp over the Palestinians’ national aims. The national camp remained split, largely between the veteran and young leaderships, while trying to work out an order of priorities between a solution of the refugee problem involving the right of return or realizing the right of self-determination in a state within the 1967 borders. The Islamic-religious camp remained united



and was determined to pursue the armed struggle until the establishment of a theocracy in the entire area of Palestine. The internal dispute was not resolved by the end of the Arafat era. The election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), who espouses a pragmatic political approach, including a willingness to end the confrontation, as well as the support he has received from the international community, has created high expectations in the Palestinian society for a major overhaul of the system and a fundamental change in the security, economic, and political situation.

In the ninth and final chapter—"The Israeli Disengagement Plan as a Conflict-Management Strategy"—Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov and Kobi Michael examine the disengagement plan as a strategy for conflict management and as an opportunity to recast the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The chapter consists of six sections: (1) a theoretical and empirical examination of unilateral disengagement as a strategy for conflict management and resolution, and on its potential to modify an international conflict; (2) the main elements of the disengagement plan as proposed by the government of Israel; (3) the underlying rationale of the plan and its goals, as set forth in the plan itself and in statements by the prime minister; (4) a close monitoring of statements made by Prime Minister Sharon, the plan's exclusive initiator, to survey the stages by which the plan was formulated as a gradual process adapted to the violent confrontation; (5) the implications of disengagement as a basic change in Israel's foreign and security policy in the territorial, security, political, and settlement dimensions; (6) the potential of the disengagement plan as an opportunity to modify the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing on the need for Israeli-Palestinian coordination and cooperation to execute the plan without violence, with the goal of ending the violent confrontation and renewing the political process.

CHAPTER 1

DIALECTIC BETWEEN CONFLICT  
MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION

*Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov*

The rapid transition from an attempt to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the Camp David conference (July 2000) and in the Taba talks (January 2001) to renewed large-scale violence (from the end of September 2000) raised doubts about the possibility that the conflict could be resolved in the near future. The failure to resolve the conflict prompted researchers and policymakers to theorize that time was not yet ripe for a solution and that the only option is therefore to manage it—or, more precisely, to manage the violent confrontation that the conflict spawned in the past few years.<sup>1</sup>

The transition from a process of conflict resolution to the renewal of violence is a crisis of severe magnitude, though not rare in the history of conflicts between states. Manifesting the failure of the political process, such a development shows that the sides' conception of peace collapsed together with all their basic assumptions and with it the hope and belief that the conflict is amenable to peaceful resolution. Compounding the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian case is the difficulty entailed in the fact that one of the actors involved is a state and the other is not.

If the political process fails, such a conflict tends to revert to its previous and ostensibly natural pattern of being protracted, irresolvable, and intractable: a zero-sum conflict that now escalates to new levels, its seemingly irresolvable nature having become manifest.

The failure of a political process indicates that conditions are not yet ripe for conflict resolution. The return to the use of violence shows that at least one side has reached the conclusion that the political

process cannot produce the goals that brought it to the negotiating table. Those who take this view believe that they can achieve their goals by means of violence, or at least improve their bargaining position with a view to the resumption of the political process. Violence, then, is perceived to be more effective than a political process to realize national goals, an approach that represents a significant regression from the concept that conflicts should be resolved by peaceful means.

The reversion to violence is a grave step, as it reflects loss of confidence in both the peace process and in the other side. Although the building of such confidence is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the existence of a political process, the collapse of mutual confidence raises serious doubts about the possibility of resolving the conflict and questions about how the other side manipulated the peace process while concealing its true—and not necessarily conciliatory—intentions.

In addition, the parties are now compelled to come up with a new concept for coping with the situation that has transpired, and more especially to manage the violent conflict. The political process having collapsed, the resulting violence must be managed. This change obliges the construction of a conflict-management approach that involves new management strategies and tactics aimed at advancing each side's interests within the framework of the new violent confrontation—to punish the adversary for violating the agreement and initiating the violence and to deny the other side military and political achievements.

Conflict management is not a uniform phenomenon about which there is general agreement in the research literature. As a rule, it refers to conflicts that elude resolution for one reason or another, so that conflict management becomes the default option. At the same time, conflict management is usually considered to be a prefatory stage toward resolution, the particular mode of management likely to affect the transition to resolution. The dialectic between conflict management and conflict resolution is therefore very important for understanding the transition from one phase to the next.

Despite the crisis and the negative feelings toward the adversary—who is generally perceived as being responsible for the failure of the political process and the deterioration into violence—the dilemma faced by the policymakers on both sides is how to manage the conflict in a way that will enable a return to the political process. The ability to manage a violent conflict that is driven by political expectancy calls for singular leadership prudence that is difficult to develop during a crisis, when disappointment in the political process is rife and blame is imputed to the other side.

The aims of this chapter are to examine the following:

1. The phenomenon of conflict management as a default option where conflict resolution has failed.
2. Various strategies of conflict management, focusing on a case of conflict involving a state actor and a non-state actor, as in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
3. The prospects of a renewed transition from conflict management to conflict moderation and the renewal of the political process.

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

We can distinguish between different levels of conflict management involving different types of “actors” (between two nation-states, between a nation-state and non-state actors, including terrorist or guerrilla organizations) with the aim of achieving different goals (violence prevention, violence control, violence termination) utilizing different management strategies. In general, a distinction can be drawn between two principal levels of management. The first and most basic level treats conflict management like the totality of the efforts aimed at forestalling violence in a conflict. Management at this level refers mainly to *conflict prevention* or *preventive diplomacy*. Conflict prevention aims at preventing a conflict from becoming violent; thus, the eruption of violence indicates a failure of conflict management.

The second level is *controlled management* of the violence (prevention having failed) in order to contain it and keep it from escalating, with the goal of terminating it rapidly, leading to moderation or resolution of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> That is, although some researchers view the very outbreak of violence as failure, others ascribe the term controlled management to efforts aimed at controlling the violent aspect of the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

A further distinction is customarily drawn between three types of management: unilateral, joint, and external. *Unilateral management* refers to the totality of the efforts made by each side separately to prevent the other side from initiating violence or escalating it. *Joint management* refers to the totality of the official and unofficial efforts made by both sides to prevent violence or to control it by adopting a certain degree of coordination or cooperation. *External management* refers to the totality of the efforts made by a third party (a superpower or regional actors or international organizations) to intervene in the conflict in order to prevent violence or to control it.

## UNILATERAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Unilateral management occurs when the sides refrain from joint conflict management or for various reasons have difficulty in adopting that mode. Unilateral management tends to develop when one or both sides to a conflict decline to cooperate in managing it. Such a situation tends to develop in a conflict that is prone to be zero-sum in character, in conditions of extreme asymmetry of power or of punitive capability between the parties to the conflict, in conditions of absolute mistrust, if a high level of hostility exists, if the other side is delegitimized, or after the failure of a peace process, when mutual mistrust sometimes rules out any possibility of joint management.

Unilateral conflict management is intended to persuade the other side to refrain, restrain, and even end violence, through the adoption of unilateral strategies. Although these strategies have a similar goal—to influence the behavior of the other side—they differ in character. Three types of strategies can be distinguished in this connection: *negative sanctions* (which make use of both threats and force), *positive sanctions* (promises and enticements), and *disengagement* as a separate strategy.

Strategies of the first type include deterrence, coercive diplomacy, “an eye for an eye” or “tit for tat,” and the threat of punishment or collective punishment. Strategies of the second type include reassurance, gradual mutuality to lower tensions, and conditional reciprocity.<sup>4</sup> Strategies of the third type, disengagement, can be seen either as a positive or a negative sanction.

### Unilateral Management Strategies

1. *Unilateral Deterrence*—A strategy that aims to obviate violence or control it by threatening punishment. This is an essential and necessary deterrence in the face of state or non-state adversaries. However, it tends to be ineffective when the other side, whether a state or a non-state foe, is determined to act and refuses to be deterred because of the perceived importance it attaches to the issue in dispute for its interests or values (Egypt and Syria in the Yom Kippur War, Iraq in the invasion of Kuwait and in the Gulf War, the Palestinians in both intifadas). Unilateral deterrence, though, can be more effective in limiting the level of violence after it has erupted (Iraq’s nonuse of chemical weapons in the Gulf War). Historical experience shows that unilateral deterrence strategy seeks to “gain time” and anticipates other opportunities to moderate significantly the danger of war or other violence.

As such, it cannot be relied upon as an exclusive means to obviate or contain violence. Deterrence should be treated as an important element in a strategy that combines threats of punishment with positive enticements and other diplomatic efforts which aim to influence the adversary's behavior. The use of deterrence depends on the adversary and the situation, based on a thorough examination of the type of conflict, the adversary's character and goals, and its determination to achieve them and be willing to pay the price this may entail. Historical experience shows that deterring a non-state actor that aspires to independence is more complex and more complicated than deterring a state actor. The reason is that the non-state actor lacks "true assets" and therefore takes a different attitude toward losses and future costs. A nothing-to-lose feeling on the other side may negate the force of effective deterrence in such situations. The same holds true in regard to the deterrence of terrorist organizations or suicide bombers, who take a zero-sum approach to the conflict and feel that they have no alternative strategies. In addition, if the non-state adversary consists of many actors—organizations and suborganizations—deterring them becomes more complex and complicated, because of the need to differentiate among them and gear the deterrence to the particular traits of each.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Coercive Diplomacy*—A strategy intended mainly to put a stop to hostile or violent activity following the failure of deterrence. This strategy utilizes punitive activity, such as diplomatic and economic sanctions, or limited force. The adversary, having already resorted to hostile activity, will be committed to it until the goals are attained and the achievements maximized; stopping is tantamount to an admission of failure. Consequently, the punishment must be sufficient to create risks and high costs for the adversary, at a level permitting situation reassessment but not thrusting it into a nothing-to-lose situation. Of course, even when the adversary is a non-state actor or consists of many actors, the use of this strategy must be especially selective toward those actors that are defined or perceived as being relatively moderate.<sup>6</sup>

3. *An Eye for an Eye or Tit for Tat*—This strategy, based on a mutual threat to exchange blows, sets in motion a process of escalation, with the two sides punishing each other, though there may be asymmetry in the scale and force of the punitive blows and in the amount of damage and pain they inflict. This strategy can deter the use of violence or a certain type of violence by threatening that this will be met with an appropriate and perhaps disproportionate response and so create mutual deterrence between the sides. The threat of retaliating with a

painful blow to every painful blow delivered by the other side is intended to further cooperation in conflict management by avoiding certain actions or the use of certain means. The effectiveness of this strategy depends on the ability of both sides to inflict painful punitive measures (albeit not always symmetrically) and on a similar attitude by the two sides toward the price and the pain entailed in exchanging blows; that is, the two sides are “pain averse” or “risk averse.”<sup>7</sup> A process of this kind, involving mutual deterrence based on concrete exchanges of blows or their threat, developed between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon beginning in the 1980s and continues to characterize the relations between them.<sup>8</sup> In the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation the result of the exchanges of blows was escalation and not the emergence of mutual deterrence in the use of violence; this was due to both the asymmetrical character of the confrontation and the existence of numerous sub-actors in the Palestinian camp between whom there was no direct connection enabling certain limitations to be developed and upheld.

4. *Threat or Use of Collective Punishment*—The object of this strategy is to induce the adversary’s leaders to desist from the use of violence and to moderate and end such usage by using the population or part of it as a hostage. The strategy of collective punishment is meant to threaten or to inflict harm concretely on a population that is not directly involved in the war, if the leaders of the other side persist in their behavior. The aim is to use the population as a means of pressure on the leadership and to strengthen the moderates or the opponents of violence on the other side by instilling a fear of punishment. When utilized by a state actor, this strategy might include encirclement, closure, demolition of homes and property, and even the expulsion of political leaders and activists. When utilized by a non-state actor, this strategy might also include acts of terrorism against a civilian population. Success is more likely if there is a total break between the leaders and the population or central segments of the population, which opposes the leadership’s policy of violence that brings punishment in its wake. This strategy will not be effective if the leadership and the population are united and all are possessed by a nothing-to-lose feeling. Because use of punishment as a strategy does not differentiate between different target populations—belligerents and nonbelligerents—it is liable to heighten feelings of enmity and revenge and exacerbate the conflict, increase support for the existing leadership, enhance political and social cohesion, and intensify the opposition of the victimized population toward the state or the terrorist organizations that are using this strategy. Consequently, this strategy tends to achieve results

that are the opposite of those intended. A more serious problem, though, is that it is amoral and inhumane, as it punishes innocent people. It is therefore liable to generate fierce criticism in the international community and arouse opposition within the population of the side that is meting out the punishment but is in effect punishing itself.<sup>9</sup>

5. *Reassurance*—This strategy seeks to influence the other side by assuring it that there is no intention of doing damage to its interests or punishing it, provided it abstains from violence or agrees to control and desist from it. It is a strategy based primarily on persuasion rather than threats. It is likely to fail if the adversary has aggressive tendencies, is determined to change the status quo by force, and feels that it has an opportunity to make a concrete gain at a cost and risk perceived as reasonable. Such an adversary will probably view assurance as a sign of weakness of the other side rather than as an opening to dialogue and resolution of the conflict.<sup>10</sup> This strategy may be effective when the adversary intends to resort to violence only as a defensive measure, rooted in weakness and accumulated damage, from a feeling of “no choice,” or from a misunderstanding of the other side’s intentions, which appear to be hostile.<sup>11</sup>

6. *Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction (GRIT)*—This strategy is aimed mainly at reducing the mistrust between the sides in order to enable cooperation toward lowering tension. It involves a series of meaningful conciliatory steps that include unilateral concessions in order to persuade the adversary of one’s sincere and serious intention to diminish the existing tensions and resume the dialogue. In contrast to other conflict-management strategies, this strategy does not make the change conditional either on the prior modification of the adversary’s behavior or an immediate conciliatory move on its part; it is intended to encourage the adversary to undergo attitudinal and perceptual changes toward the other side, which has made the conciliatory move, and toward the conflict itself. The idea is not to “bribe” the adversary but to encourage it to view the gestures as a sincere, serious, and genuine opportunity to which it ought to respond. This strategy is a type of experiment that entails a gamble and involves risks, as the adversary might take advantage of the concessions without modifying its behavior in the slightest. Therefore, even though the concessions should be meaningful, they should not necessarily endanger the initiating side, because if the adversary shows no signs of readiness to reduce the tension no additional concessions will be forthcoming.<sup>12</sup>

7. *Conditional Reciprocity*—This strategy seeks to manage the conflict by means of conciliatory concessions or conditional rewards



and seeks to elicit a modification of the other side's behavior. However, in contrast to the previous strategies, it is conditional on a prior behavioral change by the other side. Every concession or gesture will be a compensation or reward for a positive shift in the adversary's behavior, thus creating congruence between the reward being offered and the nature of the behavioral change that is sought. Conditional reciprocity can develop within the framework of negotiations to prevent, limit, or end violence. It can be a long-term strategy that seeks to change the character of the conflict's management from unilateral to bilateral through a gradual process in the course of which the level of hostility and mistrust is reduced. In contrast to the previous strategy, this strategy does not involve concrete risks, as the concession or compensation is conditional on a prior change in behavior. This strategy, like the others, is conditional on the other side's reaction to the enticement that is being offered. The adversary might reject the offer or ignore it and thus scuttle the initiative; however, the offer might be accepted under certain conditions, making possible negotiation on the continuation of the conflict's management and the possibility of joint management. This strategy, too, necessitates a trial and error process during which the other side's reaction is examined.

8. *Unilateral Disengagement Without an Agreement*—In this strategy one side leaves a disputed area in order to bring about the termination of a conflict or to reduce it by eliminating one of its motivating sources. Disengagement as a means of conflict management is effective mainly in places where there is no common border between the sides and the very act of leaving might put an end to the conflict or reduce the motivation for violence. In cases where a common border exists, unilateral disengagement will not necessarily end the conflict but will make possible a mode of management that does not entail the forces remaining on the ground. The result depends very much on the other side's perception of the underlying motives of the disengagement. If it is perceived to be satisfactory and is able to meet its needs, it can become a spur to moderate or even end the conflict. However, if it is perceived as a sign of weakness, the other side is liable to continue and even escalate its violent behavior with a view to realizing future gains. Thus disengagement can not only moderate a conflict but also exacerbate it. If so, the disengaging side will have to utilize deterrence and punishment as conflict-management means.

The use of unilateral conflict management based on deterrence and punishment strategies or on a "stick" approach (the first four strategies above) is intended primarily to persuade the adversary to reconsider its

behavior—on the assumption that the other side is rational and thus capable of assessing properly the cost/benefit of continuing or stopping the violence, or moderating it—and to compel to put an end to the violence or moderate it significantly. Conflict management is a form of struggle for the consciousness of the other side, based on the assumption that it is indeed amenable to influence. The aim is to get the other side to desist from the use of violence and make it recognize that the violence it initiated not only fails to serve its purposes but will adversely affect the ability to achieve them nonviolently; it will not be able to achieve its goals through the use of violence.<sup>13</sup> Conflict management of this type tends to be effective against a non-state actor that is very determined (in conditions of a low-intensity conflict) to achieve its goals and feels it has nothing to lose as it “lacks assets.”

These strategies are even less effective if the non-state player is nonunitary, consisting of additional sub-actors that act separately, are not subordinate to a central authority, and feel they have nothing to lose. Each of them must be approached differently, by means of unique strategies, in order to test their reaction. The basic assumption is that because of the differences among these actors, the use of threatening or punitive unilateral strategies must be controlled and focused in accordance with the specific actor. Thus, for example, the existence of actors in the Palestinian arena in addition to the Palestinian Authority, such as Tanzim, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, necessitates a differential approach involving the creation of a model applying to each actor separately and a thorough examination of its leaders, goals, ideology, logic, style of activity, determination, strength, and weakness, as well as its ability and willingness to absorb costs of different types.

It is therefore necessary to identify distinctive traits of various non-state actors that are involved in the conflict in order to consider more intelligently the use of deterrent or punitive strategies against them. In general, these actors are known to be strongly motivated by powerful political and/or religious beliefs and to be driven by a high readiness for self-sacrifice. Although they usually have no concrete material assets, their political, religious, and military leaders can be identified and threatened. At the same time, such actors often lack clear leadership or decision-making structures that are fully in control of the operative units. Consequently, the use of threatening or punitive strategies will sometimes achieve exactly the opposite results of those that were intended, as actors of this kind believe that attacks on them will serve and bolster their legitimacy among the broad public. Similarly, an attempt to use enticement strategies might also fail if the actors take a zero-sum approach to the conflict and strive for military and political

victory. In such cases, enticement strategies are liable to be viewed as manifestations of weakness. It follows that a measured and intelligent integration of the two types of strategies—stick and carrot—is necessary, in accordance with the type of adversary and the circumstances of the conflict.

If joint management is not possible, the use of unilateral strategies can be more diverse in accordance with the relative effectiveness of each strategy under different conditions. By adopting a process of trial and error and adjusting such strategies to the goals sought in managing the violent conflict and to its circumstances, the side using them can examine the relative utility of each of them.

## JOINT MANAGEMENT

Joint management occurs when the two sides are willing to cooperate in order to prevent, control, or end violence. This development may be the result of overt and explicit dialogue that eventuates in an agreement, or of covert dialogue that brings about implicit understandings. The existing research about joint management of violence focuses mainly on conflicts between state actors, regional conflicts, conflicts between powers, and conflicts between powers and small states. Little research has been done about joint management involving state actors and non-state actors, still less in a situation in which the non-state actor is nonunitary and includes a large number of sub-actors.

The literature on limited conventional wars is rich with theoretical and empirical material about joint conflict management between states over the issue of limiting war and about the sides' ability to develop mutually agreed rules for jointly managing the war. The rules for this are intended to reduce the violence, diminish the number of casualties, differentiate between various targets of attack, enable a distinction to be drawn between front and home front and between combatants and noncombatants, limit the use of certain violent means, and make possible political initiatives to terminate the violence and resolve the conflict peacefully.<sup>14</sup>

A conflict between state actors and non-state actors—Israel and the Palestinians, Israel and Hezbollah, Russia and Chechnya—is also known as a low-intensity conflict or asymmetric warfare. Such conflicts differ from conventional warfare largely because they are generally not amenable to joint management—either to prevent them or to control them—owing to their singular characteristics:

- Conflicts that tend to be zero-sum—in which the non-state side, which generally foments the conflict, seeks to realize all its national,

political, and territorial goals at the “total expense” of the state actor (ending colonial rule, ending military occupation, expelling the state actor).

- Asymmetric conflict—in which there is no symmetry in any sphere: goals, power relations, balance of power, available means and the ability to utilize them, ability to inflict damage, readiness to absorb losses, willingness to engage in a lengthy struggle, or in balance of values and combat morality (given each side’s feeling of a just and unjust war).
- A conflict that is intended to terminate an “intolerable” situation or a “painful impasse” for the non-state side.
- A protracted conflict in which no unequivocal military decision is possible.
- Violence that is less than conventional war and is characterized by guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and sporadic violence perpetrated by irregulars in the face of belligerent reactions and initiatives by the regular forces.
- Use of collective means of punishment (primarily economic, restrictions on movement, curfew, and closure) by the state actor.
- Absence of a clear distinction between front and home front and between combatants and noncombatants.
- Psychological warfare and media utilization.
- Lack of clear timing for terminating and resolving the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

Such elements generally impede efforts to prevent violence, unless the sides are able to agree on a peaceful settlement that puts an end to the conflict, usually because of the state-actor’s readiness to withdraw from the arena of conflict. Similarly, the existence of these elements makes it impossible to achieve control of the violence by setting rules for its joint management.

It is the pronounced disparity between the political goals of the sides in a conflict of this kind that impedes joint conflict management and violence control. The non-state side generally harbors offensive political goals aimed at radically altering the territorial, military, and political status quo. The state actor, which is generally the side that reacts, seeks defensive political goals in the form of preserving the status quo. Seemingly, the disparity between the desire to change a certain situation totally and the desire to preserve the situation, or between the aspiration for total victory and the aspiration to prevent a total loss, rules out the possibility of a mutual limitation on political goals in a conflict of this kind, in contrast to a limited conventional war. At the same time, whereas the non-state actor is hampered by military constraints (military weakness) in seeking to translate its

political goals into broad operational military goals, the state actor is hampered in this aim by political constraints (internal and external). The asymmetric character of a conflict of this kind combined with the constraints affecting both sides render it difficult for either side to achieve a rapid and clear-cut military victory or, alternatively, to resolve the conflict peacefully to their mutual satisfaction. Consequently, a conflict of this kind tends to drag on inconclusively.

The asymmetry of a low-intensity conflict—in terms of both goals and the means available to each side—also makes it difficult to limit the use of means. The non-state actor's broad goals prompt extensive use of military means, a desire that is undercut by limited military capabilities. At the same time, the non-state side tries to utilize its available means to the utmost and without limit. The true test of a limitation on the use of military means is usually one-sided, reflecting the degree to which the state actor—the stronger side, which possesses a large range of means, and of higher quality—is willing to limit their use. The state actor's readiness to impose such self-limitations, whether from self-restraint or due to external or internal constraints, will in large measure determine the possibility of limiting the violence in this type of conflict. In addition to the use of military means, the strong side can, in certain cases, resort to additional measures in order to bring pressure to bear on the non-state side; for example, by punishing its civilian population, either by means of economic sanctions or by a physical economic siege (closure and encirclement) that impedes or prevents the population's free movement. Of course, whether or not limitations are placed on the use of these means has larger implications for the conflict's management, especially with regard to its relative escalation or moderation.

During their recent confrontation, Israel and the Palestinians expanded the use of the means available to them and each side exploited the advantages inherent in their use. The Palestinians expanded the use of suicide bombing attacks in the knowledge that such acts of violence produce particularly "effective" results and that Israel would have a hard time coping with them. Israel, for its part, expanded the assassinations of military and political leaders, made occasional use of attack helicopters and warplanes, imposed limitations on movement, and subjected the Palestinian population to encirclements and sieges. Each side viewed the other's use of such means as escalatory and as breaking the rules of violence management. In some cases escalation of the use of available means is a response to the other side's behavior or seeks to bring about more meaningful achievements in the war. Their use might be limited by self-restraint or because of external

constraints—as in the case of Israel—or, in the Palestinian case, because the Israeli security forces have become more skilled at thwarting terrorist attacks. In the absence of political aims the sides will find it difficult to control the violence, let alone end it. If one side or both sides alike refuse to reach a political agreement and instead seek a military decision to the conflict, they will also find it difficult to reach an agreement on effective control of the violence, as such an agreement, by its nature, conflicts with the possibility of achieving a decisive military conclusion and a clear political victory.

### EXTERNAL MANAGEMENT

External management of an international conflict tends to occur when the sides are not capable or not interested in cooperating to prevent, stop, or control the violence, or when they are interested in external management in order to achieve those goals. Such management can take place within the framework of a process to reduce or stop the violence in the form of an agreement between the sides, if they are interested in having an external entity assist in guaranteeing that the agreement is upheld. External management can thus be invited by both sides or by one side only, or it can be imposed, contrary to the will of one side, if actors in the international arena are unwilling to accept the continuation of the violent confrontation. Such actors can be great powers, regional actors, or international organizations, which are appalled by the high price in human life being exacted from the sides or by the possibility that the violent conflict will spread and engulf external actors, ultimately threatening regional and international stability.

The most convenient situation, for the combatants and for the external actors alike, occurs when the two sides need and are ready, of their own free will and at their initiative, for external management with the aim of enforcing and honoring the agreement. The external intervention that is sought can take the form of international observers or peacekeeping forces to supervise the cease-fire, armistice, or separation-of-forces agreement by establishing a security regime between the sides that includes monitoring violations of the agreement by them. Examples involving Israel are the UN force that was stationed in the Middle East in 1949, following the armistice agreements that were signed between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon; in Sinai, in 1957, after the Suez War; in Sinai and on the Golan Heights in 1974, following the signing of the separation-of-forces agreements between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria, respectively; the stationing of a UN force in Southern Lebanon following Israel's

Operation Litani, in 1978; and of a multinational force in Sinai to monitor the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

In cases where one or both sides refuse to engage in violence control or are incapable of controlling or ending the violence, they can be coerced by means of concrete external military intervention, as occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.<sup>16</sup> Such intervention can be solicited by one of the sides against the side that is identified as the aggressor. Of course, intervention depends on the willingness of a third party to risk becoming involved in a violent conflict, which could produce a protracted military collision with one of the parties to the conflict.

External intervention of some kind is usually required in international conflicts between a state actor and a non-state actor, or in internal conflicts between the government and nongovernmental actors, in which the sides are incapable of cooperating to stop or moderate the violence.

A number of limited external efforts were made to assist in managing the Israeli-Palestinian violent confrontation of 2000–2004, notably the Mitchell, Tenet, and Zinni initiatives of the United States. All three initiatives focused on efforts to terminate the violence and renew the political process, and all of these failed because the sides did not truly cooperate with the envoys and because the third party was unwilling to intensify its persuasive or coercive efforts.<sup>17</sup> The combatant parties were divided over international intervention. The Palestinians insisted that any intervention be European-based and include enforcement and monitoring of a cease-fire. Israel, however, objected to this vehemently, for fear that its freedom of action would be curtailed and that the Palestinians would exploit the international intervention to perpetrate violence without concrete fear of Israeli responses. Israel was also concerned that international intervention of this kind would bring it under greater pressure to agree to an unacceptable political settlement.

The exacerbation of the violence also produced more comprehensive political initiatives. The initiative by U.S. President, George Bush in June 2002 and the “Road Map” (at the initiative of the “Quartet”—the United States, Russia, the UN, and the European Union) in December 2002 sought to end the violence, renew the political process, and resolve the conflict. However, despite the political anticipation these initiatives generated, they too failed, both because the sides perceived them as being more virtual than substantive and because the initiators took no concrete steps to advance them.<sup>18</sup>

## CONFLICT WITHOUT A DECISIVE MILITARY OR POLITICAL CONCLUSION

The terms “military decision,” “military victory,” and “political victory” are used differently in reference to conventional wars between state actors than they are in reference to low-intensity violent conflicts between state and non-state actors. Military victory refers solely to the tactical or strategic level of the war or violence. It is related to the realization of the war goals of the sides, as reflected in the war’s outcome. Military victory is a relative, subjective, perceptual term based on the assessment and perception of the sides’ policymakers. Because it is the policymakers who define the war’s goals, and because those goals are not always sufficiently spelled out—they are vague and variable in line with different motives (which are in part malleable)—a situation could arise in which both sides define their goals retroactively in a manner enabling them to be presented as a military victory. The possibility thus exists that both sides will declare themselves victorious. Military victory does not necessarily depend on a decisive military conclusion or on the total military defeat of the adversary. Thwarting the adversary’s efforts to achieve its goals through war or violence can also be perceived as a military victory or a military success.

Military victory is sometimes linked to a *decisive military conclusion*, a concept that refers to a situation in which the adversary is deprived of the ability and the will to continue fighting and usually also asks for a halt to the hostilities. A decisive military conclusion is seemingly more objective than a military victory, as it is not necessarily connected to the war’s goals but to its military outcome, namely its cessation by means of a cease-fire or an armistice agreement—though this does not necessarily end the conflict. A decisive military conclusion is attained for the most part when the adversary has paid what it considers an intolerable price and is forced to stop fighting due to severe loss of military capability (losses of life and of military equipment) and/or of territory.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the relative importance of the terms military victory and decisive military conclusion, genuine victory in war lies exclusively in the political sphere. War is a political means to realize political goals. Those goals are not necessarily measured in terms of military victory or decisive military conclusion, but by the war’s political outcome. At the same time, a certain relationship—albeit, not necessarily direct—may develop between military victory and/or decisive military conclusion and political victory. The central question is whether military



success can be translated into political success, and if so, how. Both military victory and a decisive military conclusion, far from being necessary or sufficient conditions for a political victory or a political-strategic success, are actually liable to be an obstacle. In certain conditions, the side that has sustained military defeat can convert its failure into a political victory. Not only will it make no political concessions to the adversary, it can also secure external political support for its uncompromising positions. Nevertheless, even though military victory or a decisive military conclusion do not always bring about the desired political results, military defeat is as a rule worse, especially for small states.

Political victory thus depends on the ability to translate military achievements into political gains: to bring about an improved political situation (at the end of the war, as compared with at its beginning), whether in the conflict itself or on the regional or global plane. Eliminating the adversary's will to realize its goals through war and forcing a change in its goals and its approach to the conflict, as well as moderating or even terminating the conflict by means of a political agreement—partial or full, official or unofficial—is likely to be construed also as a salient political victory for the other side. In the absence of this possibility, international legitimization for the end of the conflict can also be construed as a political victory.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to a decisive military conclusion, which can be judged immediately, based on the end of the war, political victory is neither autonomous nor immediate but a process and as such subject to judgment at different points of time. Thus a distinction must be drawn between short-term results and long-term consequences. For example, one prism through which the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War can be judged is the peace agreement with Egypt in 1979, because without Israel's conquest of Sinai, Egypt would probably have been unwilling to make peace.

In a conflict between a state actor and a non-state actor, the former will have difficulty achieving a clear military decision. Even though the balance of power usually favors the state actor, the balance of determination and readiness to pay the price of a decisive military conclusion generally tend to favor the non-state actor, especially when no common border separates the two adversaries. The non-state actor, having nothing to lose, usually has greater vital interests in the confrontation. Although rarely achieving a decisive military conclusion over the state actor, the non-state actor's determination to pursue the armed conflict at any price sometimes inflicts a political loss on the state actor, if it feels caught in an endless trap of a prolonged confrontation and is no

longer willing to pay the price.<sup>21</sup> The outcome of a confrontation is therefore primarily a matter of perception and depends on each side's willingness and desire to bear the price of the confrontation over time.

In a confrontation of this kind the state actor can achieve a political victory only by being willing to pay its price over time and by "persuading" the non-state actor that the political aspirations that underlie the violence are achievable solely by diplomatic means. Accordingly, the non-state actor will understand that the continuation of the military confrontation is liable to be extremely costly and conflict with the realization of its political aspirations. Thwarting the efforts of the non-state actor to achieve its goals by violence can therefore be perceived as both a military victory and a political victory by the state actor.

The low-intensity violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians does not lend itself to a clear military decision, notwithstanding that the balance of power is clearly on the Israeli side. Although the Palestinians are too weak to vanquish Israel, the latter cannot crush the Palestinian army, for the simple reason that there is no such army. The existence of a large number of Palestinian actors hampers, if it does not prevent, a clear military decision in terms of Israel's ability to force an effective cease-fire or to moderate the violence significantly. Nor is the seizure of territories necessarily meaningful in this confrontation, given the Palestinians' feeling that they have nothing to lose territorially. Moreover, seizing territory compels Israel to deal with the needs of an occupied population—a very expensive proposition. Even if a conflict of this kind can be decided militarily, the political and moral cost is liable to be higher than Israel, as a democratic state, can afford. Furthermore, a decisive military conclusion could cause the total annihilation of the Palestinian Authority, a development that would ultimately turn out to be a two-edged sword, as there would be no authoritative partner in the ensuing anarchy to make decisions about ending the violence. Indeed, even if a military decision were possible, international constraints would prevent it from being translated into a political decision. Furthermore, a conclusive decision at the military level, even if it were attainable, would not vanquish the Palestinians politically, because they would not forgo their political aspirations and the international community would not accept this as a possible solution. Success in the latest confrontation will be measured not only by the cessation of violence or its large-scale reduction, but mainly by whether the Palestinians are persuaded that they have no chance to realize their aspirations by means of violence and that the only viable way to achieve this goal is at the negotiating table.

## FROM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BY MEANS OF UNILATERAL STRATEGIES TO MUTUAL HURTING STALEMATE

In a situation in which conflict management takes the form mainly of unilateral strategies, uncontrolled violence can continue for a protracted period without concrete military or political expectancy on either side. Without the possibility of a clear military decision, the two sides are liable to find themselves in a mutual hurting stalemate. In the absence of a mutual desire to reach an agreed political settlement or of an externally imposed settlement, the stalemate is liable to become entrenched for a lengthy period and be painful for both sides. Given the pronounced disparity in power relations, the consequences of such an impasse may not be symmetrical: despite their mutual character, they will likely be more detrimental to the non-state actor. However, even in this situation—with the feeling of no political expectancy, no choice, and nothing more to lose—even a highly painful impasse is unlikely to induce the non-state actor to desist from the violence or to moderate it substantially.

The continuation of the mutual hurting stalemate may lead the sides to reevaluate the military situation from time to time and to conclude that the violence, or at least violence at its current level, cannot decide the conflict. Such a conclusion might prompt the sides to escalate the violence, still believing erroneously that the conflict can be decided by force, though this assumption will almost certainly prove to be mere wishful thinking. The parties to the conflict will quickly discover that not only is the goal unattainable through added force, but that this move is liable to ensnare them even more deeply in the conflict.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the state actor's military and economic superiority, the ongoing violence and its high cost are liable to generate domestic and foreign opposition to the continuation of the situation and to create pressure toward a unilateral solution. This will usually take the form of unilateral disengagement, with or without an agreement. A solution of this kind is typical of the termination of military intervention (the United States in Vietnam, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Israel in Lebanon) or of colonial rule. Disengagement in its unilateral form is indeed an attempt to look for a management alternative that is different from the options already assayed. The Israeli disengagement plan is more of a unilateral strategy that has been adapted to the development of the violent confrontation than it is a learning process that might bring about the cooperation of the other side in joint conflict

management. Disengagement is tantamount to recognizing the limitations of unilateral strategies to decide confrontations; hence the need to adopt this alternative strategy, in order to reduce the loss and the pain arising from the impasse in which the state actor is caught.<sup>23</sup> Even though disengagement is a default option—in the absence of the possibility or desire for joint conflict management—its implementation can serve as an opportunity for incipient joint management if the other side truly views it as an opportunity rather than as a manifestation of weakness that will encourage it to escalate the confrontation.

Even though a non-state actor will tend to persist in a violent confrontation because of the nothing-to-lose feeling, over time the costs this entails will become difficult to bear for this side, too. This will be even more pronounced in the light of the failure by the non-state actor to realize its political goals: the political defeat of the state actor and the establishment of an independent state.

### FROM MUTUAL HURTING STALEMATE TO MODERATION AND TERMINATION OF THE VIOLENT CONFRONTATION

Intensification of the mutual hurting stalemate might encourage the parties—each by its own strength, both of them jointly, or with third-party assistance—to reexamine joint options to moderate or possibly terminate the violent conflict. Even in the absence of ripeness to renew the political process, the sides might view violence moderation or termination as an option that is preferable to the continuation of the mutual hurting stalemate. Moderation and termination of a violent confrontation is a complex, multidimensional act. Though not a substitute for conflict resolution, it is generally a prior condition for resolution. Efforts at violence moderation, which can also be viewed as preliminary negotiations ahead of the political process, might be undertaken as a result of mutuality, a learning process undergone by leaders, changes in the internal environment of one or both of the actors, changes in the external environment, a lessening of the mistrust between the sides, or third-party intervention.

Mutuality is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the moderation or termination of a violent confrontation. Both sides must view this as being a mutually beneficial outcome that will advance their interests or at least not affect them adversely. Mutual learning processes undergone by the leaders of the two sides can become an unfailing source for modifying a violent confrontation—perhaps the most important source of all. Learning in this context means “A change of beliefs (or the

degree of confidence in one's beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience."<sup>24</sup> This definition indicates that the learning is largely limited to cognitive change (beliefs) at the individual level (policymaker) stemming from a different understanding of reality—in the present case, the environment of the violent confrontation—even though this does not necessarily lead to a change in policy or behavior. Learning in a violent confrontation can occur in the wake of developments such as the following:

1. Negative experience, including partial successes, consecutive failures, disappointments, and disasters in the violent confrontation.
2. Failure to adapt unilateral strategies effectively in the confrontation.
3. Development of new insights for addressing the problems raised by the confrontation.
4. Assimilation of new information (internal or external) that challenges existing basic assumptions and military-political conceptions.<sup>25</sup>

Developments of this kind can lead to two types of learning. *Causal learning* leads policymakers to alter their beliefs about the causes, effects, and results of the implementation of unilateral strategies that were adopted in the violent confrontation in various circumstances. *Diagnostic learning* leads them to examine their basic assumptions, concepts, and beliefs in relation to defining the situation, priorities, intentions, or the relative capabilities of the other side in the confrontation.<sup>26</sup>

For learning to bring about policy change in the violent confrontation, it must go through four stages:

1. Observation and new experiential interpretation in the confrontation, which is required for a change in the attitudes and beliefs of the policymakers.
2. The policymakers become convinced and acknowledge that no other possibility exists.
3. Adoption and implementation of policy change, which depends not only on the desire and readiness of the policymakers, but also on their ability to cope effectively with psychological, cultural, political, organizational, and institutional inhibitors.
4. Policymakers obtain political and public legitimization to initiate and implement the required policy change.

Learning, then, is a necessary though not sufficient condition to modify the confrontation, unless translated into a change of policy and

behavior—otherwise it remains only a potential cause of change. Learning in a confrontation involves three types of belief change: about oneself in the confrontation, about the Other, and about the confrontation environment. Only joint learning can bring about a change in the confrontation.

In this context three questions can be posed:

1. What changes in the confrontation require attitudinal and belief changes?
2. Which attitudes and beliefs require change?
3. When are these cognitive changes translated into policy change that is required to modify the confrontation?

The learning that characteristically eventuates in moderation or termination of violence is simple and tactical. It entails only a limited change in the sides' attitudes and beliefs. Such learning can take place during a violent confrontation only when leaders become convinced that they are caught in a mutual hurting stalemate and that the continuation of the violent confrontation, far from producing significant unilateral military or political achievements, is liable to be extremely damaging and dangerous. Leaders can undergo a learning process through the experience of a painful, dangerous, and costly confrontation. At the same time, it is far from clear how much pain and suffering each side must endure to this end, especially in a conflict between a state actor and a non-state actor.<sup>27</sup>

Reevaluation of the environment of the violent confrontation or a change in attitudes and beliefs carries great potential to effect a change in policy and behavior. However, institutional, political, and economic inhibitors are liable to prevent the learning content from being translated into concrete change. In the state actor, internal disputes can arise among the policymakers themselves; for example, between doves and hawks, the political and military echelon, diplomats and politicians, policymakers and their political rivals in the opposition, and between them and extra-parliamentary interest groups over the need for change in the violent confrontation, the type of change, and its usefulness and cost. Such disputes are even more likely to characterize the non-state actor, especially in a nonunitary situation marked by the existence of many sub-actors that are competing for control. In this type of competition there is a pronounced tendency to radicalization. The inhibitors will be acute on both sides if learning has already brought about change in conflict management in the past but led to a failed result. A case in point is the Oslo process,

which can be seen as the product of learning that led to a policy that failed and caused severe damage to both sides. Past failure, then, can be a major inhibitor on the road to effecting change in the violent confrontation.

The disagreements between central actors in the internal environment can manifest themselves over a range of issues, including the very attempt to moderate the violent confrontation with the other side; the need to moderate the conflict even before significant military and political gains have been achieved; the method and the means chosen to bring about moderation; the timing and pace of the moderation process; the price and risks entailed by the change; and the relation between moderating and terminating the violent confrontation and the renewal, type and expectancy latent in the political process.<sup>28</sup> Domestic actors are liable to oppose an attempt to moderate and terminate the violent confrontation, whether for ideological reasons, such as unwillingness to reach a settlement that is not a total military and political victory, or for fear that their status in the internal political environment will be adversely affected, especially if it is they who will pay the concrete price for the change (for example, the settlers in Israel).

In the non-state entity, where the violent confrontation constitutes a paramount rationale for the political existence of some of the domestic actors, its termination is liable to put their status at risk.<sup>29</sup> They may therefore try to sabotage efforts to reduce or end the violent confrontation, compelling the leaders who seek this goal to obtain broad public legitimization for the move, whether by persuading the opponents or neutralizing them in some way.<sup>30</sup>

Another key source for bringing about a change in the violent confrontation can be changes in the internal environment of one or both of the parties to the conflict. A new leadership, which was not directly involved in the failure of the political process and the deterioration into violence, might become a source for possible change. The fact that the new leadership is neither responsible for nor committed to the policy of its predecessor can encourage conciliatory initiatives both on its side and on the other side, which may view these developments as having the potential to modify the confrontation.<sup>31</sup> A change of government can be brought about by internal pressures stemming from the public's unwillingness to continue to endure the conditions of a protracted confrontation entailing very high costs to life and property. The public may gradually come to feel that a change in the conflict can be possible, but only by means of a change in the political leadership. The background to the election of Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister in 1992 and of Ehud

Barak in 1999 was the public's desire to foment a change in the conflict toward the adoption of new peace initiatives that would bring about a change in the confrontation with the Palestinians. Barak's election was also related to his commitment to remove the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from Lebanon. It bears noting that the Palestinians, too, perceived the election of both Rabin and Barak as positive opportunities for peace. By electing Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister in 1996 and Ariel Sharon in 2001 and in 2003, the public sought a more successful management of a peace-and-security process, after the failure of their predecessors in this regard. In the Palestinian Authority, the death of the leader, Yasser Arafat, and the election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as his successor, might also turn out to be important internal developments on the Palestinian side toward modifying the confrontation. Indeed, this change was perceived as an opportunity in Israel, the United States, and the European Union. On the other side, the coming to power of the Hamas was perceived by these actors more as potential threat and risk to a potential peace process.

In some cases domestic criticism might be voiced on both sides about the continuation of the violence. The mutual hurting stalemate can prompt internal circles on each side to call for a cessation of the violence.<sup>32</sup> The continuation of the mutual hurting stalemate might also encourage domestic elements from both sides, both political and nonpolitical, to cooperate because of their view that because neither leadership is doing enough to de-escalate or resolve the conflict, they must take matters into their own hands.

Changes in the external environment, whether regional or global, though not directly related to the confrontation, can bring about greater involvement by external actors and induce the sides to reevaluate their mutual hurting stalemate.<sup>33</sup> In the wake of the first Gulf War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States convened the Madrid Conference on the Middle East at the end of 1991, and the Washington talks. These developments were perceived by Israel as a "window of opportunity" to be exploited in order to reexamine the conflict with the Palestinians and with Syria. Indeed, the onset of the Oslo process and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations in 1993 are related to this perception of a window of opportunity. The war in Iraq in 2003 and the U.S. involvement in it, the reelection of George Bush as president the following year, and Egypt's willingness to play a part in implementing the disengagement plan might also serve, to some degree, as external inducements for Israel and the Palestinians, though they do not carry the same weight as the external inducements that existed in 1991.



In the light of the fact that the violent confrontation erupted after the failure of the political process, every attempt to moderate or terminate it must create at least a minimal level of trust between the sides. Without such trust, the risks and uncertainties entailed in any change in the confrontation will be perceived as more threatening than the continuation of the existing situation. Generally the state actor tends to feel that the non-state side will try to take advantage of the confrontation's moderation or termination in order to upgrade its inferior military capability ahead of the possible renewal of the violence and that it will violate every understanding or agreement whenever it thinks this will pay off strategically. The non-state side, for its part, will tend to fear that the state actor will exploit the confrontation's moderation or termination to perpetuate the military and political status quo that was created by the confrontation and prevent the non-state side from realizing its political goals. It is therefore necessary to reduce significantly the mistrust between the sides and for them to be mutually persuaded that moderating or ending the confrontation will not make them more vulnerable.<sup>34</sup>

In this situation, a process toward the creation of a minimal level of trust can develop under the following conditions: adoption of unilateral conciliatory strategies, a series of mutual confidence-building measures, and third-party intervention. A minimal level of trust is created through conciliatory steps that are intended to persuade the other side of the sincerity, credibility, and integrity of one's intentions, and that the failure of the efforts to create trust is fraught with danger and potential high cost for the initiating side if the other side abuses the opportunity. Trust, therefore, is needed in order to ensure a modicum of certainty, credibility, and good intentions. The certainty is meant to make good a prediction of the positive development of a process of violence moderation and resolution. The credibility is related to expectations of the other side's readiness to fulfill its part in the agreement. Good intentions indicate that the other side will not exploit the moderation or termination of the military confrontation in order to prepare itself for its resumption.<sup>35</sup> Only if the sides find that their agreement to a process of this kind will not worsen their military or political situation will they be able to place their trust in the possibility that the violent confrontation will be moderated. A full correlation thus exists between the creation of a certain level of trust and the parties' readiness to take calculated risks. A process of creating trust can develop gradually, at the initiative of one side, as a joint initiative, or at third-party initiative.

One of the sides can launch a process of creating trust by means of strategies of conditional reciprocity or by a Graduated Strategy

of Reducing Tension (GRIT). In general, the expectation is that the more powerful state actor will assume greater risks in adopting positive initiatives. Because in a confrontation of this kind the mistrust between the sides leads them to suspect that any initiative by the other side is inherently manipulative, unreliable, and not genuine, the actions taken by the initiating side must be sufficiently persuasive to demonstrate that they will prove costly and dangerous to itself if the other side does not respond to them or exploits them for its own gain. Without a positive response by the other side, enabling graduated reciprocity to reduce the violence, it is unlikely that the state actor will be able to persist with a policy of restraint in the long term. A positive response by the non-state actor might permit the onset of a dialogue that can lower the level of mistrust initially and create mutual trust subsequently. Such a response might take several forms: unofficial and official messages of readiness to view the conciliatory moves as sincere and genuine, not exploiting them to the other side's detriment, positive public declarations, and a partial reduction of violence.

If the sides are unable to develop agreed understandings to limit the violence, they can take a series of limited, mutual, graduated steps that will not endanger them. These might include refraining from hostile actions, declaring sanctuary zones, proclaiming a truce, or showing readiness for a time-limited cease-fire and positive public declarations not to abuse the moderation of the violent confrontation. The meticulous implementation of such steps over time can help build trust between the sides.

Both of these confidence-building strategies are liable to fail if the two sides are unable to trust each other. If so, and if they nevertheless wish to reach understandings or agreements to moderate or terminate the violence, they can enlist third-party help. In that case, each side "transfers" its trust to the third party, in the belief that this will ensure that its efforts to moderate the conflict will not be abused. The third party may assist in the dialogue between the sides by putting forward ideas and means that will make possible initial joint understandings to reduce the violence, and it can also act as a guarantor that the understandings will be upheld.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, it can be an important factor if the sides are in a learning process but are finding it difficult to translate what they have learned into the policy required to moderate or terminate the violence. Whether the third party succeeds depends on its relations with the sides, their readiness to cooperate with it, and its desire and ability to help them change their policy in the confrontation.

A third party can also assist the sides to develop norms and mechanisms for moderating and terminating the violence, imposing

and stabilizing a cease-fire, and preventing renewed escalation. Assistance can also be provided to enable the sides to establish a mutual security and ensure its continuation and performance, including the implementation of monitoring and verification methods to oversee the implementation of the agreement.

### FROM MODERATING AND TERMINATING THE VIOLENT CONFRONTATION TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Cooperation between the sides in managing the conflict by means of security arrangements does not necessarily attest to their readiness to terminate and resolve it. Mistrust and suspiciousness about the joint management of the conflict continue to run high. When a conflict is managed jointly and continuously, with no violations, to the satisfaction of both sides, an interim stage is reached between the stage of violence and the stage of conflict resolution. Joint conflict management is a means to foster trust and is a necessary prior condition for conflict resolution. Since the major goal of joint conflict management is to stabilize and institutionalize the conflict, the parties involved must focus their efforts more on stabilizing the cease-fire and on the security arrangements rather than on a future political settlement. At the same time, joint management aimed at ending the violence is conditional also on the sides' common understanding that the next stage in the political process is conflict resolution and that the security cooperation will not prevent progress toward a political settlement that will enable each side to realize its goals in the conflict. Expectancy of a political settlement is an essential condition for the continued stabilization of the conflict.

The creation of a limited security regime under third-party auspices is an essential means to arrange the security relations between the sides. This type of limited security regime existed between Israel and Jordan from 1970 to 1994 and between Israel and Egypt from 1974 to 1979, and has existed between Israel and Syria since 1974. It was this type of management that made it possible to forge gradual mutual trust between Israel and Egypt and between Israel and Jordan, and also helped to resolve those conflicts. It also helped Israel and Syria draw a clear distinction between the Golan Heights arena and the Lebanon arena, but impeded the development of a security regime in Lebanon.<sup>37</sup> No such security regime was established during the Oslo process and the sporadic efforts that were made to do so were based on an unconventional model in the Israeli-Arab conflict—joint military

patrols—which turned out to be unproductive and ineffective in preventing violence.<sup>38</sup>

In a conflict involving a state actor and a non-state actor, the establishment of a limited security regime becomes complex and may not be possible, depending on the nature of the non-state actor. The existence of a unitary actor able to exercise full if not absolute control over the means of violence and impose its authority on the many actors that constitute it, is almost a *sine qua non* for stabilizing and institutionalizing a conflict. The non-state actor, seeking to promote its political goals by means of a diplomatic settlement, must demonstrate its credibility in terms of fulfilling its security commitments at the stage of conflict stabilization and institutionalization. The two sides must act, both separately and together, against the many domestic forces that will try to sabotage the agreement. Because a security agreement is so fragile, both sides must maintain it meticulously. In conditions of mistrust, international involvement is essential to assist the sides and oversee the orderly implementation of the security agreement. In other words, external management is crucial in this regard.

## CONCLUSIONS

In a conflict that underwent resolution processes that collapsed and reverted to conflict management, the dialectic between the two processes—management and resolution—becomes complicated. Although it is not rare for a resolved conflict to turn violent again, such a development is highly problematic because of the crisis of confidence and the cognitive and mental radicalization that develops between the sides. The situation is especially acute in a conflict between a state actor and a non-state actor, which tends naturally to be a zero-sum conflict. The failure of a political process and a reversion to violence offers new proof that such a conflict is not only irresolvable but does not lend itself even to joint management. The tendency of this type of conflict to become even more extreme after its resolution proves unworkable is liable to aggravate the violence further. The tendency toward unilateral conflict management is likely to produce greater escalation and make joint management extremely difficult.

At the same time, expectancy of resolving a conflict of this kind by military means is so low as to be impossible, given the military and political constraints to which the sides are subject. In this state of affairs, after the sides pay a heavy price in life and property, they are likely to find themselves at a mutual hurting stalemate, which will force them, sooner or later, to reconsider the possibility of moderating and perhaps

also resolving the violent confrontation. The process of transition from unilateral to joint management, with the intention of moderating and terminating the violence, is difficult and in some cases impossible, owing to an array of inhibitors of different types—psychological, institutional, social, political, and above all, lack of trust. To overcome them, the sides sometimes need domestic and external changes, learning processes by leaders (new or old), and third-party assistance, both in creating trust and in providing guarantees for the establishment and maintenance of an agreement to moderate and terminate the violence.

Processes of moderating and terminating a violent confrontation between a state actor and a non-state actor are especially difficult when the non-state actor is nonunitary and no central authority exists to impose its will on the many sub-actors and organizations. Without control by a central actor that can guarantee the moderation and termination of the violent confrontation, it is doubtful whether meaningful change can be achieved in a conflict of this kind. Every effort toward the moderation and termination of the violence must be accompanied by political expectancy that transcends moderation and termination of the confrontation; that is, the possibility of a return to a process of conflict resolution. Clear linkage exists between the possibility of moderating and terminating the violent confrontation and resolving the conflict. Whereas the state actor strives to stabilize and institutionalize the conflict in order to forestall a renewal of violence before talks can begin about conflict resolution, the non-state actor will strive to realize its political goals through a diplomatic settlement and, accordingly, will make the moderation and termination of the violence conditional on an assurance of the conflict's resolution. It follows that the two sides need third-party assistance, both in order to achieve the moderation and termination of the violent confrontation and to obtain guarantees for the resolution of the conflict in the future—if the agreement on ending the violent confrontation continues to be upheld.

## NOTES

1. The question of “ripeness” as a condition for conflict resolution is discussed in I. William Zartman, “Ripeness: The Hurting Stalemate and Beyond,” in Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman (eds.), *International Conflict Resolution after the Cold War* (Washington: National Academy Press, 2000), pp. 225–250.
2. For various definitions and treatments of the concept of conflict management, see Gary Goertz and Patrick M. Regan, “Conflict Management in Enduring Rivalries,” *International Interactions*, vol. 22 (1997), pp. 321–340.

3. On conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy, see Michael S. Lund, "Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampton, and Pamela Aall (eds.), *Managing Global Chaos* (Washington: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996), pp. 3–24; Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, *The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy* (New York: Carnegie, 1998).
4. For an extensive discussion of conflict-management strategies, see Alexander L. George, "The Need for Influence Theory and Actor-Specific Behavioral Models of Adversaries," in Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (eds.), *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and their Strategic Cultures* (Alabama: United States Air Force, Counterproliferation Center, 2002), pp. 271–310. On regional conflict management, see Paul F. Diehl, "Regional Conflict Management: Strategies, Necessary Conditions, and Comparative Effectiveness," in Paul F. Diehl and Joseph Lepgold (eds.), *Regional Conflict Management* (Boulder: Roman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 41–77.
5. George, "The Need for Influence Theory," in Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (eds.), *Know Thy Enemy*; see also Shaul Shai, "The Limited Confrontation and the Concept of Deterrence," in Haggai Golan and Shaul Shai (eds.), *The Limited Confrontation* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 2004) (Hebrew), pp. 165–188.
6. Alexander L. George, David K. Hall, and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Lawrence Freedman (ed.), *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1998).
7. George, "The Need for Influence Theory," in Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (eds.), *Know Thy Enemy*; Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).
8. Daniel Sobelman, *New Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbollah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2003) (Hebrew).
9. Shmuel Gordon, "Deterrence in the Limited Confrontation with the Palestinians," in Haggai Golan and Shaul Shai (eds.), *The Limited Confrontation* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot 2004) (Hebrew), pp. 189–200.
10. Israel's attempt to invoke a strategy like this during the crisis of May–June 1967, which preceded the Six-Day War, failed both because President Nasser viewed it as a sign of weakness and because he believed that he could make significant gains by means of an aggressive policy. A similar attitude was taken by Hezbollah and the Palestinian Authority toward the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.
11. On strategies of reassurance, see Janice G. Stein, "Deterrence and Reassurance," in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern, and Charles Tilly (eds.), *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War: Volume 2* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 8–72.

12. Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War and Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962); A.L. George, P.J. Farley, and A. Dallin (eds.), *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 702–707.
13. For a discussion of the struggle for consciousness in a limited confrontation between a state actor and a non-state actor, mainly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, see Shmuel Nir, “The Nature of the Limited Confrontation,” in Haggai Golan and Shaul Shai (eds.), *The Limited Conflict* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 2004) (Hebrew), pp. 19–44; Miri Eisen, “The Struggle for Consciousness in the Postmodern War: Background and Conceptualization,” in *ibid.*, pp. 344–377.
14. On limited war, see Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959); Alexander L. George, *The Quid Pro Quo Approach to the Study of Limitations in Local War* (Rand D-5690, 1958) Morton Halperin, *Limited War: An Essay on the Development of the Theory and Annotated Bibliography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for International Affairs, Occasional Paper no. 3, May 1962); Morton Halperin, *Limited War in the Nuclear Age* (New York: Wiley, 1963); Henry H. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper, 1957); Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Israel-Egyptian War of Attrition 1969–1970: A Case Study of Limited War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
15. On low-intensity conflict, see Shmuel Nir, “The Nature of the Limited Confrontation,” in Golan and Shai (eds.), *The Limited Confrontation*, pp. 20–44; Ido Hecht, “The Limited Confrontation: Some General Characteristics of a Distinctive Form of Combat,” in Golan and Shai (eds.), *The Limited Confrontation*, pp. 45–68; Avi Kober, “Reflections on Battlefield Decision and Low Intensity Conflict,” *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 22 (2001), pp. 96–120; Avi Kober, “Low Intensity Conflicts: Why the Gap between Theory and Practice,” *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 18 (2002), pp. 15–38.
16. Different approaches to external management of international and internal conflicts are found in Joseph Lepgold, “Regionalism in the Post-Cold War Era: Incentives for Conflict Management,” in Paul F. Diehl and Joseph Lepgold (eds.), *Regional Conflict Management* (Boulder: Roman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 9–39; Diehl, “Regional Conflict Management: Strategies, Necessary Conditions, and Comparative Effectiveness,” in *ibid.*, pp. 41–77; Benjamin Miller, “Conflict Management in the Middle East: Between the ‘Old’ and the ‘New,’” in *ibid.*, pp. 153–208; Paul F. Diehl, Daniel Druckman, and James Wall, “International Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution: A Taxonomic Analysis with Implications,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 42 (1998), pp. 33–55.



17. On the three American initiatives, see Amos Harel and Avi Isacharoff, *The Seventh War* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004) (Hebrew), pp. 126–130, 177–180, 230–232.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 271–273, 301–305.
19. Harkabi, *War and Strategy*, pp. 593–605; Avi Kober, *Military Decision in the Arab-Israeli Wars 1948–1982* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1995) (Hebrew).
20. An example is the American support for the Israeli position after the Six-Day War, according to which Israel would not withdraw from territory it had conquered without a political agreement—in contrast to Washington’s position in 1957, after the Sinai War.
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CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCES OF HEURISTIC  
THOUGHT AND GROUP DYNAMICS  
ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE  
ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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Most of the models that deal with conflict resolution posit basic assumptions concerning the rationality of the parties to the conflict; however, I argue that this assumption is not necessarily borne out by reality. Psychological research shows that human rationality is fundamentally limited. Heuristic thought processes, some of which reflect motivational or affective influences, operate both at the individual and the group level. Processes of group dynamics affect the attitude of a group toward other groups, whether friendly or adversarial. Such processes are almost always triggered spontaneously and intractably, and in most cases unconsciously as well. The upshot is that psychological difficulties are generated that undermine the prospect of conflict resolution.

This chapter describes several of the central processes of heuristic thinking and analyzes how their effect is liable to contribute, on both the Israeli side and the Palestinian side, to the escalation of the conflict between the two sides. True, these are not the major factors obviating the conflict's resolution, but they contribute, beyond the substantive factors, to toughening the parties' attitudes and thereby reducing the possibility of cooperation between them. Finally, a number of conclusions are adduced regarding the moves that are required in order to make the Israeli-Palestinian conflict more amenable to resolution, and a general theoretical conclusion that holds that existing conflict-resolution models do not take the influences of heuristic thought processes and group dynamics sufficiently into account.

## ON CONFLICT AND RATIONALITY

Conflict is a natural component of human social behavior; accordingly, the solution and resolution of conflicts is an essential need. The phenomenon of resolving a conflict in a manner both violent and extreme—by means of war and killing—is natural to mankind and as old as human history. The phenomenon of war is unique to mankind and has no parallel in other species. As human civilization developed, thinkers and statesmen began to study the nature of conflicts and to search for ways to resolve them nonviolently.

The realist school views conflict as an inevitable product of the “state of nature” and emphasizes the use of deterrence and threat of force as means to prevent violence and instability. In contrast, the Kantian school maintains that “state of nature” obstacles can be overcome through the rule of law and cooperation based on shared values. Other approaches, which originate in psychology and sociology, emphasize the use of dialogue to develop empathy and mutual understanding, which can lead to compromises based on mutual trust (Steinberg, 2004).

The two last schools of thought have developed various tools to solve and resolve conflicts, including law, negotiation, arbitration, mediation, and modes of persuasion. Two examples are illustrated below:

One example is the negotiation management model of Fisher and Ury (1983), known as “Getting to Yes.” This model offers negotiators a system of principles, such as: do not bargain over positions, separate the attitude toward people from the attitude toward the problem, focus on interests rather than positions, and invent options that enable both sides to gain.

The second example involves the analysis of social conflict situations by means of game theory and attempting to define conditions of solution for different types of games. An example is the mini-max theorem, which proves that every game has a finite, zero-sum for both players, a rational solution in the form of a mixed strategy or a pure strategy (Newmann and Morgenstern, 1944, cited in Poundstone, 2000).

The above approaches are based on the underlying assumption that the parties to a conflict (or the players in a game) are fundamentally rational. Without elaborating on the concept of rationality, the definition of Dawes (1988) holds that rationality is dependent on the existence of three criteria:

1. The rational person makes decisions based on the totality of the decider’s current resources.

2. The rational person takes into account all the possible consequences of his decisions.
3. If the consequences are uncertain, the rational person assesses the likelihood of their occurrence in a manner that does not violate the laws of normative probability theory.

This definition does not relate to the question of the *essence* of the values (such as their morality) upon which the decider acts, as this belongs to the sphere of ethics and not rationality.

The obvious question that arises is: To what extent do people, especially those in a conflict situation, behave rationally? The point is that if people do not usually behave rationally, the ability to wage conflicts in rational ways is called into serious question.

In what follows, this question is analyzed with special reference to intuitive and heuristic thought processes. Following this general analysis, we examine the question of whether such processes do in fact constitute an obstacle to the rational resolution of conflicts. The implications of this analysis are applied in examining the prospects for the rational management of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## HEURISTIC THOUGHT PROCESSES AND RATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Heuristic thought processes are part of the fashion for intuitive thinking. They are rules of thumb by means of which people cope with necessary assessments and judgments, especially in situations of uncertainty. For the most part there is no awareness of the nature of these processes, so they are not subject to the authority of analytical control.

Simon (1985) found that human behavior does not meet the criteria of normative rationality but is characterized by “bounded rationality,” which finds expression in a variety of choice and preference processes that may or may not be proximate to rational processes. For example, people do not necessarily aspire to achieve the maximum benefit from their decisions; often they are willing to decide in a manner that will achieve a benefit level they will find satisfying, in accordance with the intensity of the psychological need for the achievement in the context of a defined decision problem. Dawes (1988) notes that in many cases the principles of rationality are violated because the decider does not take into account only his present situation but also factors in his past—that is, the question of how he reached his present position. Thus, even though we cannot change the past, we allow it to affect the

future nonrationally (see also the discussion of “sunk cost” below). With regard to the possible results, people are influenced not only by their absolute value but also by how they are perceived and interpreted (see also the discussion of prospect theory, below).

A paramount problem that adversely affects our ability to be rational is our attitude toward uncertainty. In evaluating the prospects of various outcomes occurring, people often violate the laws of normative probability theory, because heuristic modes of thought take over probability judgments. Dawes notes that in many cases behavior is determined by processes such as habit, tradition, emulation of majority behavior, and religious or ideological principles. When these processes determine a mode of action without examining its appropriateness for a given situation, the outcome will very probably not be rational.

The most cogent challenge to the assumption of the rationality of human choice and preference processes lies in the extensive research on the processes of heuristic thinking (Bazerman, 2002; Nisbett and Ross, 1980; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Heuristic thought is a type of intuitive thinking based on the use of rules of thumb that are not amenable to exact explanation or algorithmic formulation. This type of thinking is rapid, but its level of cognitive control is partial or low. Heuristic thought can characterize both individuals and groups. It can reflect the influence of emotions and motivations, as well as the influence of cognitive process that in many cases is not sufficiently adjusted for the precise implementation of the required task. Heuristic thought is discussed at length in the professional literature. Here, only a brief description of several heuristic processes, which will serve us in analyzing the processes of conflict management is given, and references are made to heuristic processes that have an effect at the individual level and to others that have an effect at the level of group-team processes.

## NAÏVE REALISM

The tendency to overevaluate our perceptions of objective observations as reflecting objective reality, is called “naïve realism.” As a result of this tendency, people believe that their perception of reality is correct and is unaffected by inclinations, beliefs, and so forth. People tend to believe that if someone else’s viewpoint does not match theirs, it is because the other person has been exposed to different information or is irrational or is biased in his interpretation of the facts because of ideology, personal interests, and so on. Naïve realism leads

people to believe that others, who are rational and are exposed to information identical to theirs, should espouse attitudes that are identical to theirs (Robinson et al., 1995).

One effect deriving from naïve realism is that of the *false consensus* (Deutsch, 1989). When people make a particular decision in the light of a dilemma, they believe that others, too, will solve the dilemma in a similar manner. As a result of these two effects, people ascribe attributes of laziness, handicap, illogic, and so on to those who do not think as they do. The upshot is attempts to persuade the Other “to see the world as I do,” on the one hand, and deeper entrenchment in one’s existing positions, on the other hand.

### THE AFFECT HEURISTIC

Feeling influences our perception of reality and thus also processes of judgment and decision-making. This is because the world is represented in our mind by images that are linked to positive or negative feelings. This is the basis for what Finucane et al. (2000) categorized as the “affect heuristic.” In their research they showed that feelings that arise when decisions are made affect the decision-making process and the perception of the risk level and the utility level in the decision situation. A positive feeling will enhance the value of the perceived benefit and reduce the perceived risk level, a negative feeling will have the opposite effect.

### HEURISTICS THAT AFFECT INFORMATION ABSORPTION

People are inherently conservative in their opinions and do not tend to change them easily. For an opinion to change, new information needs to be absorbed and processed in our mind. However, traits that do not necessarily reflect the value of the information influence its prospects of being absorbed and exerting an influence. An example, the influence of the *information vividness*, is discussed below. The more concrete information is, and the easier it is to forge plastic images from it, the more likely it is to be absorbed and encoded well in the memory. Thus, the television image of a crying child or a wounded soldier can leave a far more powerful impression than the presentation of an abstract, complex argument. When we have to make a judgment, we resort to the *availability heuristic* (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974): available information, which can be extracted easily from the memory, will influence judgment more than information

that is difficult to extract from the memory. Thus, an item of information that was concrete and vivid when absorbed is more likely to influence judgment than a well-grounded but abstract explanation.

### JUDGING THE VALUE OF SITUATIONS AND OUTCOMES: PROSPECT THEORY

Special importance is attached to the implications of *prospect theory* (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), which describes the heuristic processes that influence how we determine the value of the benefit that is attributed to a given situation or outcome. The prospect curve is different from the benefit curve—stems from the theory of rational benefit—and it explains processes that reflect “bounded rationality.” Some of the basic principles of the theory are:

1. Every situation is interpreted as one of potential gain or loss (by means of processes known as editing or framing) in relation to a reference point that represents the decider’s present situation.
2. In accordance with the framing of the situation, the values of possible outcomes are analyzed according to the prospect curve in a region of gain or in a region of loss.
3. All the values are determined according to their distance from the reference point that reflects the decider’s present situation.
4. The prospect curve in the region of potential gain (to the right of the present reference point) is less steep than the curve in the region of potential loss (to the left of the reference point). The implication is that the benefit that is attached to the value of any objective gain is relatively less than the negative benefit that is attached to the value of a loss that is identical in its absolute value to the former. In other words, a loss “hurts” relatively more than the pleasure generated by parallel gain.
5. The motivation of people is to avert risks in the sphere of potential gains and to take risks in the sphere of potential losses. In other words, people tend to be conservative about decisions that are liable to adversely affect possible perceived gains but are willing to take risks in order to try to minimize possible losses, even when the possibility exists that the final outcome will be worse.
6. As for probabilities, people do not take into account objective values of probability but translate them into subjective values by overweighting low probability values and deficient values into moderate probability values. In contrast, probability values that are perceived to reflect certainty (values in the areas of 1.00) are

overweighted, reflecting the psychological comfort of certainty as opposed to the feeling of pressure and unpleasantness caused by a situation of uncertainty.

Two heuristics of great relevance to conflict resolution that can be explained by the principles of prospect theory are:

1. *Endowment Effect*—Reflects the ascription of a benefit value that is higher than the value of the objective benefit to an object that is in our possession, or which we received in a situation in which the danger of losing it exists. The explanation for this lies in the framing of the situation, as a situation of loss, relative to the present situation and as a result of which the judgment of the object's benefit value is made according to the prospect curve in the loss region. This brings about negative benefit that is higher than the positive benefit of handing over the object or even selling it at a realistic price.

2. *Sunk Cost*—Reflects behavior showing readiness to invest at a high risk level, in order to try to prevent losses. This readiness exists even if an objective analysis shows that a greater gain can be expected from putting a stop to the investment, whose retention will probably only cause more losses to be incurred. A related process is *escalation of commitment*, in which the decision-maker continues to act as he did in the past, even though the previous actions failed and/or caused losses. A rational analysis at this juncture, if free of the influences of the past, would show that according to the values of the decider himself, it was not worthwhile to continue on the path of the previous action. The additional investment in this situation is called a "sunk cost," as it refers to cost for an investment that has already been made and because of which losses (financial or other) were incurred.

These effects can be explained by means of prospect theory, in that people are ready to take risks in order to try to prevent losses, even when the outcome can be an even bigger loss. Studies have shown that those who feel responsibility for the negative outcomes are those who tend to demonstrate a high level of escalation of commitment (Brockner and Rubin, 1985).

## MENTAL ACCOUNTING

Thaler (1999), drawing on prospect theory, hypothesized that people choose a mode of action based on "mental accounting" of pleasure and suffering. Pleasure reflects the perception of a situation as a gain, whereas



suffering reflects a loss perception. The weight attributed to loss is relatively higher than that attributed to gain. Consequently, people tend to avoid loss situations as far as possible and are ready to continue taking nonrational actions in order to avoid it, almost at any price.

## TEAM HEURISTICS

1. *Minimal Group Effect*—Group affiliation is a critically important human need. According to social identity theory, people identify with the in-group to which they belong. This situation is achieved relatively easily, for example, by random division and random affiliation of people with groups. Research shows that when the in-group achieves good results, the group's members attribute them to internal factors, such as capability. In contrast, negative results of the in-group are attributed to external and situational causes. The situation changes in relation to out-groups: even good results of out-groups will usually be attributed to external and situational factors. In general, the in-group is perceived by its members as being involved more in positive than in negative activity, as compared to out-groups (Gillian, 1994).

2. *Groupthink*—This is a phenomenon that integrates heuristic thought with processes of group dynamics. It was identified by Janis (1972) in the wake of a study of the decision-making processes at U.S. Naval headquarters in the Pacific that preceded the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Some of the main characteristics of “groupthink” are:

- A strong belief by the group's members in their rightness and in the morality of their actions (this is explained by the minimal group effect).
- A stereotypical outlook that debases the image of the rival (the out-group).
- A feeling of confidence in the superiority of the in-group over the out-group.
- Use of mechanisms (such as censorship) to block the penetration and influence of information that contradicts the perceptions of the in-group.

3. *Narrowing the Information Space*—A process that reflects the minimal group effect and the dynamics of groupthink is that of

the narrowing of the information space, to which the members of the group are exposed. The group is effectively exposed only to internal information whose source lies in the opinion leaders of the group itself. As a result, the ability to think critically is diminished (Bar-Tal, 2004). The phenomenon is exacerbated when a group feels threatened: there is a growing tendency to reject all external criticism.

### HEURISTIC THOUGHT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON DECISION-MAKERS

In combination, the team heuristics, as described above, make it difficult for groups to fashion a true picture of rival groups and hamper processes of rapprochement. It should be noted that these processes can characterize both broad in-groups, such as a national group, and small teams, such as teams at the political or military decision-making level.

Jervis (1968) pointed to distorted perceptions that influence the way decision-makers interpret information about the world, in consequence of which they are liable to make biased decisions. Some of the misperceptions he noted are the following:

- Decision-makers tend to adjust the information they absorb to theories and images they already possess.
- Decision-makers' interpretation of data is not influenced solely by the structure of their consciousness or by their theories and images, but also by what is occupying them when the information is received. This notion can be linked to the affect heuristic, according to which the nature of the emotions that arise within decision-makers at the time they receive the information will influence its interpretation.
- It is difficult for a decision-maker to believe that another views him as a threat and still more difficult for him to believe that matters he considers important are of no import to others. This idea can be linked to the naïve realism heuristic and to groupthink.

Taken together, the phenomena described above can cause attachment to a political approach based on underlying assumptions that do not necessarily reflect the true political and military situation. Harkabi (1990, p. 555) termed this "psychological lock-in."

## HEURISTIC THOUGHT AND GROUP DYNAMICS AS OBSTACLES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The successful resolution of a conflict, other than by violently vanquishing the adversary, requires the existence of some of the following conditions (not a complete list):

- The creation of trust by each side in the sincerity of the other side's intentions.
- A feeling of reciprocity; reciprocity is also the basic factor that influences human behavior, since in social interaction the readiness of one side to give to the other depends on what the second side is ready to give the first. Thus, the perception of reciprocity is instrumental in determining whether a situation of competition or of cooperation is created (Brehm and Kassir, 1990).
- Each side must be capable of recognizing and understanding the interests and utilities of the other side and be capable of separating them from its own interests and utilities.
- The ability to neutralize the influence of the residues of the past is needed, with the focus being on resolving the current problem, which underlies the conflict.
- Both sides in the conflict must possess the ability to forge a common, uniform world picture (though this does not oblige mutual agreement) in order to enable effective communication between them.

Heuristic thought processes pose a threat to the successful resolution of conflicts by reducing the prospects for the emergence of the conditions just cited.

Because statesmen and policymakers base their decisions not on objective reality but on the basis of reality as it is represented in their mind, it is doubtful that the parties to a conflict will in fact succeed in forging a common, uniform world picture. The subjective world picture espoused by each side will necessarily be biased according to its system of beliefs and ideology and influenced by group identity processes. The absorption of new information will also have a biasing effect on the updating of the situation appraisal, because the interpretation of the new information will be influenced by groupthink processes and by the feelings that arise when the information is received. Because specific information is probably accompanied by conflicting feelings on the part of the decision-makers on each side, an opposite and conflicting interpretation will emerge on each side,

according to the affect heuristic. In addition, the interpretation of the information and the situation through conflicting frames of gain and loss on each side, will bring about a situation in which the analysis of the cost and utility values that are linked to every proposal for resolving the conflict will be carried out differently by each side (in a different region of the prospect curve).

We should remember also that the feeling that arises associatively in the light of particular information reflects past residues as well, thus hindering the emergence of a problem-solving perspective that focuses on the present situation *per se*. Other influences of the past, in the form of the sunk cost bias and escalation of commitment, only aggravate this difficulty. The naïve realism bias is liable to cause each side to entrench itself in its positions, making it difficult to conduct an effective dialogue and for each side to understand the interests, utilities, and orders of preference of the other side.

When these elements come into play, mutual trust and the feeling of reciprocity are liable to be adversely affected, leading in turn to the creation of a competitive climate and lessen the likelihood of cooperation. The result is liable to be the creation of a vicious cycle: it has been found that people who are in a competitive situation tend to perceive the Other as competitive, too, which may result in the escalation of the conflict (Sternberg and Dobson, 1987).

## EXAMPLES OF HEURISTIC THOUGHT: THE ISRAELI SIDE

### Attitude toward the “Right of Return”

Realization of the “right of return” is a cardinal Palestinian demand as part of an agreement to resolve the conflict with Israel. In a telephone poll conducted in March 2002 among a representative sample of the adult Jewish population in Israel (Zakay et al., 2003), respondents were asked, “In your opinion, is a true permanent settlement between the Israelis and the Palestinians possible without a mutually acceptable solution being found for the question of the right of return?” Only 29 percent of the respondents said that this was possible in large measure or in very large measure. The respondents were also asked to report on the first thought that came to mind upon hearing the term “right of return.” The absolute majority of the respondents, espousing right wing and left wing views alike, cited highly negative thoughts, such as “destruction of the Jewish state,” “national disaster,” “slaughter of the Jews,” and even “Holocaust.” Although the emotional

intensity of the responses decreased commensurate with higher age and higher income, and was lower among secular than religious people and among center and left wing voters than among right wing voters, overall the responses of all sections of the population bore a negative emotional intensity. Only 7.7 percent reported positive thoughts of any kind in this connection.

The results of the survey show that the very term “right of return” generates very deep negative feelings, together with an awareness that no agreement is possible if this issue is not resolved. It can be conjectured that when the subject arises in negotiations the highly charged feelings will add their impact (through the affect heuristic) to the genuine objective difficulty the problem entails. It is possible that the intensity of the negative feelings will make the perceived risk even more extreme, thus further reducing the likelihood of finding a solution.

### **Impact of Holocaust Remembrance**

The Holocaust created deep emotional residues at all levels of consciousness, including the personal and collective unconscious of the Jewish people. These emotional residues surface in different contexts and in some cases deliberate use is made of them. For example, according to a newspaper report,<sup>1</sup> the action committee against the disengagement plan (a body that operated in the Likud ahead of the party’s internal referendum about the plan) had the idea of publishing a full-page ad in the newspaper *Ma’ariv* on Holocaust Remembrance Day, which would declare “Expulsion of Jews—never again,” against a background of the blue stripes of the Israeli flag and the image of a memorial candle. In the end, the ad appeared without the text that created an association between the Holocaust and the disengagement plan. Another example of the powerful impact of the remembrance of the Holocaust is a statement by the Chief Education Officer of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that “every officer in the IDF must see himself as a survivor of Auschwitz”—both to ensure that he acts morally and that there will never be another Holocaust.<sup>2</sup>

Manifestly, the lessons of the Holocaust are relevant and need to be studied and invoked in the proper contexts. However, in inappropriate settings, indirect associative influences of emotions related to the Holocaust are liable to cause heuristic effects beyond any substantive requirement.

### **Ties to the Past and to National Myths**

As noted above, one of the problems that impede the use of rational considerations in conflict situations is the intensification of influences from the past. This phenomenon is flagrant in both parties to the conflict, the Israelis and the Palestinians alike.

In the Israeli case, the justification for establishing settlements and for opposing their evacuation can be ascribed to the historical-religious significance that resides in settlement locations. An example is the justification for establishing the Elon Moreh settlement, near Nablus, as described on the Internet site of the Yesha Council of settlements.<sup>3</sup> The site refers to the biblical description of Nablus (Shechem) as having been the first point of encounter of the nation and its forefathers with their land and notes that the patriarch Abraham, in coming to the Land of Israel in the wake of a divine imperative, passed through Elon Moreh. One of the grounds cited (on the Hebrew site) to justify the creation of the settlement is “to eliminate the disgrace of preventing Jewish settlement throughout an entire region which is so deeply implanted in our national memory.”

### **Perception of the Degree of Morality in Combating Terrorism**

A group's belief in the rightness of its path and its actions is an important element in forging group cohesiveness in the face of external threat (Bar-Tal, 2004). Similarly, a strong belief by the group's members in the morality of its actions is also a pronounced characteristic of the dynamics of groupthink. The Israeli society found itself caught up in a harsh struggle against hostilities perpetrated in the armed intifada. The justness of the combat overall is not in doubt. However, in some cases allegations were made and questions raised about the degree of morality entailed in certain isolated cases, when innocent Palestinians were killed or wounded in IDF operations. In some cases, the Israeli response to such allegations reflected the dynamics described above. An example is the reaction by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to a charge that the IDF was using the “human shield” procedure (known in Hebrew as the “neighbor procedure”).<sup>4</sup> Sharon, who was speaking to members of the Naval Commando unit, stated that “the fighters of the IDF are the most moral of all.”<sup>5</sup>

Another example is an article published by Yadlin and Kasher (2003), entitled “Moral combat against terrorism.” The authors examine the

issue in depth and fairly. At the same time, they arrive at the following sweeping conclusion: “In the case of an IDF operational activity that was planned properly and executed properly, and was successful from the aspect of the targeted assassination, but unintentionally inflicted casualties on the target’s human surroundings, we all feel very bad as human beings, but at the same time *we do not feel guilty—not of violating morality, not of violating ethics, not of violating the law of the land and not of violating international law*” (pp. 9–10; my emphasis). The text shows a comprehensive rejection of a concept of immorality or even of a feeling of guilt. In this connection, Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) note that generally both sides to a violent conflict feel that their actions are fundamentally moral, as a result of which no personal or collective experience of guilt feelings develops toward the other side (Cohen, 2001).

### **Psychological Implication of the Terms “Uprooting” and “Evacuation”**

There is understanding among those who are engaged in trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that an agreed solution will entail the evacuation of settlements on a certain scale. One of the factors that render it difficult for large sections of the Israeli public to accept this is the psychological difficulty entailed in apprehending terms such as “uprooting” or “evacuation.” The implication is of the loss of something that is in the loser’s possession. According to prospect theory and the endowment effect, which were described earlier, this perceived meaning of the event causes the situation to be interpreted as one of loss, and the analysis of the alternative will thus be made according to the loss region of the prospect curve. Consequently, the magnitude of the negative utility will be greater relative to the magnitude of the positive utility that might be associated with positive contributions of an agreement that entails the evacuation of settlements. This implication also automatically activates the affect heuristic, which in the wake of feelings of loss will heighten the perception of risk and diminish the level of perceived utility. In general, graphic, concrete images have a greater impact than rational or abstract arguments—a result of the availability heuristic, as explained above. For example, an image such as “a synagogue being turned into a mosque in the wake of a settlement’s evacuation” can exert a more powerful influence than an abstract explanation of utility or benefit, such as greater economic growth thanks to the evacuation.<sup>6</sup> The psychological effects of the processes described above may be among the reasons for the settlers’ heightened opposition to the disengagement plan.

## EXAMPLES OF HEURISTIC THOUGHT: THE PALESTINIAN SIDE

### Who is Winning the Confrontation?

Many people are puzzled by the attitudes of the Palestinian society in the light of the severe economic blows and the relatively large number of casualties the Palestinians have suffered as a result of the second intifada. A poll conducted by Shikaki and Shamir (2004) among a representative sample of the adult Palestinian population in the territories (the poll was conducted in June 2004) found that 77 percent of the Palestinians were concerned about their personal security and their family's security. At the same time, 69 percent of the respondents expressed the belief that they had succeeded in achieving national and political goals through the intifada that they had not achieved through negotiations. Forty percent were convinced that the Palestinians were the winning side in the intifada, as against 16 percent who thought Israel was the winner (it is also noteworthy that 79 percent of the Palestinians supported a mutual cease-fire).

In part, the explanation for the fact that many Palestinians feel that they are the victorious side may lie in psychological processes and heuristic thinking, which determine how information is interpreted. For example, studies found that in both the Second World War and in the Vietnam War massive aerial bombing actually generated a rise in morale and in-group cohesiveness among the target population (Brehm and Kassin, 1990). It is clear that as long as the majority of the Palestinians believe that the gains they are reaping from the intifada outweigh the losses, no significant internal pressure will arise to resolve the conflict.

In this context, it appears that whether Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), the new Palestinian leader, will succeed in putting an end to the armed intifada depends in large measure on his ability to bring about a change in the perceived cost-benefit relations that the Palestinian society attributes to the intifada.

### Use of Sacred Language and Terminology

The Palestinian side connects various events with terms that associatively produce negative emotional baggage within individuals and groups. A blatant example is the use of the term *Naqba*, meaning "calamity" to describe what happened to the Palestinians in the aftermath of the 1948 war. Another example is the name given to the 2000–2004 intifada—"Al-Aqsa Intifada"—in order to create a direct



emotional connection between the uprising and a Muslim holy place. Invoking such terms brings into play heuristics such as the affect heuristic, creating an emotional context that impedes a problem-solving approach.

In an article written on the occasion of the death of Yasser Arafat, Beyer (2004) notes that the Palestinian demands for East Jerusalem to become the capital of the Palestinian state and for the realization of the right of return were always presented as “sacred demands,” thus virtually ruling out any possible flexibility in connection with them.

### **Ties to the Past and to National Myths**

The influence of the past is manifest in the Palestinians’ attitude toward possibilities of resolving controversial issues. As an example, the description given by Gilad Sher (2001) of Arafat’s approach to the issue of the Temple Mount is cited, in a meeting held between the Palestinian leader and Shlomo Ben-Ami in Nablus on June 25, 2000. Ben-Ami put forward a possible direction for a solution to the problem, and Arafat replied, “Al-Quds [Jerusalem] is relevant for Arabs, for the Vatican, for Christians, and for Muslims. I would remind you of [Shimon] Peres’s letter to [Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jørgen] Holst and of the Charter of Umar” (p. 140).<sup>7</sup>

This example illustrates how achieving a solution in negotiations is made more difficult and complicated when an historical event is invoked. Even if the event is mentioned as a political message, it automatically generates associative emotional baggage, further compounding the substantive difficulties and hindering a problem-solving approach involving a discussion of the present problem *per se*.

### **View of the Other as Part of a Large, Hostile Group**

One manifestation of the processes emanating from the “minimal group effect” is that clear and sharp psychological boundaries are placed between the members of one’s group (“us”) and rival groups (“them”). One way in which these boundaries are demarcated is by including the rival group as part of a large, hostile group.

A salient example of this propensity is the broad definition of the “axis of evil,” the term used by U.S. President George Bush after the events of September 11, 2001, to describe “regimes that sponsor terror.”

A similar process is visible among the Palestinians when they include Israel within the large group of “Western colonialists” and, more specifically, draw an analogy between the Israelis and the

Crusaders, who tried to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslims in the Middle Ages. Some Palestinians refer to the Zionists as “new Crusaders” who are out to seize control of the heart of the Arab world (Ron, 2004). Of course, a perception of the Zionists as Crusaders dovetails with a viewpoint that ties the conflict to the past and to national myths: the metaphor also reflects the hope that the Zionists will come to the same end as the Crusaders, who were defeated at the battle of the Horns of Hittin (1187) by Salah a-Din. Michael (2003) notes that the historical metaphor of the Crusaders best fits the worldview of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, both because of their perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a religious prism, like the conflict with the Crusaders, and because of the duration of the struggle—about 200 years.

## DYNAMICS OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATIONS

### “Illusion of Control” and “Naïve Optimism”

A possible effect of heuristics on the dynamics of negotiations is exemplified by means of two heuristics that have motivational sources: the “illusion of control” (Langer, 1975) and “naïve optimism” (Zakay, 1996). The “illusion of control” is defined as the ascription of the probability of a personal favorable outcome that is higher than the objective probability warrants. The illusion of control reduces the level of perceived risk in a given situation and increases the feeling of confidence about the rightness of a particular course of action. Thus, the ability to cope psychologically with situations of threat and danger is enhanced.

An example is the behavior models developed by the Israeli population in the light of the danger of terrorist attacks. A survey conducted by Klar et al. (2002) among a representative sample of the adult Israeli population examined the question, “How do the Israelis perceive the terrorist threat and what modes of behavior have they adopted to cope with it?” Most of the respondents reported adopting behaviors that gave them the feeling they were lessening the danger of becoming the victim of a terrorist attack (e.g., by shopping at malls on days and at times that were perceived as safer). What is interesting in connection with the present discussion is that the majority of these respondents also understood that the true contribution of these behaviors to improving their safety was dubious. This, then, is an example of the adoption of behavior that has no true justification on

the basis of an objective rational analysis; its true value lies in increasing the subjective feeling of security. It is possible that the illusion of control, as manifested in the above example, contributed positively to the staying power shown by the Israeli society in the light of the suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism.

“Naïve optimism” is characterized by an individual’s ascription to himself of higher probabilities of positive outcomes than those he ascribes to others, and lower probabilities of negative outcomes as compared with others. This may provide part of the explanation for the finding that was reported earlier: that many Palestinians feel that the intifada is working in their favor.

These examples show that heuristic thought can have positive outcomes in terms of each side’s viewpoint of itself. However, from the perspective of conflict resolution, the influence of these two heuristics can in fact contribute to a hardening of attitudes, because of an unrealistic perception of the expected outcomes of the conflict’s continuation and an inaccurate perception of the risk level facing each side as a result.

### **Reactive Devaluation**

The phenomenon of “reactive devaluation” (RD) is defined as the devaluation of a compromise offer or deal put forward in a negotiation, only because of the knowledge that the offer is being made by “the other side” and not because of its substantive content (Ross, 1995). RD is thus a serious psychological barrier on the road to conflict resolution and successful negotiation management (Kahneman and Tversky, 1995).

Ma’oz et al. (2002) conducted a study that demonstrates the highly negative effect RD has on attempts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Within the framework of three experiments, it was found that Israeli Jews or American Jews who support Israel viewed a proposed solution that was submitted for their perusal as detrimental to Israel when it was presented as originating with the Palestinians, but objected far less when the same proposal was presented as being of Israeli origin. A similar process was found among Israeli Arabs in connection with a proposed solution that was presented as originating with the Israeli government.

### **Factors Affecting Conflict Escalation**

All of the above attests to the fact that the processes of heuristic thought and group dynamics that characterize both sides to the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict help cause the conflict's escalation, generate dialogue difficulties between the sides, and have a certain adverse effect on the prospects of resolving the conflict (This analysis should not be construed as playing down the importance of other substantive factors, which are not discussed here.) (Zakay, 1997).

The professional literature describes five factors that influence conflict escalation and how extreme the escalation will be (Brehm and Kassir, 1990). They are group context, available resources, needs of the individuals within the groups involved in the conflict, structural changes within the adversarial groups, and entrapment in failed courses of action. Each factor is discussed briefly.

1. *Group Context*—Research shows (McCallum et al., 1985) that a conflict between groups is more likely to escalate than a conflict between individuals. The reason is that groups are comparatively more competitive and less inclined to cooperate than individuals. This is due to group processes, which are in large measure nourished by heuristic thought processes, such as the minimal group effect and groupthink. It has also been found that groups are likely to assume (in specified conditions) a higher risk level than each of the individuals within the group (the “risk bias” phenomenon). The result is the consolidation of a conception within every group and subsequent distortions in the interpretation of objective information, in a manner that is intended to adjust it to the existing conception. These processes are reinforced further by the *false consensus* effect (Kerr et al., 1996).

It is clear, that the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation is a conflict between two national groups that are mutually apprehensive. A cultural severance and to a large extent a communications severance as well exists between the two groups. A situation of this kind creates a suitable infrastructure for the emergence of the group context described above.

2. *The Resources Factor*—The greater the available resources of the groups involved in a conflict—such as economic, social, and time resources—the more likely it is that the conflict will escalate (Martin, 1986). With regard to the Israeli society, it appears that its available economic and social resources do not constitute a serious limitation that might generate immediate pressure to end the conflict. As for the time resource, it is in large measure a matter of perception. The one resource that the Jewish society apparently perceives as a threat is that of demography, regarding which it lacks available time resources. It is thus not surprising that one of the reasons cited for the disengagement plan and the construction of the security fence is the demographic threat.

As for the Palestinian society, the lower classes are in dire economic straits, but because of the social-governmental structure of this society it is sufficient for the ruling classes to have available financial resources for the conflict to continue. In terms of social resources, the majority of the Palestinians, as reported earlier, believe that their side is winning the conflict, so in their perception the time resource is working in their favor.

In conclusion, from the standpoint of the resources factor, there appears to be nothing significant to prevent both sides from carrying on the conflict.

3. *Needs of the Individuals*—The more the individuals that make up the groups are characterized as competitive and as possessing a need for power, the greater the likelihood that the conflict will escalate. In the context of large national groups, such as the Israelis and the Palestinians, it is difficult to characterize the needs of the individuals involved in a manner enabling a valid conclusion to be drawn, and additional research is needed on this subject.

4. *Structural Changes within the Adversarial Groups*—The more the protracted conflict reinforces extreme attitudes and extreme currents within each group, at the expense of more moderate attitudes, conceptions, and currents, the more intense the mutual hostility will become and the likelihood of escalation increase (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986). Such a process appears to be under way on the Palestinian side. The findings of the survey by Shikaki and Shamir (2004) confirm the tendency toward a strengthening of the Islamist organizations in the territories and, concomitantly, the weakening of Fatah. Thus, 28 percent of the Palestinians stated that in a fair election they would support Hamas and Islamic Jihad candidates, as compared with 26 percent who said they would support Fatah.

On the Israeli side, the voting trend in the last elections (January 2003) indicated a trend toward the strengthening of the right wing bloc at the expense of the center left bloc.

It is possible that opposite trends are beginning to appear on both sides. Indications of this can be seen in the election of Abu Mazen as the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority after Arafat's death, and in the change in the map of political support for the disengagement plan that is being led by the prime minister and leader of the Likud, Ariel Sharon.

The strengthening of the tendency toward structural changes of these kinds can help promote the political process between Israel and the Palestinians. The various types of heuristic thought processes, as described above, have a possible effect on such tendencies.

5. *Entrapment*—Escalation in a conflict between groups is heightened when both of them, or one of them, have a greater commitment to the continuation of actions that do not contribute to the conflict's resolution, because of a need to justify past investments in it and an unwillingness to admit to the wrongness of those actions. Brockner and Rubin (1985) cite an example from the First World War, which at a certain stage reached a stalemate in which neither side could vanquish the other. Because the parties to the conflict were unable to admit that millions of people had been killed in vain, millions of soldiers were sent into the killing fields (ultimately the war was decided by the intervention of the United States). As noted above, psychologically the entrapment process is explained by the heuristics of "sunk cost" and "escalation of commitment" and by prospect theory.

Signs of entrapment are identifiable on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: on the Israeli side, the difficulty of evacuating settlements, even isolated settlements and those located in areas of no security importance; and on the Palestinian side, an insistence on pursuing courses of action whose damage to the Palestinian society itself is greater than their benefits. (It is possible that in the wake of the disengagement process and the election of Abu Mazen as Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, a change is taking place in the intensity of Palestinian entrapment, though these are no more than incipient signs.)

Overall, an analysis of the five factors cited indicates that from the point of view of the group context, the available resources, and the structural changes in the adversarial groups, the tendency is toward the conflict's escalation and greater obstacles to its resolution. Heuristic thought processes are contributing to heightened distortions in each side's perception of the other, both at the level of policymakers and at the individual level as well. The result is the creation of a vicious cycle in which extreme tendencies are strengthened, behavior driven by "sunk cost," greater influence of the residues of the past, and a diminished ability to implement a problem-solving approach with reference to the present situation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Many examples, at both the micro and macro level, show that the requirements and characteristics of a successful conflict-resolution process are not yet sufficiently defined, in terms of research and application alike (Steinberg, 2004). The Oslo accord of 1993 seemed to

provide support for the Kantian approach to conflict resolution. However, the agreement's collapse seemed to affirm precisely the realist approach. In any event, it needs to be borne in mind that successful conflict resolution must meet the long-term test and cannot be gauged immediately. An interesting historical example, which represents the realist approach, is that in the 1950s the mathematician John von Neumann, the developer of game theory, and the mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell, who was a pacifist, supported the view that the United States should issue an ultimatum to the Soviet Union to dismantle its nuclear weapons—and, if it failed to comply, to launch a preventive nuclear attack, even without provocation by the Soviets. Their assumption was that a nuclear confrontation was inevitable because of the existence of two nuclear superpowers (Poundstone, 2000).

What, then, can promote the resolution of a conflict? Studies show that propaganda and persuasion aimed at altering the attitudes of the members of one group toward another are ineffective (Brehm and Kassir, 1990). The processes of heuristic thought will make it very difficult to change attitudes by means of persuasion, especially in such a polarized situation as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A tactic that has been found to be more effective is success in achieving common goals that are accepted by both groups and require a degree of cooperation (Worchel, 1986). It seems unlikely that this is achievable in the near future in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even so, it is of interest to note that in a few secondary areas (such as certain farming spheres) in which common goals exist, limited Israeli-Palestinian cooperation has continued despite the intifada (Sadan, 2004).

The analysis put forward thus far indicates that processes of group dynamics and heuristic thought diminish the prospects of finding a point of equilibrium that will be accepted—both at the level of individuals and of policymakers—by all those involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fact that these processes are intractable, nonvolitional, and unconscious—so much so that it is difficult to annul their effect even by means of “debiasing”—makes coping with them almost impossible. It is not our intention to argue that heuristic thought processes and group dynamics are exclusive, or even central, in terms of their influence on the prospects for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is no doubt that this is an inherently harsh conflict, which can be characterized as a zero-sum game. The contention is that the processes that were analyzed here compound the basic difficulty and therefore need to be addressed.

It is possible that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict bears a resemblance to “the prisoner’s dilemma,” in which the two sides, if they cooperate, can together achieve greater mutual benefit than through any other strategy, though for such cooperation to occur each side must place its trust in the other and be certain that this trust will not be betrayed. In a situation of mistrust, both sides will tend to choose a competitive strategy, which paradoxically is also the rational solution of the game, from the point of view of the personal benefit of each side (Poundstone, 2000).

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, too, the deep mistrust is apparently one of the paramount factors preventing progress toward the conflict’s resolution. However, trust, too, is largely a matter of perception, and therefore heuristic thought processes will be very influential in terms of whether the trust will increase or fade. The second intifada, which began after the failure of the second Camp David meeting, caused the Israeli side to lose trust in the Palestinian side.

In the view of the author, the efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must continue and the aspiration to achieve its resolution must not be allowed to wane because of the difficulties described above and many other difficulties not covered in this analysis. At the same time, it is necessary to adopt a strategy and viewpoint that takes into account the influence of heuristic thought processes and group dynamics. The following are several conclusions that derive from this approach:

- The conflict management processes will likely require far more time. Accordingly, it is necessary to adopt a strategy that strives to progress toward the conflict’s resolution through its correct management, in a manner that reduces the friction between the sides as much as possible. Reducing the friction, with the mediation of heuristic thought processes, may be able to help reduce the level of hostility between the two societies. Thus, for example, a decline in the scale of human losses on the two sides may, over time, diminish the power of the negative emotions that come into play, a development that might have the effect of moderating negative influences stemming from the affect heuristic.
- A second conclusion is that the resolution of the conflict will not likely come about as a result of processes originating solely in the Israeli society and the Palestinian society. As the analysis above shows, the two societies are locked into their attitudes and feelings and there is little chance of a conceptual and emotional breakthrough. This conclusion applies as well to an approach of direct



- negotiations between the sides. It follows that anyone who genuinely wishes to resolve the conflict needs to draw on methods that have proved effective in similar situations. In the main, this refers to mediation, provided the mediators are perceived to be fair and neutral and of course accepted by both sides (Welton and Pruitt, 1987). This is not a magic solution but a process with the goal of gradually drawing the two sides closer together and raising the level of trust to a point at which they might be able to enter into direct negotiations.
- The conflict's management in this period needs to ensure the construction of an appropriate psychological infrastructure on both sides. Accordingly, the conflict's management must also refer to the social-psychological aspect, which must be an important element in whatever strategy is decided upon. A possible example of the correct use of psychological insights is the correct choice of terms to describe various processes—terms whose associative emotional baggage is positive or neutral, not negative (see the discussion above of the terms “uprooting” and “evacuation”).
  - From the general research and theoretical viewpoints, it would appear to be necessary to develop appropriate conflict-resolution models that are not based naïvely on the assumption of the rationality of the parties to the conflict and that take into account the processes of heuristic thought and group dynamics.

## NOTES

1. *Haaretz*, April 21, 2004.
2. Broadcast on Israel Radio's Midday News Magazine, December 6, 2004.
3. See [www.shechem.org/elon-moreh/eindex.html](http://www.shechem.org/elon-moreh/eindex.html) and [www.moetzetyesha.co.il/yeshuvim.asp?id=77](http://www.moetzetyesha.co.il/yeshuvim.asp?id=77)
4. This refers to the use of Palestinian civilians during operations to capture terrorists.
5. Excerpt from a speech that was broadcast on the 5 p.m. news on Israel Radio, December 8, 2004.
6. The example is taken from a television debate that was broadcast on the eve of the vote in the Likud about the disengagement plan. Binyamin Ze'ev Begin cited the example about the synagogue becoming a mosque, and Ehud Olmert put forward arguments such as economic growth.
7. The “Charter of Umar” was an agreement signed in Jerusalem in 638 CE between the Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, the conqueror of Palestine, and the Byzantine Patriarch Sophronius detailing the terms of the Byzantine Christians' surrender to the Muslims. Among other points, the agreement prohibited Jews from living in Jerusalem.

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## CHAPTER 3

# THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN VIOLENT CONFRONTATION: AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE

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After long years of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in the terminology of international conflict studies can be described as intractable and was marked by a multitude of violent acts—peaking in the Lebanon War (1982) and the intifada during 1987–1993—Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) decided to launch a political process aimed at resolving the conflict. This process was a breakthrough that was made possible largely in the wake of the emergence of a new Israeli conception holding that it was possible, under certain conditions, to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### THE ISRAELI CONCEPTION AND THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF ISRAELI POLICY IN RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS, 1993–2000

The new conception that was developed at the political level under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and of the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, was fundamentally revolutionary and at odds with the conventional Israeli conception, which maintained that the conflict was not conducive to resolution but only to management, and even that mainly by violence. The new conception evolved gradually and in the course of a lengthy learning process, against the background of the intifada, the Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Madrid Conference, and the failure of the Washington talks (between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian

delegation representing the territories). The new conception was based on the following assumptions:<sup>1</sup>

1. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be decided by military means.
2. Israel does not want to continue ruling the Palestinians and wants to separate from them.
3. A political process with the Palestinians is a vital Israeli interest and is possible only with the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat.
4. The PLO and Arafat are willing to enter a political process and can be negotiating partners for a political settlement in the light of the strategic changes that have occurred in their positions, namely: abandonment of the principles of the “armed struggle” and the “phased doctrine”; readiness to recognize Israel and reach an agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders based on United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338; and solution of the refugee problem on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Israel was aware of (and rejected) the Palestinians’ conditions concerning the right of return and Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, but hoped that these were maximal positions on which the Palestinians would show flexibility during the negotiating process, knowing Israel was unable to accept them.
5. The PLO is ready to accept Israel’s position that the political process must be gradual and conducted in stages, with the problematic issues—such as the status of Jerusalem, the refugee problem, the borders, the settlements, and the security arrangements—to be discussed at the stage of the final-status settlement.
6. An interim settlement can be achieved without third-party participation—that is, without mechanisms of supervision, verification, oversight, and control—with the form of the permanent settlement left open.
7. Israel’s strength and the PLO’s political weakness will accord Israel enhanced bargaining positions in the negotiations.
8. The PLO’s commitment to abstain from and prevent terrorism will make it possible to transfer to its hands the burden of the war against Palestinian terrorism.
9. Mutual trust can be created with a continuing peace process.
10. The establishment of a Palestinian Authority (PA) will bring about responsible behavior by the Palestinians, as a governing authority and formal institution create a quasi-state that “has something to lose” and therefore will negotiate with Israel responsibly on a “fair compromise.”

Following the signing of the Oslo accord, Israel did not fundamentally change its basic conception vis-à-vis both the Oslo process and the PLO and Arafat, even though in the Israeli perception Arafat and the PA did not fully honor their commitment to abstain from violence and to thwart terrorism by Palestinian organizations.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, Israel was generally satisfied with the security cooperation between the sides—its evaluation was that Arafat was committed to the political process and to the solution of two states for the two nations.<sup>3</sup>

This conception did not basically change, at least not outwardly and officially, during the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, despite the violent events that followed the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel, in September 1996, when Palestinian policemen for the first time used weapons they had received from Israel against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and despite the slowdown in the negotiations. On the basis of this basic approach and its underlying assumptions, Israeli governments signed interim agreements entailing the transfer of powers and territory to the PA. The negotiations with Arafat and his staff continued during the tenure of Ehud Barak as prime minister, at the Camp David summit in July 2000, and in the Taba talks the following January.

The validity of this conception, which as noted was formulated during the period of the Rabin government, was largely undermined after the Camp David summit, when Barak blamed Arafat for the failure to reach an agreement and asserted that the Palestinian leader was not a partner for peace negotiations.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Barak's policy reflected a duality in Israeli policy, as negotiations with the Palestinians continued until January 2001 despite his complaint about the "absence of a partner." Barak cited a series of developments—the failure to achieve a permanent settlement at Camp David, the eruption of the violent confrontation in September 2000, and Arafat's refusal to accept Israel's far-reaching proposals, and the Clinton blueprint verbatim—as proof of Arafat's unwillingness to accept an historic compromise that was needed to reach a solution of two states for the two nations.

Some of the Israelis who participated in the Camp David talks formed the impression that the two basic tests for the Palestinians' true intentions in regard to resolving the conflict were the Temple Mount and the right of Palestinian refugees to return. During the summit and in the subsequent negotiations they found that the Palestinians were not interested in resolving the conflict in accordance with Israeli expectations—not only because they showed no readiness

to compromise on Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, and the return of the refugees, but also because they declined to accept Israel as a Jewish state with a legitimate right to exist in the region, continuing to claim that Israel's establishment had done them a grave and irreparable wrong.<sup>5</sup>

It is noteworthy that members of the Israeli delegation later expressed differing opinions about the Camp David talks.<sup>6</sup> Since then, a great deal has been published about the conference, not least by several of the participants, showing large disparities in the description of the events and the reasons for the outcome.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, a survey of the comments made by the majority of the participants shows that even though certain agreements were in fact reached during the negotiations, failure to reach a settlement was due largely to the dispute over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.<sup>8</sup> Afterward, however, the political level intimated to the Israeli public that the major issue in dispute was the Palestinians' position concerning the right of return. Israeli officials construed this as reflecting the Palestinians' unwillingness to arrive at a two-state political solution and explained that the reason was Arafat's commitment to the phased doctrine. It followed that the violent confrontation was planned and initiated by the Palestinians and constituted an existential general war.<sup>9</sup>

Arafat and the Palestinian negotiating team argued, for their part, that Barak's proposals at Camp David were insufficient and unworthy and were part of an Israeli-American conspiracy aimed at imposing an unjust and unfair settlement.<sup>10</sup> In their perception, Israel, with the connivance of the United States, had tried to dictate a solution tailored exclusively to Israeli interests, and its proposals at Camp David would not enable the creation of a durable Palestinian state. From their point of view, the fact that they rejected Barak's proposals did not mean that they were unwilling to resolve the conflict but that they were unable to accept an agreement that lacked the following strategic goals:

1. Establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders without restrictions on its independence, apart from security arrangements;
2. Arab Jerusalem as the Palestinians' capital (including sovereignty on the Temple Mount); and
3. A solution of the refugee problem based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194.<sup>11</sup>

In retrospect, it appears that Israel's demand for the "termination of the conflict" under its terms was construed by the Palestinians as an



attempt to subjugate the Palestinian narrative to the Israeli narrative. Any such "subjugation," from their standpoint, was not a viable political option.<sup>12</sup> This Israeli demand shifted the discussion from the outcome of the 1967 war to that of the 1948 war. The political crisis thus reflected, at a very high level of intensity, the clash between the two national narratives. Barak strove to bring about the end of the conflict and the end of the Palestinians' claims, in return for far-reaching concessions that reflected the outcome of the Six-Day War: establishment of a Palestinian state, ceding of the majority of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip (including the Jordan Rift Valley), uprooting of settlements, and the division of Jerusalem. However, at Camp David, as in the negotiations that followed, the Israeli side became acquainted with the Palestinians' determination not to resolve the conflict by setting only for a solution to the outcome of the 1967 war.

#### A NEW ISRAELI INTERIM CONCEPTION: FROM THE START OF THE INTIFADA UNTIL THE END OF THE BARAK GOVERNMENT

The failure to achieve a permanent settlement, compounded by the eruption of Palestinian violence at the end of September 2000, gradually produced a change in the Israeli conception. In the first stage, until the Barak government was voted out of office (February 2001), a kind of interim conception was articulated in order to address both the failure of Camp David and the continuing negotiations process as well as the Palestinian violence. The task of Israel's policymakers was to come up with a new political-strategic conception that would on the one hand, allow the negotiations to continue but deny the Palestinians political gains through violence, while on the other hand, allow for restrained military activity to ensure reasonable security for the country's citizens without harming the chances of the political process.

It was made clear to the army that the policy of containment was not intended to vanquish the Palestinians or bring about their collapse, developments that were liable to end the political process and lead to the conflict's internationalization. One of the reasons for the decision to pursue the political process was the security establishment's assessment that Arafat wanted an agreement if his terms were fulfilled within the Palestinians' narrow parameters of flexibility. Moreover, the political and security level also believed that the most effective means to stop or reduce the violence was through the political process. This approach was backed by the premise that the violent

confrontation with the Palestinians was not resolvable by military means and that even if they endured a severe mauling the resulting calm would be short-lived and their “minimum conditions” for peace would remain unchanged.<sup>13</sup>

The success of the new conception, which integrated a political process with a controlled response to the Palestinian violence, depended largely on the process’s prospects of success and on the ability to contain the military confrontation. However, the lack of rapid progress toward a settlement despite intensified negotiating efforts, combined with heightened violence, rendered this conception unviable.

Israel’s willingness to proceed with the negotiations even after the eruption of the intifada derived in part from the initial evaluation of most elements of the Israeli intelligence community that this was a popular uprising that Arafat had not planned in advance.<sup>14</sup> The Israeli intelligence assessment of possible violence antedated the Camp David summit and was based on the apprehension that the disparities between the sides about the final-status agreement might lead the Palestinians to declare an independent state unilaterally, sparking a limited conflict. This assessment was one of the factors that prompted Barak, according to his own account, to try and reach a settlement with the Palestinians—in order to avert violence.<sup>15</sup>

However, according to assessment agencies within the intelligence community, the background to the violence that erupted in September 2000 was the ripening of conditions for the outbreak of a popular uprising against both the PA and against Israel. Their appraisal was that the Palestinian public was increasingly restive in the face of the centralism and corruption of the Palestinians’ self-rule government, along with accumulated bitterness at the Oslo process, that had failed to ameliorate the economic situation or alleviate the sense of occupation—in the form of restrictions on movement and a constant Israeli military presence—while enabling continued building in the settlements, land expropriations, and the building of bypass roads. In large measure, then, the events of September 2000 were an expression of distress and frustration on the part of the majority of the Palestinian public toward both the PA and Israel.<sup>16</sup>

September 28, 2000, the date on which Ariel Sharon, the chairman of the Likud Party, paid a controversial visit to the Temple Mount, is usually considered the start of the violent confrontation known as the “Al-Aqsa Intifada.” Agitated by the event, the Palestinians initiated disturbances that required the intervention of the Israeli security forces. The next day, in the course of the riots, 7 Palestinians were

killed and about 300 wounded; a few dozen policemen were injured on the Israeli side. In the days that followed the disturbances spread to various places in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and even into Israel. The security forces, who were prepared for a violent confrontation initiated by the PA's security organizations, responded with great force to quell the unrest. The Palestinians sustained heavy losses:<sup>17</sup> 141 Palestinians were killed and about 500 wounded by the end of October, and another 186 were killed and about 540 wounded in November–December; 82 Palestinians were killed and 700 wounded in the first three months of 2001.<sup>18</sup>

In the initial months of the confrontation, the violence was manifested largely as mass disturbances in which Israeli security forces clashed with Palestinians. Terrorism in this period mainly took the form of Palestinians opening fire on Israeli vehicles in the West Bank, the murder of Israelis in the areas of the PA, and ambushes of IDF soldiers. Acts of terrorism in public places were rare. The first suicide bombing attack—in which three people were murdered in Netanya—was perpetrated on March 4, 2001. By the end of October 2000, 11 Israelis (civilians and soldiers) had been killed and 1 wounded; in November–December 2000, 31 Israelis were killed and 84 wounded; and in the first three months of 2001, 28 Israelis were killed and 98 wounded.<sup>19</sup>

In the light of the escalating violence in December 2000, there was a shift in the Israeli attitude toward the intifada. The military dynamics which developed transformed the popular uprising into a full-fledged armed conflict. The armed elements in the Fatah-Tanzim, and afterward in Hamas and the other organizations, seized the initiative in the violent confrontation, which expanded to encompass attacks on civilians and security forces on the roads, shooting at settlements and IDF bases, and terrorist attacks in Israeli population centers. One view in both the Israeli political and security establishments was that the IDF's excessive reaction might have contributed to the escalation. The army, which as noted had prepared for the possibility of a violent eruption in which the Palestinian security forces would take part, conducted the war on the basis of purely military considerations, without paying sufficient attention to the political side. The army abandoned its strict adherence to the policy of containment, in the spirit of the political level's guidelines, and thereby contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The IDF's excessive reaction was intended not only to contain the confrontation but to force the Palestinians to surrender. The goal was to punish them for engendering the violence and make clear it would not advance their political goals—and rather would

bring them to the negotiating table, weak and debilitated.<sup>20</sup> The major result was the failure of the containment policy. This is reflected most tellingly in the large number of Palestinians killed, and this, in turn, contributed to an undesirable escalation of the violence because the Palestinian organizations were intent on equalizing the “balance of blood.” These developments were compounded by the weakening of the PA, the prelude to its disintegration.<sup>21</sup>

In its first stage, during the period of the Barak government (February 2001), the two sides treated the violent confrontation as a “bargaining conflict”—that is, not necessarily as a zero-sum conflict but as a struggle by the Palestinians to improve their bargaining position in negotiations.

At the same time, the Palestinian leadership set no specific goals for the intifada, which indeed sprang from below. Initially, Arafat utilized it to try to pressure Israel into showing greater flexibility in its positions in negotiations being held “under fire” and in an effort to extract concessions beyond those Israel offered at Camp David. The goal was to force Israel to recognize the Palestinians’ rights in accordance with UN Resolutions (194, 242, 338), such that any agreement would be based on a recognized international source of authority and not be dependent on the asymmetrical situation between the two sides. Subsequently, when the negotiations were stopped after the Israeli proposals and the Clinton document were retracted, creating a political vacuum, the confrontation snowballed until neither side could control it any longer. With no prospect of returning to the negotiating table in this state of affairs, the Palestinian leadership sought to exploit the confrontation to internationalize the conflict along the lines of Kosovo—international intervention, including multinational peacekeeping forces—thus also depriving the United States of exclusivity and increasing European involvement.<sup>22</sup> The Islamists, though, uninterested in these goals of the official leadership, set out to yoke the confrontation to its ideological agenda of armed struggle and opposition to any settlement with Israel.<sup>23</sup>

At the outset of the confrontation Israel’s declared goal was to proceed with the negotiations despite the violence, with the aim of achieving a final-status settlement, while trying to restore calm as quickly as possible. Israel, that is, sought to contain the violence and avert an escalation that was liable to spark a regional conflagration and/or internationalize the conflict. Accordingly, Israel respected Palestinian sovereignty in Area A and the IDF did not operate there systematically (until Operation Defensive Shield, in the spring of 2002).

The security forces were directed to act in a manner that would accord the political level maximum flexibility in conducting negotiations with the Palestinians.

This stage can be summed up as the failure of the Israeli attempt to crystallize a two-pronged conception—continuation of the political process combined with a policy of containment to cope effectively with the violence—that led to a change of government. Barak's policy was characterized by duality as regards the rationale for conducting negotiations under fire and the possibility of achieving a settlement with the Palestinians. It may be this duality that accounts for the political level's inability to compel the military to carry out an effective containment policy.<sup>24</sup> The biting criticism, from both the political opposition and the public at large, also undercut the legitimacy of conducting negotiations under fire. The criticism was especially seething during the Taba talks, which were held in the shadow of the election campaign in Israel. Significant progress was reportedly made in the talks, but they were broken off amid a mutual promise to complete them in the future.<sup>25</sup>

The public criticism and the need to assuage public opinion (on the eve of the elections) after the failure to obtain a political agreement induced the political level to pin the sole blame for the collapse of the peace process and for initiating the violence on the Palestinians. The political leaders reiterated the complaints they had voiced against the Palestinian leadership more forcefully after the failure of Camp David.<sup>26</sup> Much of the public accepted these arguments as the unvarnished, unchallengeable truth, though others viewed them as an excuse by the political level to shake off its responsibility and make Arafat the villain.<sup>27</sup>

Be that as it may, the underlying rationale of the new Israeli policy—that the Palestinians must not be allowed to make political gains by means of violence—also failed. The fact is that in the negotiating process, which narrowed the gaps between the two sides' positions, the Palestinians obtained additional significant Israeli concessions between the Camp David conference and the Taba talks. Concurrently, as noted, because of the PA's noncooperation in containing the violence, and the Israeli political level's limited control over the military in managing the confrontation with the Palestinians, the level of violence rose and the Israeli public's feeling of security deteriorated. The public lost its confidence in the Barak government, in both its ability to achieve a political settlement with the PA and to provide security.

## THE NEW CONCEPTION IN THE PERIOD OF THE SHARON GOVERNMENT AND ITS ASSUMPTIONS

### The Political Conception

Following the change of government in Israel, in February 2001, and especially so after the elections of February 2003 (after the dissolution of the national unity government), a new conception gradually evolved concerning the political process and how to deal with the violent confrontation. Effectively, as compared with the Barak period, there was greater accord between the evolving political and military-strategic conceptions as well as with the operational conception on the ground. The changes in the political conception had a direct impact on the other two conceptions. A series of developments—despair at the political process, the cessation of the peace process, the surging terrorism and its rising human cost, the limited effectiveness of the military in dealing with the terrorism, and the events of September 11, 2001—were deeply influential in the articulation of the three conceptions: political, military-strategic, and operational.<sup>28</sup>

The leading advocates of the new political conception were Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor) in the national unity government; Ben-Eliezer's successor, Shaul Mofaz, who took over after the dissolution of the unity government, shared their view. They inherited Barak's assessments that the Palestinians were not yet ready to resolve the conflict and were responsible for the failure of the political process: there was no partner on their side for Israel to talk to. Yet, throughout 2001, the official intelligence appraisals maintained that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership were still interested in achieving their goals through negotiations.<sup>29</sup> However, Barak's explanations, although inconsistent with the official intelligence assessments, perfectly matched Sharon's outlook. Sharon had opposed the Oslo process all along, viewing it as a threat to Israel's security and very existence, and had supported the settlement enterprise unreservedly.<sup>30</sup> Sharon and Mofaz objected to the concessions Barak had offered the Palestinians at Camp David, in the Clinton plan, and at Taba. Mofaz, during his tenure as Chief of Staff, not only expressed explicit opposition to those concessions, but also sharply disputed the political level's containment policy and in effect did not implement it in letter or spirit.<sup>31</sup>

The basic assumptions of the new policy mainly reflected the belief system of the policymakers and their attitude toward the political process and the character of the Palestinian violence, a set of beliefs that was reinforced by the military leadership.

The new political approach was based on assumptions that were very different from those of the Oslo process:<sup>32</sup>

- Even though Israel did not officially withdraw from the Oslo process, in practice the political process ceased to exist because of the military confrontation, and hence also because of the absence of a negotiating partner.
- Even though Israel effectively adhered to the principle of two states for the two nations, such an arrangement in the short or intermediate term was of dubious feasibility, as the Palestinians had in effect rejected it.
- The Israeli proposals to the Palestinians at Camp David and Taba and in agreeing to the Clinton blueprint were no longer binding on Israel after the Palestinians spurned them and launched a violent struggle.
- The Palestinian violence was defined as a clear violation of the Oslo process and the renewal of the political process was made conditional on the complete cessation of the violent struggle.
- Not only did Arafat cease to be a legitimate and worthy partner for a political process, he also became an obstacle to peace: his removal was now a precondition for renewing the political process.
- Israel was ready to negotiate with a different Palestinian leadership, one which dissociated itself from terrorism and fights it, while implementing democratic reforms in accordance with President Bush's speech in June 2000.
- In the absence of any prospect to resolve the conflict, Israel would focus on managing it, with the goal of terminating it or reducing it significantly, while denying the Palestinians any military or political achievement in the confrontation.<sup>33</sup>

These basic premises drew on the political viewpoints of at least some of the leaders of the political level, as expounded for years, and were based on the new interpretation given by senior officials of the intelligence community to the Palestinian positions in the Oslo process and particularly to the Palestinians' goals in the violent confrontation. Although little faith had been placed in the Palestinians' talk of peace from the beginning, they were now perceived as an adversary and an enemy with malicious intentions.

- Arafat did not accept Israel's existence as a Jewish state and therefore would never sign off on the termination of the conflict, not even if all his conditions were met. Arafat never explicitly mentioned an independent Jewish state existing alongside the Palestinian state

but spoke about Israel in vague terms. Not even the achievement of his four strategic goals—a state, the 1967 borders, East Jerusalem as the capital, and realization of the right of return—would induce him to declare the end of the conflict and the finality of the Palestinians' claims.<sup>34</sup>

- Arafat continued to adhere to the “phased theory” and his goal was “Greater Palestine,” to be achieved through the Palestinians’ demographic advantage. Arafat’s positions in the negotiations and his statements challenging Israel’s moral right of existence and the Jewish national attachment to the Land of Israel, in contrast to the Palestinian people’s historic right to the land, reflect not only a religious-historical approach but a plan of action.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, his approach is realistic and he is acting on the basis of political-diplomatic understanding, but his strategic vision was to establish a Palestinian power from the Mediterranean to the Iraqi desert, thanks to the demographic superiority which gave the Palestinians control of the area.<sup>36</sup>
- Arafat viewed the violent struggle as a cardinal means to promote his national goals. He made a strategic decision to launch a campaign of terrorism alongside a political-diplomatic route.<sup>37</sup> However, that route had exhausted itself and had even become dangerous from the standpoint of the Palestinian interest. Accordingly, the idea of the “armed struggle” had not been abandoned and was again becoming a paramount tool to achieve political goals,<sup>38</sup> as part of a strategic move to implement the “phased doctrine.”
- Arafat was a terrorist and the PA an entity that supported terrorism. The Palestinian security establishment was an organization of state terror. Arafat was activating terrorism directly, through his security organizations, which received their salary from the PA—the Tanzim, Preventive Security, General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and Force 17—and indirectly by insinuated authorization to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other groups to execute terrorist attacks.<sup>39</sup>
- The violent confrontation with the Palestinians was no longer the result of a popular uprising but a genuine war in which the Palestinians were trying to achieve their political goals by means of violence. This is a war of no choice that was forced on Israel—an existential war that could brook no compromises (“a war for our home”), the continuation of the War of Independence, and Israel’s most important war since then.<sup>40</sup>

Summing up this section, it can be noted that the conception holding that Arafat was not interested in an agreement and therefore turned to



violence and was not a partner for a political process—a conception first voiced by the political level in Israel after the Camp David summit—was adopted by the new government without a renewed examination and became part of the basic assumptions of the new policy approach. In the events related to the cessation of the political process and the escalation of the conflict, senior intelligence officials found justification for the reasons cited by the political level for the failure to attain an agreement and the outbreak of violence. As such, they gave backing to the conception that was adopted by the political level.<sup>41</sup>

With the new basic assumptions as the foundation, an updated conception was fashioned holding that there was deep doubt about the feasibility of achieving a permanent settlement entailing two states for the two nations. Within a few months this conception was adopted by all the political and military decision-makers and by public opinion.

### **The Military-Strategic Conception**

The basic premises of the new political conception naturally nourished the strategic-military conception as well. Now, with the negotiations moribund and the military confrontation defined as a genuine war, Israel's military-strategic approach was aimed directly at the PA as a responsible governmental body that was associated with the terrorist organizations.<sup>42</sup> The military-strategic goal was to bring about the rapid end of the Palestinian violence or reduce it to a level that would deny the Palestinians any military and political achievement and would burn into their consciousness the lesson that they could never make military or political gains by means of terrorism. The goal was thus defined as changing the mindset of the Palestinians (and in effect, of all the Arabs) and getting them to internalize deeply that "terrorism and violence cannot defeat us, will not make us fold. If this deep internalization is not achieved at the end of the confrontation, we will have a strategic problem and an existential threat to Israel. If that lesson is not burned into the Palestinian and Arab consciousness, there will be no end to their demands of us."<sup>43</sup>

According to this conception, it was crucial for Israel to restore its deterrent credibility, which had suffered in a series of events going back to the beginning of the last decade: the nonresponse in the Gulf War, Israel's participation in the Madrid Conference against its will, concessions in the Oslo accord in the wake of the first intifada, handing over Hebron to the Palestinians in the wake of the violence triggered by the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel, and the withdrawal from Lebanon.<sup>44</sup> It was therefore essential to overcome the terrorist

threat as quickly as possible.<sup>45</sup> Arafat's malicious intention to liquidate Israel, exposed at the moment of truth, attested to the concrete threat Israel faced. That threat had to be eliminated at any cost, by means of Israel's military superiority and the society's endurance. This was the only effective option, a policy that was essential in order to prevent any future Palestinian threat to Israel's existence. The strength of the IDF had to be relied on to prevent the Palestinians from implementing their vicious plans.

Henceforth, the mission of thwarting the malicious intentions of Arafat and the PA was perceived, by both the political and the security level, as synonymous with "burning into the Palestinians' consciousness" Israel's military superiority and the lesson that political goals could be achieved not by force, but through a political process. This lesson would reduce the terrorist threat in the present and prevent a Palestinian threat to Israel for many years to come. In addition, when negotiations resumed on the final-status agreement the Palestinians would have to pay a political price and emerge with fewer achievements than they could have extracted from Israel in the previous round of talks. For the first time the political and security levels defined Palestinian terrorism itself as an existential strategic threat to Israel. The security establishment was directed to eradicate the terrorist organizations, including the Palestinian security units that were engaged in terrorism.<sup>46</sup>

Already in the first stages of the interim agreement, following the suicide bombing attacks in early 1995, and more especially in the wake of the violence initiated by the PA after the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel in September 1996, the IDF was required to adapt itself to a new form of combat against the Palestinians, known as "low-intensity conflict." Given the existence of a self-governing Palestinian political authority with armed security units, it bore some resemblance to interstate conflicts. Drawing on operational lessons from the Western Wall Tunnel events and other violent clashes (including the events on "Naqba Day," May 15, 2000), the IDF prepared for a possible confrontation with the PA's security forces, triggered, in one scenario, by the failure of the political process. The army formulated a conceptual framework for conducting a "low-intensity conflict" through a process defined as "operational configuration planning" aimed at shaping a future reality that would optimally serve the political-strategic goal. In line with this methodology, a comprehensive conceptual framework was devised, linking the level of political goals to that of tactical activity and enabling compatibility between a number of levels on the scale (nine in all), from the political level to the soldier at the checkpoint.<sup>47</sup>

In drawing up the operational guidelines for the conflict's management, the military level set two overriding goals:

- To serve Israel's political aims by means of military accomplishments that will shape the reality on the ground and influence the consciousness of the Palestinians to make them understand that the war they planned and fomented will not produce any political achievements<sup>48</sup>. After three and a half years of violent confrontation, the army changed its conception to some extent. Even though the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, continued to maintain that terrorism could be eradicated completely, the army's primary tactical goal appears to be to reduce terrorism substantially so that the public can go about its business tolerably and the political level can make decisions without the pressure of terrorism. At the same time, the conception of instilling in the other side the recognition that it would make no political gains by means of terrorism remained intact.<sup>49</sup>
- To ensure the relevance of the military force in a "low-intensity conflict" by means of preparation and equipment and by adjusting its combat doctrine to the distinctive parameters of the conflict.

### Operational Patterns

The change in the conceptions, both political and military-strategic, led also to the formulation of a pattern of operational engagement that was consistent with the new conceptions. The army classified different stages and different patterns of engagement: the containment stage (September 2000–beginning of 2001), the stage of leverage or ongoing continuous pressure (2001), the stage of the systematic dismantlement of the terrorism infrastructures (January–March 2002), the stage of the counterblows of Operation Defensive Shield (March–April 2002), the stage of security control of Operation Determined Path (June 2002–May 2003); and the stage of regularization and operational stabilization (second quarter of 2003 and afterward).<sup>50</sup> The transition from one stage to the next was related to the change of political leadership in Israel, the cessation of the political process (the shift from the first to the second stage), the escalation of terrorism and especially of the suicide bombings, the assessment that the pattern of coping with Palestinian violence was ineffective, and the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States.

The first operational stage, from September 2000 until the beginning of 2001, which was categorized as containment, ended after the

Israeli general elections of February 2001. This stage, which proceeded in conjunction with the continuation of the political process, sought primarily to reduce the violence in the hope of returning to political arrangements. The army did not implement the government's containment policy in its letter and spirit. At the same time, full Palestinian sovereignty was respected in Area A, in accordance with the political directive formulated by the Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak.<sup>51</sup>

The change of political leadership in the wake of the elections and the cessation of the political process, combined with burgeoning terrorism and the concomitant expansion of Israeli military activity, led to a change in the political-strategic directive and the adoption of a new pattern of military coping: "leverage" (*minuf*, in IDF argot) or "ongoing continuous pressure." In this stage, which lasted throughout 2001, the operational conception continued to be based on the premise, which was clearly reflected in the official intelligence assessments that were presented in written form, that the Palestinians were interested in reaching a political settlement of two states for the two nations. However, the strategic goal was to put a stop to the violence by coercing the PA not only to wash its hands of terrorism but also to enlist in the battle against it. The PA was perceived (even without an official declaration) as an adversary (not an enemy) and as a governmental establishment bearing direct responsibility for the acts of terrorism and violence originating in its territory.

The "leverage" was intended to generate unrelenting, continuous, measured, graduated, and controlled pressure on the PA in order to compel it to fight terrorism, while at the same time not denying Palestinian sovereignty or targeting the PA's civilian apparatuses.<sup>52</sup> The targets were structures, positions, and checkpoints of the PA forces. The systemic element was realized tactically by means of repeated penetrations—in the form of time-limited raids and encirclements—in PA areas in all sectors. Initially limited in scale, these operations were gradually expanded to the point where they included the use of warplanes in the West Bank and a brief takeover of a Palestinian city (Tulkarm, for one day).

This pattern, as noted, lasted throughout 2001, and changed due to the following developments: (1) escalation resulting in 185 Israelis being killed (March–December 2001) and reaching its peak in the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi on October 16, 2001. The killing was an act of revenge for the liquidation by Israel of Abu Ali Mustafa, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This period also saw a dramatic increase in the number of

suicide bombings (35 successfully carried out and another 16 thwarted from March–December 2001),<sup>53</sup> (2) the evaluation that the leverage strategy was ineffective; and (3) the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States.

The first two developments helped bring about the assessment that the PA was not susceptible to leverage and would not fight terrorism, and therefore Israel had to wage this campaign by itself, while adopting a new operational mode: the “systematic dismantlement of the infrastructures of terrorism throughout the area.”<sup>54</sup> The third development was of crucial importance in providing domestic and international legitimacy for an expanded, unrelenting, systematic mode of operation that was intended to vanquish Palestinian terrorism by military means.

Thus the PA, no longer perceived as a potential partner to renew the political process, was, as of December 2001, defined as a supporter of terrorism that used its security organizations for terrorist missions.<sup>55</sup> Even though at this very time Arafat ordered a cease-fire and also managed to begin implementing it in practice, the Israeli government placed no credence in his efforts and decided to dismantle the PA’s security apparatuses.<sup>56</sup> This was especially consequential for the choice of operational targets (the refugee camps in Jenin and Nablus), including targets in Area A, without consideration for Palestinian autonomy, and for the duration of the operational activity. In short order the systematic dismantlement of the terrorist infrastructures turned out to be not effective enough.

In the first three months of 2002, 173 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks—a record number in such a brief period—while the Palestinians sustained 372 fatalities. Twenty-eight terrorist attacks were perpetrated and 11 thwarted in this period. This dramatic surge, which peaked with the suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya on the eve of Passover, prompted the government to launch Operation Defensive Shield that began on March 29, 2002, two days after the hotel attack. The operation was intended “to vanquish the Palestinian system which supports and nourishes terrorism.”<sup>57</sup> Carried out simultaneously in all the Palestinian cities apart from Jericho and Hebron, and subsequently in rural areas as well, the operation was classified by Israel as a “strike” (*mahaluma*): “an effort to break the adversary’s operational logic and create conditions for a different situation.”

The harsh blow to the terrorist infrastructures, the elimination of the Palestinian security presence from the cities, and the creation of a convenient security situation for ongoing preventive operations—including

security control on the ground and Arafat's physical isolation—were all evaluated as “a relevant form of conclusive decision in a limited conflict.” In practice, however, “an opportunity for a political process or for transferring control to other Palestinian hands” was not created and it soon turned out that a concrete conclusive decision was not achieved, either.<sup>58</sup> The one-time strike in the form of “Defensive Shield” proved effective only in the short term.

In the following three months (April–June 2002), 130 Israelis were killed (including soldiers who fell in the operation) along with 371 Palestinians. Seventeen suicide bombings were perpetrated in this period and 21 were thwarted. In these circumstances, the decision was made to persist with the ongoing operational activity, including full control on the ground, in order to suppress the terrorism. The stage of security control, codenamed “Determined Path” (June 2002–May 2003), was thus aimed primarily at forestalling terrorism, especially suicide bombings. This was accompanied by activity aimed at molding the general Palestinian consciousness and thereby dissuading the Palestinian public from supporting terrorism. In the second quarter of 2003 an additional strategic move—known as “regularization”—was introduced, which involved setting permanent security arrangements, notably the building of the separation fence.<sup>59</sup> Throughout the entire period major efforts were made to thwart suicide bombings, with the effectiveness of the targeted assassinations becoming more pronounced from July 2002. In the period from July 2002 to June 2004, 49 suicide bombing attacks were carried out and 343 prevented.<sup>60</sup> These efforts also included targeted assassinations not only of the terrorists themselves but also of those who were behind the attacks.

The military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians functions as a cycle of terror, in which each side influences the activity of the other. Thus, the terrorist attacks affected the mode and intensity of Israeli security activity, but that same activity influenced Palestinian violence. For example, the assassinations of Raed Karmi and Abu Ali Mustafa ratcheted up the level of Palestinian terrorism; and the mass-terror attack on the Park Hotel in Netanya spawned Operation Defensive Shield.

In many cases, the cycle of terror syndrome is partially attributable to the fact that at the Israeli political level focus is put on dealing with the immediate problems of terrorism—especially the suicide bombing attacks, because of their brutal results—but not on long-term strategic planning, which entails decisions of state policy. As a result, the military is frequently compelled to fill in the conceptual blanks left by the politicians in regard to strategic policy. This phenomenon was exacerbated after the eruption of the violent confrontation, and more

especially after its escalation, when the military reached the conclusion that the existing conceptual lexicon contained no effective answer for coping with a protracted conflict. The military, therefore, believed it had the duty to develop an alternative and improved conceptual system. In the absence of clear political directives, the military also largely assumed the role of the political level in shaping the conflict environment, including the level of violence.<sup>61</sup>

### INTERIM BALANCE-SHEET: POLITICAL AND SECURITY DEADLOCK WITH ADHERENCE TO THE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND THE CONCEPTION

A lengthy perspective will be necessary before it is possible to make a comprehensive accurate profit and loss assessment based on Israel's conception of managing the conflict in the four years of violence that began at the end of September 2000. However, despite the absence of the necessary perspective, such an assessment is essential, especially in the light of Sharon's decision to adopt a new policy of conflict management, which includes the building of a separation fence and a disengagement plan. Up to a point, this can be seen as the start of a new chapter in Israel's policy of conflict management and perhaps even as a new management paradigm. The problem is that this paradigm appears to be based largely on the assumptions that were described above, some of which, at least, are of dubious validity.

The political level's perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with its central basic assumptions, is the paramount factor guiding the conception of the conflict's management. Within a relatively brief period (1993–2001) the political conception changed twice in a fundamental way. The first dramatic paradigmatic change, which made possible the Oslo process, rested on the assumption that not only could the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be resolved gradually and in stages, on the basis of two states for the two nations, but that Israel also had a vital interest in such a process. The failure of the Oslo process—the Palestinian-initiated violence—led gradually to the second paradigmatic change (after the elections of February 2001), which is based on a different underlying assumption, namely that in the present stage there is no prospect of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to the absence of a Palestinian partner, and therefore Israel's only available option is to manage the conflict unilaterally in order to bring about a rapid end to the Palestinian violence, while denying the Palestinians any military or political gains.

The changes in the level of Palestinian violence, particularly the advent of the suicide bombings, became a central factor in Israel's perception of the confrontation and influenced its political, military-strategic, and operational conceptions. As long as the Palestinian violence was perceived as a popular uprising or as aimed at improving the Palestinians' bargaining position in the political process, it was not defined as a genuine strategic threat to Israel; accordingly, the countermeasures were limited to containing and reducing the violence so it would not sabotage the political process. However, the military did not implement the containment policy in the spirit of the political level's directives, resulting in unwanted escalation. After the February 2001 elections in Israel, with the cessation of the political process and the escalation of the confrontation, the violence was perceived as being directed by the Palestinian Authority and as a strategic threat to Israel's security and existence.<sup>62</sup>

Accordingly, in the first stage of the confrontation, the Israeli goals focused on reducing the violence and denying the Palestinians any military or political achievement, in the hope of reaching a political settlement. In the next stage the aim was to put a stop to the violence by means of a military decision, based on the recognition that the Palestinians were not a partner for negotiations and that no real prospect of resuming the political process existed, because Arafat was intent on destroying Israel.<sup>63</sup>

From Israel's point of view, management of the violent conflict with the Palestinians had, to date produced only partial political-military success. It is noteworthy that the military confrontation was forced on Israel at a time when the government was ready to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians, on its terms, based on two states for two nations. Israel has so far succeeded in preventing the Palestinians from realizing their goals: to establish a Palestinian state in accordance with their preferential conditions, to expand the conflict to a regional level by getting additional Arab actors to join the cycle of violence, and to internationalize the conflict by getting the world community to station forces in the region. However, Israel was unable to reduce the motivation of the combatants on the other side to persist with the confrontation or to prevent Hezbollah and Iran from financing the terrorists and smuggling weapons, ammunition, and sabotage know-how into the territories.

The Palestinians, for their part, believed that despite their tremendous disadvantage in force relations they were able to prevent Israel from achieving its goals in the confrontation through the realization of its superiority by imposing its terms for an agreement. Moreover,



they construed the disengagement plan as an Israeli admission of failure and as their victory. Thus, a “strategic deadlock” had been generated between the two sides. They were stuck in a “mutual hurting stalemate” and lacked the ability to develop a formula to terminate the confrontation and renew a peace process of some sort. This situation compelled Israel to adopt a strategy of unilateral disengagement, that does not necessarily hold out genuine expectation of bringing about a change in the violent conflict.

The events of September 11, 2001, accorded Israel international and above all American legitimacy to make a quantum leap in the patterns of its military response to terrorism (including the reconquest of West Bank cities and placing Arafat under lengthy siege). The Bush administration accepted Israel’s rejection of Arafat as a legitimate partner for the political process and presented its program of reforms (June 2002) to the PA as a condition for the renewal of the political process. At the same time, the Road Map, the successor to the Bush initiative, was less convenient for Israel and in the future might become an international diplomatic framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The confrontation exacted a terribly high price. As of September 19, 2004 (according to the IDF Web site), 989 Israelis had been killed (694 civilians, 295 members of the security forces) and 6,709 wounded (4,711 civilians and 1,998 members of the security forces) in 22,406 attacks, attempted attacks, and violent incidents.<sup>64</sup> Despite the steep price in blood, and an economic cost of NIS 50 billion, the Israeli society did not crack and succeeded in maintaining a relatively high level of cohesion, deriving from the recognition and conviction of most Israelis that the PA was not a partner for negotiations and was exclusively responsible for the outbreak of the violence and its escalation. The price of the confrontation is indeed intolerable, and as yet there has been no success in ensuring the security of Israel’s citizens.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, during the four years of the conflict, poverty in Israel increased substantially and the social gap grew to worrying dimensions.

It bears noting that over time a considerable minority emerged in Israel who were critical of the Sharon government’s policy.<sup>66</sup> They advocated the renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians and were the source of various initiatives for realizing that option, in conjunction with public figures and leaders from the Palestinian mainstream (examples are The People’s Voice and the Geneva Initiative). In addition, various protest movements developed, including refusal to serve in the territories even among army elites such as air force pilots and Sayeret Matkal reconnaissance unit.

The paradigmatic shift, which, in the absence of a Palestinian partner or while the designated partner was Arafat, rejected any possibility of resolving the conflict and renewing the political process, left violence as the only option. This ruled out the possibility of examining other conflict management options, such as interim settlements or other political arrangements that are less than conflict resolution. Beyond this, Israel's focus on Arafat and his personality as a fundamental cause of the conflict, befuddled understanding of the roots of the crisis, and created the impression that his ouster would remove all the obstacles. Another consequence of this approach was that political and social contexts in which the confrontation developed were partially ignored,<sup>67</sup> as were the dangers stemming from the absence of a political horizon and the implications of the continuing blow to the PA's infrastructures and its security structure. The destruction of the PA demolished the possibility of a partner for a settlement.

True, Israel succeeded in reducing substantially the scale of the Palestinian violence, especially the suicide bombings, and thereby greatly diminished the number of fatalities. This is a very important tactical achievement, though it is not yet a situation that necessarily enables the Israeli society to pursue a "tolerable life."<sup>68</sup> Overall, Israel has not succeeded in deciding militarily the confrontation with the Palestinians in a manner ending their violence. Despite the high price being paid by the Palestinians, they are refusing "to surrender." Israel did not succeed in "burning into the consciousness" of the Palestinians the lesson that violence does not serve their goals and indeed is contrary to them. Indeed, their feeling of having "nothing to lose" was intensified and their motivation to continue the violence was heightened—motivation that induces many Palestinians to enlist in the service of violence. Israel failed, then, in persuading the broad Palestinian public that the continuation of the violence hurt them and ruled out any possibility of improving their situation and that their leadership, under Yasser Arafat, was distancing them from any prospect of realizing their political aspirations.<sup>69</sup>

In addition, the Israeli policymakers (both political and military) appear to have miscalculated the Palestinians' long-term level of endurance in the violent confrontation. This is due in part to a lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding to wage a "low-intensity conflict" against a people seeking independence, and in part to the deliberate failure to create a political horizon that might provide incentives to end the violence or moderate it significantly. The conclusion is that the political and military-strategic basic assumptions about the possibility of achieving a conclusive military or political decision were unrealistic.

Although the major interest of the Israeli political level at the outset of the confrontation was to contain it and prevent its spread, the opposite result was achieved. One reason for this was the harsh and highly intensive military response in the first stage of the confrontation, when it was a distinctly popular uprising (the extremely high number of Palestinian civilian casualties induced more Palestinians to take part in the violence). Beyond this, it appeared to be impossible to contain a confrontation fomented by an insurgent nation without this being accompanied by political expectations.

Israel's heavy-handed policy and pressure on the Palestinian population and the security units, most of which were not involved at the start of the confrontation, produced negative results. Feelings of rage and the desire for revenge led to closer cooperation between the terrorist organizations and between them and elements in the Palestinian security forces, which joined the confrontation after being attacked by the IDF. The result was that the suicide bombings reached an unprecedented scale, began to be perpetrated by the nonreligious organizations as well—Fatah and the Fronts (the turning point in this regard was apparently the assassination of Raed Karmi in January 2002)—and were accorded broad social legitimacy in the Palestinian society. As a consequence, the “limited confrontation” lurched out of control of the two sides and became a conflict in which each of them posited comprehensive aims. The situation was compounded by the increasingly strident criticism from the international community, which led to growing pressure on Israel and to diplomatic isolation. Effectively, the only meaningful and genuine external support Israel enjoyed was that of the United States.

Israel's policy of conflict management had the additional effect of breaking down the barriers within the Palestinian society.<sup>70</sup> The destruction of the PA made it impossible for the Palestinian leadership to control the violence and restrain the more radical forces within Fatah and the Tanzim, as well as in Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Having failed to limit the war, Israel adopted a less discriminate policy of applying force and treated all the Palestinian organizations monolithically. Israel's classification of all the organizations as violent and dangerous enemies had the effect of breaking down the differentiations in Palestinian society, leading to organizational and social cohesion, and above all of blurring differences and disputes between relative moderates and extremists.

This policy also constrained Israel's freedom of political maneuverability and made a possible dialogue with the more moderate elements, or even the use of divide-and-rule tactics, more difficult. An especially

telling effect of the Israeli policy was the elimination of the differentiation and distinction between the central secular national stream (the PLO: the Fatah-Tanzim/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the left-wing Fronts)—which at that stage was fighting against the Israeli occupation and for better terms in the final-status settlement with the aim of establishing an independent durable state in the 1967 borders alongside Israel—and the extreme Islamic stream ( Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad), which opposes Israel's existence and advocates an ideological war to the death.<sup>71</sup>

The Israeli policy gradually brought about the destruction of the PA as well as a rise in the strength of the extremist Islamic stream and operational cooperation between Fatah, the Fronts, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad in perpetrating terrorist attacks. The continuation of the violent confrontation, combined with the absence of political expectation, eroded the support of the Palestinian street for the political path of the secular national stream and its platform of a two-state solution. The result is liable to tilt the Palestinian position in the direction of one state for the two nations. Already today the basic Palestinian support for the two-state idea is showing signs of crumbling and the danger is that the Palestinian public and leadership will lose interest in such a settlement amid a contrary atmosphere.<sup>72</sup> Such a turn of events would definitely run counter to Israel's national interest.

The complete lack of trust in Arafat and the PA made it extremely difficult for Israel to identify possible security and political opportunities that might reduce the violence. The Palestinians made several efforts in this direction, especially after the events of September 11, 2001 (when, as noted, the Palestinian leadership sought to be classified on the list of the "good guys"). However, Israel did not view these attempts as a meaningful change but as empty tactical moves. As a result, no positive dynamic of Israeli moves was generated that would encourage and consolidate attempts to create calm (such as by offering the Palestinian side security and political expectations).<sup>73</sup> This conception made it difficult for Israel to discern security and political opportunities correctly, such as the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as the Palestinian prime minister.

A move toward possible reforms could perhaps have been encouraged in the PA and a dialogue launched that aimed at reducing the intensity of the confrontation through goodwill gestures (release of prisoners, military redeployment, lifting restrictions on the population).<sup>74</sup> In addition, it might have been possible to exploit the positive potential latent in the Arab peace initiative (March 2002), which the Palestinians adopted and which they presented to the United States as their agreed position. The major importance of that initiative lay in

the solution it proposed for the refugee problem: a just and agreed solution according to Resolution 194 of the UN General Assembly, without citing the “right of return”; taking the choice of which solution to adopt out of the refugees’ hands; and granting Israel veto power in deciding whether a specific quota of refugees could return to its territory. The initiative’s significance lay in the fact that the Arabs and the Palestinians were interested in creating a new situation by embarking on the path of a practical solution to the conflict, while continuing its management only.<sup>75</sup>

The new Israeli basic assumption, holding that the Palestinians were not interested in a political agreement of two states for the two nations and that the war with them was existential (“the war for our home”), led to conflict management using violent means, based on “an eye for an eye” strategy and coercion involving the use of threats, punishments, and deterrence, without any attempt to invoke carrot-and-stick strategies as well. This form of conflict management may have prevented the possibility of bringing about a change in the confrontation’s violent character. New opportunities might have been created by adopting strategies such as “reassurance,” “conditional reciprocity,” and “graduated reciprocation in tension reduction” (GRIT).<sup>76</sup>

A variety of such strategies could have been utilized not only vis-à-vis the PA as such but also toward relatively moderate elements within it. Although there is no guarantee of success, avoiding their use means forgoing even so much as their examination.

The paramount conclusion that emerges from an analysis of the Israeli conception of managing the conflict in the violent confrontation is that violent “conflict management” with no political expectation is a negative prescription in every sense for both sides. This type of management conception tends to escalate the conflict with no concrete expectation of its cessation or even its reduction. It results in the perpetuation of the existing despair, brings about a long-term freeze, leads to a hurting stalemate, and plays into the hands of the extremists on both sides. Ultimately, it helps perpetuate the Palestinian conception that violence, with all its risks and its steep price, is the only way to get Israel to accede to demands.

The mode of the conflict management also bears the most serious cognitive emotional implications for the future of the relations between the two sides. The enmity, hatred, fear, delegitimization, and mistrust between the sides reached unprecedented dimensions, which makes renewal of the political process, or even its control, exceedingly difficult. The result is liable to be the indefinite prolongation of the violent confrontation, with fluctuations in the level of the violence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Israeli concept of conflict management, which was grounded in the basic assumption that no political settlement was possible due to the lack of a negotiating partner, and which focused mainly on finding alternative modes of military response in order to bring about a military decision of the confrontation, has been changed with the decision of unilateral disengagement. Both levels in Israel, the political and the military, appeared to have internalized the insights stemming from the failure of deterrence or military coercion to prevent the confrontation and from the inability to decide it militarily.

The newly evolving management conception of unilateral disengagement accepted the assessment that no military solution exists for the present confrontation and that only a political solution can end it. However, the conception continued to be grounded in the assumption that there was no prospect for such a solution in the present stage and therefore the terrorism must be dealt with by unilateral measures. These measures were intended to reduce terrorism and its gains maximally, and diminish Israel's management costs in the different dimensions. The unilateral disengagement plan, entailing the evacuation of all the settlements in the Gaza Strip and of four settlements in northern Samaria, was a direct outcome of the lessons of violent confrontation between 2000 to 2003. A thorough and detailed discussion of the Israeli unilateral disengagement plan and its military and political implications will be introduced in chapter 9 of this book.

## NOTES

1. The assumptions were defined and articulated on the basis of a large number of sources that were available to us and that we drew on to write this chapter. They include interviews from the research project of the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which addressed the question, "What Went Wrong in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process?" See also: Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations 1999-2001* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001); Danny Rubinstein, Robert Malley, Hussein Agha, Ehud Barak, and Benny Morris, *Rashomon Camp David* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2003) (Hebrew); Uri Savir, *The Process* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1998) (Hebrew); Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It: The Collapse of the Oslo Process and the Violent Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003); Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004) (Hebrew).

2. In the Palestinians' perception, the Israeli side did not fulfill its commitments within the Oslo process framework either, especially in regard to continued building in the settlements and the ongoing increase in their population, and because the additional interim stages of the original accord went largely unimplemented.
3. This was the view of the Shin Bet security service, which was responsible for cooperation with the intelligence bodies of the Palestinian Authority aimed at foiling terrorism. However, this policy was harshly criticized by senior officers in Military Intelligence and in the IDF in general, who insisted that Arafat and the Palestinian security apparatuses were not doing all they could and should be doing.
4. Lally Weymouth, "Stream of Life," interview with Ehud Barak, *Newsweek* (May 6, 2002); Ehud Barak, "Israel Needs a True Partner for Peace," *New York Times* (July 30, 2001); Ehud Barak, "More an Actor Than a Leader," *Newsweek* (May 12, 2003); Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz* (September 6, 2002).
5. Ari Shavit, interview with Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Haaretz* (September 14, 2001); Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz* (September 6, 2002).
6. Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision—What Happened at Camp David and Taba?," *International Security*, vol. 28 (2003), pp. 5–43.
7. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*; Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*; Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz*, (September 6, 2002); Shimon Shamir and Bruce Maddy-Weitzman (eds.), *The Camp David Summit—What Went Wrong?* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005); Menahem Klein, *Shattering a Taboo: The Contacts Toward a Permanent Status in Jerusalem 1994–2001* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2001); Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," *New York Review of Books* (August 9, 2001); Acram Hanneh, "The Camp David Papers," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 30 (2001), pp. 75–97; Charles Enderlin, *The Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East 1995–2002* (New York: Other Press, 2003).
8. Klein, *Shattering the Taboo*; Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, pp. 228–235; Danny Rubinstein, "Temple Mount Top Item," *Haaretz* (June 21, 2004); Khalil Shikaki, "New Thinking about Jerusalem," presentation at conference in Washington DC, [www.centerpeace.org](http://www.centerpeace.org) (September 5, 2000); Pressman, "Visions in Collision," *International Security*, vol. 28, 2 (2003), pp. 5–43.
9. Amos Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute, 2004), pp. 47–58; Yosef Kuperwasser, "Identity of the Other: The Complex Structure of the Palestinian Society," in *As the Generals See It*, *ibid.*, pp. 35–46; Ari Shavit, interview with Ariel Sharon, *Haaretz Magazine* (April 13, 2001) and *Maariv Magazine* (September 5, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002).



10. Acram Hannieh, "The Camp David Papers," Abu Mazen, "We Went to Camp David So No One Would Say the Palestinians Refuse to Negotiate," *Haaretz* (August 9, 2001); Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "How Barak Torpedoed the Camp David Talks," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (July 20, 2001); Tracy Wilkinson, "Blame for Camp David Talks' Failure Takes a Twist," *Los Angeles Times* (July 29, 2001).
11. This policy position of the Palestinians is permanent and overt and has not changed since its adoption by the 19th Palestinian National Council, in November 1988.
12. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 416; Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*, pp. 475, 497. Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, p. 48; and Yosef Kuperwasser, "The Palestinian Vision—A State in All of Palestine," *Haaretz* (June 23, 2004).
13. Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*, pp. 329–330, 360, 426.
14. The research bodies of the Shin Bet, Military Intelligence (MI) and the Foreign Ministry agreed that the confrontation was a popular eruption from below, which Arafat exploited for his own purposes but which then lurched out of his control. However, senior levels in MI were disinclined to accept this conclusion and held instead that Arafat initiated, guided, and controlled the violence: Yossi Melman, "Dispute between Shin Bet and MI on Arafat's Part in the Disturbances," *Haaretz* (November 16, 2000). The director of MI, Major General Amos Malka, told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on November 21, 2000, that the events in the territories were shifting from a *popular uprising* (stone throwing, demonstrations) to *popular resistance*, characterized by a lower level of civilian involvement and increased terrorist activity. See Gideon Alon, "MI Chief: Arafat Will Continue with Terrorism," *Haaretz*, (November 22, 2000); Major Michael, "Has Arafat Returned to the Armed Struggle Strategy?" *Maarakhot* (December 2001), p. 6; Akiva Eldar, "Previous MI Chief Malka: Major General Amos Gilad Falsified MI Evaluation on the Causes to the Intifada," *Haaretz* (June 10, 2004); Akiva Eldar, "His Real Face" (*Haaretz* (June 11, 2004)); Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004); Danny Rubinstein, "Mistaken Evaluation Proves Self-Fulfilling," interview with Matti Steinberg, *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004); Amos Malka, "Retroactive Rewriting," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 30, 2004).
15. Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz* (September 6, 2002).
16. Danny Rubinstein interview with Dr. Matti Steinberg, "Mistaken Evaluation Proves Self-Fulfilling," *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004); Ami Ayalon, "The Broken Dream: Analyzing of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 9–17; Amos Malka, "Retroactive Rewriting," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 30, 2004).
17. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, p. 319.
18. Data from the Internet site of the Palestine Red Crescent Society: [www.palestinercs.org](http://www.palestinercs.org). According to IDF data, 129 Palestinians were



- killed by the end of October, another 170 in November–December, and 67 in the first three months of 2001. See Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *The Seventh War: How We Won and Why We Lost the War with the Palestinians* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004) (Hebrew), p. 401.
19. Data from the Internet site of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il).
  20. Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 368; Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*, pp. 319–321; Alex Fishman, interview with Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, *Yedioth Ahronot* (January 30, 2004).
  21. Ben Caspit, “The Intifada Two Years On—Part 1,” *Maariv* (September 6, 2002); and, “The Intifada Two Years On—Part 2,” *Maariv*, September 13, 2002); Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*, pp. 319–322; Gal Hirsh, “From ‘Cast Lead’ to ‘Another Way,’” p. 28.
  22. Shai Feldman, “The October Violence: An Interim Assessment,” *Strategic Assessment* (Tel Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University), vol. 3, no. 3 (November 2000).
  23. Memri document, “On the Conflict between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority,” June 2, 2003 (Hebrew), at: [www.memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?language=Hebrew&cnttype=4&cntid=1216](http://www.memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?language=Hebrew&cnttype=4&cntid=1216).
  24. Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard*, pp. 397, 402, 468.
  25. David Matz, “Why Did Taba End?,” *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2003), pp. 96–105, and no. 4, pp. 92–104; Pressman, “Visions in Collision.”
  26. Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz* (September 6, 2002); Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 416; Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 377, 445, 447, 455–456, 463–476.
  27. See chapter 6 in this book.
  28. Hirsh, “From ‘Cast Lead’ to ‘Another Way,’” p. 28.
  29. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 387–389, 459.
  30. Ariel Sharon, “Oslo Accord is Seed for War,” *Yedioth Ahronoth Magazine* (February, 4, 1994).
  31. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 387–389; Levy, *The Other Army of Israel*, p. 398; Sher, *Just beyond Reach*, p. 367; Caspit, “The Intifada Two Years On—Part 1,” *Maariv* (September 6, 2002); and “The Intifada Two Years On—Part 2,” *Maariv* (September 13, 2002); Ze’ev Schiff, “Mofaz-Ya’alon Dispute led to Mofaz-Sharon Dispute,” *Haaretz* (October 15, 2001).
  32. The premises cited here derive from a number of sources, press interviews with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, and his deputy, Moshe Ya’alon, and later interviews with Ya’alon in his capacity as Chief of Staff; interviews with Ehud Barak and Shlomo Ben-Ami; the talks delivered by IDF major generals which appear in *As the Generals See It*, and the addresses delivered by Prime Minister Sharon at the Herzliya Conferences of 2002 and 2003.
  33. According to Brigadier General Gazi Eizenkot, the commander of the Judea-Samaria Division and formerly the military aide to Barak and

- Sharon and as such involved in the political directives issued by the two prime ministers for managing the conflict, neither Barak nor Sharon talked about achieving a military decision of the conflict. At the same time, although Barak talked about reducing the violence, Sharon ordered its stoppage. Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).
34. Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004); Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv* (January 4, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); Kuperwasser, "Identity of the Other," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 41–42.
  35. Yehonatan Dahuah-Halevy, "The Palestinian Point of View vis-à-vis the Resolution of the Conflict," *Maarakhot*, no. 383 (May 2002), pp. 16–25; Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004).
  36. Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004). Stern, *ibid.*, p. 45.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
  38. Kuperwasser, "Identity of the Other," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 4–41; Yaakov Amidror, "The Components of Israeli Strategy in the War against Palestinian Terrorism," *National Security*, no. 2–3 (September 2003), pp. 13–23.
  39. Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv* (January 4, 2002); Amos Malka, "The Regional System Facing the Test of Stability," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 23–31; Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004).
  40. Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002).
  41. Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 47–58; Gabi Shefer, "Breakdown of Strategic Thought," *Haaretz* (June 5, 2001); Aluf Benn, "MI as Government Propagandist," *Haaretz* (February 6, 2003); Doron Rosenblum, "Who Needs Conceptions," *Haaretz* (June 25, 2004); Reuven Pedatzur, "Caution—Determined Intelligence Services," *Haaretz* (February 2, 2004); Matan Vilnai, "The Failure Belongs to the Political Level," *Haaretz* (March 31, 2004).
  42. Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv* (January 4, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with Ariel Sharon, *Haaretz Magazine* (April 13, 2001) Yaron London, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (August 13, 2004).
  43. Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); and see also: Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv* (January 4, 2002); Ya'alon, "Victory and Decision in a Limited Conflict," pp. 75–81.

44. Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); Amidror, "The Components of Israeli Strategy in the War against Palestinian Terrorism," p. 3.
45. Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, p. 57.
46. Ya'alon, "Force Preparation for a Limited Conflict," p. 26.
47. Moshe Ya'alon, then the deputy Chief of Staff, "Force Preparation for a Limited Conflict," pp. 24–28; Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002); and Ronen Bergman, *Authority Given* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2002) (Hebrew), Bergman, *Authority Given*, pp. 31–32.
48. Ya'alon, address at a seminar on "Relations Between the Political Level and the Military Level in a Reality of Asymmetrical Conflicts" (Maltam OTRI, Operational Theory Research Institute, February 24, 2003); See also Yoav Limor, interview with Major General Yitzhak Eitan, head of Central Command, *Maariv* (March 29, 2002).
49. Ben Caspit, interview with Major General Moshe Kaplinsky, *Maariv* (May 25, 2004); Avi Tzur, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Halobem* (August 2004); Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, We Didn't Win," *Haaretz* (October 1, 2004).
50. Hirsh, "From 'Cast Lead' to 'Another Path,'" pp. 27–28.
51. Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).
52. Hirsh, "From 'Cast Lead' to 'Another Way,'" pp. 28–29.
53. The number of casualties is from the Foreign Ministry's Web site and the number of terrorist attacks and preventions from the IDF site.
54. Hirsh, "From 'Cast Lead' to 'Another Way.'"
55. Aluf Benn, "Sharon: Arafat Is Like the Taliban," *Haaretz* (October 19, 2001); Lee Hockstader, "Palestinian Authority Described as Terrorist," *International Herald Tribune* (March 1, 2002).
56. During 2001 Arafat in fact tried to restore calm on a number of occasions, directing his security chiefs and the Fatah leadership to maintain a cease-fire. However, the decision-makers in Israel reacted to these moves with skepticism and disbelief. Harel and Issacharoff, *The Seventh War*, pp. 165–188.
57. Hirsh, "From 'Cast Lead' to 'Another Way,'" p. 30.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. IDF, "Suicide Bomber Attacks Carried Out vs. Attacks Prevented," at [www.idf1.il](http://www.idf1.il); Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004); Amos Harel, "From 40 Terrorist Attacks Per Quarter to 5: How Terrorism Is Prevented," *Haaretz* (April 8, 2004).
61. Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Ibal Giladi, head of Strategic Planning in the IDF, *Maariv* (January 2, 2004).
62. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 318–319.

63. Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Abronoth* (April 11, 2004).
64. According to the Shin Bet, 1,017 Israelis were killed and 5,598 were wounded, *Haaretz* (September 28, 2004). See also [www.idf1.il](http://www.idf1.il).
65. See the remarks of Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter at the Herzliya Conference (2003), "There Is Life after Terror," [www.herzliyaconference.org/\\_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=1031&CategoryID=170](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID=1031&CategoryID=170).
66. Ze'ev Schiff, "Who Won, Who Lost," *Haaretz* (August 8, 2003); Ofer Shelah, interview with Yisrael Hasson, *Yedioth Abronoth Magazine* (October 31, 2003); interview with four former Shin Bet chiefs, *Yedioth Abronoth* (November 14, 2003); Ari Shavit, interview with Ephraim Halevy, *Haaretz* (September 5, 2003); letter of refusal to serve signed by 27 pilots, *Yedioth Abronoth* (September 28, 2003).
67. Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Mike Herzog, *Maariv Magazine* (August 27, 2004).
68. The number of suicide bombings declined from 60 in 2002 to 26 in 2003 and 13 in 2004 (as of September 1). The number of Israelis killed fell from 452 in 2002 to 214 in 2003 and to 97 in 2004 (as of September 1). On these statistics, which were provided by the Shin Bet chief, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, We Didn't Win," *Haaretz* (October 1, 2004).
69. According to the IDF, the Palestinians' losses in the first 42 months of the confrontation (as of April 2004) were 2,720 killed and more than 25,000 wounded: see Amos Harel, "From 40 Terrorist Attacks Per Quarter to 5: How Terrorism Is Prevented," *Haaretz* (April 8, 2004). According to the Shin Bet, more than 6,200 Palestinians who were involved in violence have been "removed from combat" since Operation "Defensive Shield" in April 2002, with 940 of them (about 15 percent) killed: see Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, We Didn't Win," *Haaretz* (October 1, 2004).
70. Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Mike Herzog, *Maariv Magazine* (August 27, 2004).
71. Hassan al-Khashaf, a senior official in the Palestinian Information Ministry, *A Hiyat al Jadida* (July 18, 2001).
72. Ephraim Lavie, "The Road Map: Political Resolution instead of National Narrative Confrontation," *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2003), pp. 83–91.
73. On December 16, 2001, Arafat ordered a cease-fire and the cessation of the suicide bombings; on January 14, the IDF assassinated Raed Karmi, following which the suicide bombings, including attacks initiated by the Tanzim, were intensified. See note 72, above.
74. Yaron London, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Yedioth Abronoth* (August 13, 2004); Ari Shavit, interview with Ephraim Halevy, *Haaretz* (September 5, 2003).
75. Dr. Matti Steinberg, appearance before the think team of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies.
76. For discussion of these strategies see chapter 1.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE MILITARY ECHELON AND THE POLITICAL ECHELON IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ISRAELI- PALESTINIAN CONFRONTATION

*Kobi Michael*

Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on September 13, 1993, the military echelon in Israel found itself deeply involved in the political process. Its involvement took different forms over the years, but since the outbreak of the violent confrontation with the Palestinians the military echelon has moved to the front of the political stage and its influence on the management of the process has taken on singular significance.

In this chapter, I focus on the reciprocal relations that existed between the political level and the military level during the four years of the confrontation. These relations are described and analyzed based on a new conceptual framework, called “discourse space” between the two echelons. This chapter addresses the elements that influence and shape the discourse space and the effectiveness of the substantive civil control over the military level, in conditions of managing a violent and protracted confrontation with the Palestinians.

Organizationally, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has several striking advantages over civilian establishment bodies, including organizational discipline, discreetness, effective professional staff work, and, above all, almost exclusive responsibility and expertise for national intelligence assessment and strategic planning. These inputs were essential for the complex process that was on the agenda then.

The prime ministers who came through the military establishment (Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, and Ariel Sharon) and were accustomed to its modes of operation and its organizational culture placed deep confidence in the military, which they held in far higher regard than civilian systems. Confidence and trust of this degree between senior figures from the two levels can break down formal definitions of authority and blur relations of subordination and organizational hierarchy.

In situations of extreme distress, when the political level finds itself in a state of strategic helplessness that necessitates reliance on "expert advice," or locked in political impasse, the military level might "coerce" it into partnership. Similarly, the outbreak of a violent confrontation during a political process is liable to create conditions in which the military level "coerces partnership" on the political level.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the military echelon's unqualified recognition of the supremacy of the civilian echelon in Israel, a critical analysis of the reciprocal relations between the two echelons does not readily indicate a linear relationship in the direction of influence wielded by one level over the other. The reciprocal relations that existed between the echelons during the period under discussion were played out in the interpersonal space between Chief of Staff and Prime Minister and Defense Minister, and were affected by the tension between military thinking and political thinking and between the professional military interest and the political interest. Such tensions exist in parallel and forge an environment of dialectical interaction that necessarily influences the unfolding of the political process and, in this case, the violent confrontation that became part of it in the past few years.

The basic professional interest of the military level obliges it to identify the elements of military risk of political and military policies, analyze them, and prepare an appropriate response. Moreover, the military level tends to think in terms, that heighten the security threats to the state (worst-case scenarios) because the army, by definition and by its essence, must be prepared for the worst.

The military's mode of thinking and its professional interest are liable to prove an obstacle when it is called on to cope with political preferences and interests of the civilian leadership echelon, that are generally manifested as vaguely worded formulations of goals, modes of action, and agreements. The military echelon seeks sharp, clear definitions from the political level, and if these are not forthcoming will try to understand and articulate them by itself. The process of clarifying

the political-security directive takes place within the framework of the discourse space between the two levels.

### RECIPROCAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ECHELONS AS DISCOURSE SPACE

The reciprocal relations between the levels throughout the Oslo process can be described as a “discourse space” whose essence is the exchange of information, knowledge, and insights between the levels concerning a specific subject. The term reflects dynamic observation of a changing environment of interaction between the levels and makes it possible to identify and examine the changes that occur in course of the interaction.

The exchange of information and knowledge between the echelons helps the political echelon articulate the directive it wishes to convey to the military echelon. The influence exercised by the echelons is a function of the inputs that each of them contributes to the discourse space. The nature and character of the discourse can be described as having two dimensions: the dimension of content and the dimension of the political directive. They are determined by three independent variables: inputs of the political echelon, inputs of the military echelon, and the gradients of interaction between the two.

The interaction that takes place between the echelons in the discourse space is actually the meeting between statesmanship and military strategy. Drawing a clear boundary between statesmanship and military strategy is a problematic task that leaves many gray areas in which the demarcation of powers and responsibility between the sides is not necessarily clear, given the implications and the risks entailed in the very process and its outcome. This lack of clarity creates countertension, originating in the difference between the two conceptual worlds—the political and the military—and in the divergent perceptions and evaluations of each level regarding the strategic assets and the uncertainty that is entailed in a political process of transition from war to peace, and in the weight that should be ascribed to these evaluations.<sup>2</sup>

As noted, the discourse space enables each level to gain a better understanding of the limitations of the operative space of the other level and facilitates the articulation of directives by the political level. In a situation of coherent, consecutive discourse, there is a better prospect that the circles of knowledge of the two levels will be broadened. An open, high-quality discourse enables the military level to

clarify thoroughly the essence of the political directive (which does not always exist and is generally vague when it does) and influence the political or security process. Such a dialogue also generates a shared responsibility of the levels for the success of the process.

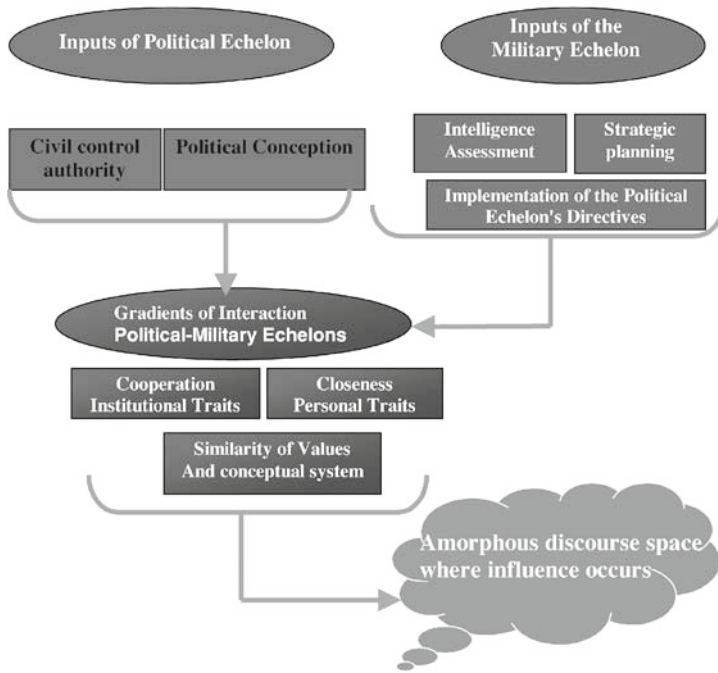
By its nature, the political echelon must treat the political process as an opportunity that needs to be exploited cautiously, with the risks taken into account, though with the emphasis on the prospects for success. On the other hand, the military echelon, even if it identifies a certain opportunity in the political process, is expected to focus primarily on the security risks and on the effort to posit the required response to them. To a certain degree, the countertension described above can be viewed as a vector of acceleration by the political level, in the face of a vector of containment by the military level, though in some cases, as we see later, these roles can be reversed. The proper exercise of statecraft can create a complementary, balancing countertension. However, in the absence of a crystallized, coherent political conception, and institutional capability for systematic strategic thought, an inherent weakness of the political level can reduce its maneuverability and affect its ability to create the necessary balance. Without that balance, the countertension is liable to generate conflict between the levels.

Accordingly, the encounter between the political level and the military level in the present context can be described as a type of intellectual one occurring both in the shadow of institutional-political interaction—which reflects relations of political power that each level wields in the state arena—and in the shadow of the interpersonal interaction that the prime minister and the defense minister have with the Chief of Staff. The underlying mechanism that organizes and regulates this encounter is substantive civil control, which is intended to ensure the political echelon's supervision of the military echelon, in order to regulate or balance the influence the military echelon exerts on the decision-making processes of the political echelon.

### THE SHAPING ELEMENTS OF THE DISCOURSE SPACE

The discourse space between the levels functions by means of three variables: the inputs of the political level, the inputs of the military level (especially intelligence assessments and strategic planning), and the gradients of interaction between the levels in the discourse space (see figure 4.1).





**Figure 4.1** Overview of the Proposed Theoretical Model

*Source:* Michael, Jacob (Kobi), "The Army's Influence on the Transition Process from War to Peace—The Israeli Case," The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, September 2004, p. 69.

### INPUTS OF THE POLITICAL LEVEL—ON THE ESSENCE OF THE POLITICAL-SECURITY DIRECTIVE

The political level's approach to conflict management contains an idea that is based on a conception and on a mode of action to implement it. The degree of clarity of the political-security conception and its resolve are acutely influenced by the broad political-security context and by the public legitimization and political support accorded the policymaking level (for its conception).<sup>3</sup> In the absence of a clear political-security directive, the military level is compelled to interpret the intentions of the political level for itself in order to translate them into military moves to further the political level's intentions as these are perceived by the military level.

The Chief of Staff identifies the vagueness of political-security directives as innate to the political culture, which the army must

accept, clarify, and execute in letter and in spirit, as far as possible: “To request the political level to issue a clear directive to the military level is naïve.”<sup>4</sup> Major General Yitzhak Eitan, Chief of Central Command, said in a newspaper interview, “That is the nature of the relations between the political level and the military level in Israel. We have never received a clear mission, and understanding the directive required interpretation and effort.”<sup>5</sup> Former minister Dan Meridor takes a similar view: “The military level is sometimes required to fill a vacuum left by the political level.”<sup>6</sup>

To a certain degree, the process of clarifying the political-security directive is one of generating knowledge that is common to both levels, while the clarification as such is an additional layer in the military’s active involvement in shaping the operational environment.

A coherent and crystallized political-security conception is a necessary condition for a clear and resolute political-security directive (although in certain cases even a coherent conception will not necessarily produce clear directives, as in a case involving Ehud Barak, described below). A clear and resolute political-security directive will limit the influence of the military level’s inputs in the discourse space and produce a discourse space bearing a civil-political character, which prefers civil and political state-policy considerations to military ones. In contrast, if the political-security directive is vague and ambiguous, the result will be the emergence of a discourse space bearing a military character. The political-military directive becomes a mechanism that regularizes the civil control over the military level and ensures the supremacy of civilian thought. As such, civil control defines the political orders of priority and subordinates the military level to them in order to carry out the goals set by the political level.

In effect, the decision-making process that takes place in the discourse space can be described as one of reciprocal influence, even though the advantages the military level enjoys in regard to staff work, intelligence assessment, and strategic planning may well accord it greater influence. In this context, the influence of the military level can also be viewed as a challenge to civil control, on the assumption that the leading indicator for the potency of civil control is which side wins out in the last analysis, with the priorities of the political level differing from those of the military level.<sup>7</sup>

Making the boundaries more flexible and expanding them—with the agreement of the political level or at its initiative—will bring about greater partnership of the military level in the decision-making process. Such participation will be defined as *involvement*. In contrast, a change of the boundaries at the initiative of the military level and

without the concurrence of the political level will constitute a breaching of boundaries that will be defined as *intervention*. Influence by means of intervention generates tension between the political level and the military level; whereas influence by means of partnership and involvement generates a more harmonious situation and manifests a cooperation between the two levels.

In the reality of managing a violent confrontation or a low-intensity conflict, the imbalance between the levels is liable to be aggravated because of the traditional structural weaknesses of the political level. The political level finds itself dependent on resources that are within the sphere of responsibility and authority of the military level, while lacking true capabilities to put forward reasoned and grounded alternatives to those adduced by the military. Lacking a staff structure and a tradition of staff work, the political level is also liable to find itself in situations where it is incapable of reviewing efficiently the military's activity. In this reality the military content of the discourse space tends to be greater.

### INPUTS OF THE MILITARY LEVEL AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF THE POLITICAL LEVEL

The military level can influence the political-security conception, the interpretative conceptual system of the political level, and the decision-making processes of the political level. Influence over the political-security conception refers mainly to shaping its basic assumptions and the logic by which they are ordered. A possible example of such influence occurred during the violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, when the military level (operating largely through intelligence) set out to tarnish Arafat's image and undermine his legitimacy as a leader fit for negotiations. The army's effort was aimed at isolating Arafat and making the continuation of the political process or its success conditional on his nonparticipation. The campaign was launched immediately after the outbreak of the violent confrontation, in the period of the Barak government, and continued during the negotiations with Arafat and his representatives.

Influence of this kind can also pose a challenge to the existing order—the order that dictates the definition of the national goals and the modes of activity to achieve them. The influence exerted on state-policy thinking will be considered more meaningful and deeper, as its implications are far-reaching and may also influence other spheres that are beyond the context of the confrontation being examined.

The military's influence on political-security thinking can enhance its status and heighten its future influence, and may also foment changes in the essence of political-military relations.

### Inputs of the Military Level

The military's influence on political decision-making takes place within the framework of the discourse space and is nourished by three main inputs:

1. *Intelligence Assessment*—The expanded role of military intelligence in Israel, together with its prestige and its closeness to the prime minister, heightens its potential influence on policy formulation, even though this is not within its purview.

According to the Israeli security conception, the central role of Military Intelligence (MI) is to supply the “warning space.” MI focuses on identifying potential security threats to the country and indications attesting to security escalation and deterioration, which are a prelude to war.<sup>8</sup> The approach of MI is characterized by a major emphasis on military-security issues and less so on general political, cultural, and economic issues, or, alternatively, by an effort to identify a potential for peace—when these issues are central in this context. Harkabi, indeed, warned against the limitations imposed on the statesman's maneuvering space, because of the tendency of intelligence to point to risks rather than prospects.<sup>9</sup>

On several occasions in the past this tendency by intelligence has led to mistakes in assessment or to flawed assessment concerning political initiatives by the adversary. Mistakes of this kind are liable to produce a “surprise” for the intelligence level and consequently for the political level as well. The intelligence agencies invest great effort and considerable resources to collect detailed information—in some cases, the system actually suffers from information “dumping”—but far less effort is devoted to research and to the intelligence assessment itself.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside the description and analysis of the facts about the adversary and the assessments themselves, the evaluations of the research units in the intelligence community that are presented to the political level also contain basic assumptions and a general conception.<sup>11</sup> The basic assumptions constitute a point of departure for understanding the adversary's intentions and political and military plans. The government's policy toward the Palestinians while conducting the negotiations on the final-status agreement (November 1999–June 2001)

and during the violent confrontation (beginning in September 2000) relied, among other inputs, on these basic assumptions and changing conceptions, some in written form and others—as arises from the remarks of senior working levels in the three intelligence organizations (military intelligence, the general security services, and the Mossad)—presented orally and without credible and verified intelligence grounds.<sup>12</sup> The result was the emergence of a metaphorical “Written Torah” and “Oral Torah,” with some of this discourse between the two levels also trickling into the public discourse and affecting the public mood and hence also the level of legitimization of political processes or policy decisions that were made in reference to them.<sup>13</sup>

During the years of the violent confrontation, criticism—some of it quite sharp—was frequently voiced against intelligence assessors for the “pendulum swings” that marked their assessments and their mistaken assessments concerning processes and trends relating to the confrontation.<sup>14</sup> Former Minister Meridor attributes the weakness of Israeli intelligence in the context of a complex political process, such as the Oslo process, to a lack of integration in the intelligence community and a dearth of intellectual courage. According to Meridor, there is a supreme necessity in Israel for a National Security Council that will be able to carry out the intelligence integration with the required intellectual courage. Otherwise, he believes, intelligence is liable to put forward assessments that tell the political leadership what it wants to hear. An example he cites is “accusing Arafat of organizing the terrorism even though no unequivocal intelligence evidence of this was ever found.” If Meridor cites the risk that intelligence assessments will be adjusted to the perceived views of the leadership only as a possibility, MK Yossi Sarid is far more absolute in his judgment: “We are no better than others. I hope we are no worse . . . I think that intelligence is being tailored even now.”<sup>15</sup>

The conception that Arafat was not interested in an agreement from the outset and therefore fomented the “armed struggle” began to be voiced by the political level in Israel mainly after the failure of the Camp David summit in July 2000, when Arafat’s “mask was removed.” The official explanations that were offered by the Prime Minister Ehud Barak—that Arafat bore full responsibility for the failure to reach an agreement and for the outbreak of the confrontation—constituted the basis for the national unity government that was established (March 2001) and was supported by the assessment of some senior officers in MI, notably the head of the research division at the time, Brigadier General Amos Gilad.<sup>16</sup>

From that point onward, the developments relating to the cessation of the political process and the escalation of the confrontation were identified by intelligence personnel as decisive proof in support of the reasons adduced by the political level for not obtaining an agreement and for the eruption of the violence. The updated intelligence basic assumptions were presented as an “Oral Torah” to the political level and to the public. According to authorized senior intelligence personnel, these updated basic assumptions were not necessarily consistent with the written intelligence assessments, which were also transmitted to the political level as part of the normal work procedures.<sup>17</sup> Colonel (res.) Ephraim Lavie, who during this period headed the Palestinian desk in MI’s research division, stated unequivocally that there was nothing in the division’s official written assessments in those years to ground the conception and appraisals that were presented orally by the head of the division to the political level. Lavie points to a dangerous phenomenon of intelligence assessments that are presented by authorized senior assessment agents as impressions that are not based on exact intelligence information and are not consistent with the written assessments.<sup>18</sup>

The military, citing the updated basic assumptions, took the lead in promoting the updated conception that cast serious doubt on the possibility of reaching a final-status settlement with the Palestinians deriving from the principle of two states for the two nations. Within a short time this conception was accepted by the political level, the military level, and the majority of the Jewish population in Israel. Senior intelligence personnel explained that although Arafat’s malicious intentions were exposed only in the final stages of the Oslo process, at the Camp David summit, and in the confrontation he fomented after the summit, his conspiratorial aims could have been discerned from the outset of the process if the political level had not concealed its moves from the military level.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, it was said, Arafat’s intentions to torpedo the negotiations at Camp David and to launch a violent confrontation had been forecast accurately, but the political level ignored the warnings, whereas the IDF paid heed to them and prepared for the confrontation.<sup>20</sup>

The military level, which adopted the “updated” conception, identified the intifada as an armed confrontation being directed by the PA, a confrontation for which the IDF had been preparing since the violence that followed Israel’s opening of the Western Wall Tunnel in September 1996.<sup>21</sup> Yet at the same time, the senior working levels in the intelligence community categorized the intifada as a “popular uprising” generated by internal processes that developed “from below”

within the Palestinian society, creating a military dynamic that escalated. Contrary to this assessment, the senior army levels described the intifada in full congruence with the political level's public-information line as a "planned and initiated offensive" on Arafat's part.

In the period of the negotiations on the final-status agreement, the chiefs of the intelligence community, at the directive of the political level, focused on collecting intelligence information about the intentions of the Palestinian leadership in the political process, and largely neglected the collection of information and research about the Palestinian society, which is a major element in the Israeli-Palestinian power equation. This tendency was later intensified, when in the months that preceded the violent confrontation that security and intelligence establishment was preoccupied with drawing up possible scenarios of confrontations that were liable to develop between the Palestinians' security units and the IDF. As a result, less attention was paid to differentiating among the currents and trends within the Palestinian society and leadership, and the Palestinian side overall was perceived as monolithic. The intelligence assessment did not discern the "deep currents" within the Palestinian society and did not point to the social and political frustration that had developed within it, in the absence of hope for an end to the occupation and a centralist, corrupt Palestinian self-rule regime.

From this point onward the military level deployed to deliver a strike that would immediately thwart the PA's intention to make political gains by means of terrorism and violence. At this stage, which began with the events of the Palestinian *Naqba* Day (May 15, 2000), following violent clashes between the Palestinian security forces and the IDF, and more intensively after the outbreak of the violent confrontation in September 2000, the term "burning into their consciousness" was coined.<sup>22</sup> The Palestinians were to be persuaded that their use of terrorism would cost them dearly. The hoped-for result of the "consciousness-burning" was that the Palestinians would come to the conclusion that by resorting to terrorism they would have fewer prospects of making gains in future negotiations than if they did not.

The thrust of the collection of information and of research by the intelligence community, which was henceforth dictated by the political and military levels alike, was narrowed to focus mainly on the security-military sphere. From this point on, the information received from the intelligence community was taken as decisive confirmation of the political assessments formulated by the policymaking level. Palestinian terrorism itself was defined by both the military level and the political level as an existential strategic threat, and the security

establishment was instructed to eradicate the terrorist organizations, including the Palestinian security units that were engaged in terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, from the latter part of 2000 and throughout the entire period under review, senior figures in the security establishment (from the IDF and the Shin Bet security service, at least) were actively involved in the efforts of the political level to create a combined and coordinated military-political-informational alignment to manage the confrontation with the Palestinians.

The active involvement of some of the senior members of the intelligence community in the political level's information policy made them even greater adherents of the new conception and undermined other viewpoints adduced by some of the senior working levels in the three organizations of the intelligence community. Thus, for example, the intelligence community preferred to attribute significance precisely to hate-articles and speeches by senior Palestinian figures against Israel after the outbreak of the crisis, and presented them to the leadership as reflecting a concrete aim to bring about Israel's liquidation.<sup>24</sup> This led the political level to define the confrontation incisively as a "war of no alternative" and "the continuation of the War of Independence," forced on Israel by the PA for purely ideological reasons (the "phased doctrine"), and to adopt an information line according to which Israel was being forced to react in order to defend its citizens against Arafat's campaign of terrorism. Through the intelligence assessment the military level became an active partner in refashioning the Israeli narrative in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>25</sup>

Despite a series of efforts undertaken by Ministers Shimon Peres and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and by nongovernmental figures, such as Yossi Ginossar, as emissaries of Prime Minister Barak, and despite several understandings with senior figures in the PA, including Arafat himself, the military level continued to monitor the threats meticulously and to make Israel's part in implementing the understandings conditional on their removal. The military lost interest in contacts that might lead to calm, not least because it was consistently skeptical about the intentions of the other side—which, as noted, was perceived as the planner and fomentor of the confrontation. In these conditions the military option remained the only effective way to cope with the Palestinian uprising, and it was this option that organized the environment of the confrontation.<sup>26</sup>

The assessments of the intelligence community served as support for the policy conceptions of the political level and became a basis for the political leadership in formulating its vigorous policy against



Arafat and the PA. Within the framework of the public discourse at the time, harsh criticism was leveled at the intelligence community.<sup>27</sup>

2. *Strategic Planning*—The military level's broad responsibility for Israel's strategic planning, including its involvement and influence in strategic planning relating to the peace processes, places it in an advantageous position vis-à-vis the political level. The upshot is that the political level is forced to rely almost entirely on the military level with regard to strategic planning—a situation that is liable to weaken civil control. The great weight of the military-security component in any possible political settlement and the military's proven ability in compiling data, carrying out staff work, and in strategic planning make the IDF Plans and Policy Directorate (formerly known as the Planning Branch) the most influential body in shaping political settlements. The army's influence has gone beyond saliently military areas and now also shapes the discourse space between the echelons by its control of the dimension of content.

In the absence of a civilian mechanism capable of putting forward alternatives at the general and specific planning level of the plans and policy directorate, the political level is liable to find it difficult to reject or modify the proposals offered by the military and thus find itself captive to the military-security paradigm. This situation is another manifestation of the weakness of substantive civil control.

About two years before the outbreak of the violent confrontation, the IDF completed the formulation of a new situation-assessment methodology. The new methodology called "Systemic Configuration Planning" (SCP) was developed with the assistance of experts in cognitive processes in coordination with MALTAM (Operational Theory Research Institute). By the time the violent confrontation erupted, the method had been developed and improved only in Central Command, under the command and guidance of Major General Moshe Ya'alon. Following Ya'alon's appointment as Deputy Chief of Staff, the development of SCP was stepped up and it was applied in the other territorial commands and in additional staff bodies in the IDF.

By means of these conceptual processes, complex and diverse aspects of the confrontation environment were analyzed at the general staff and territorial-command levels, with the understanding that it was no longer possible to ignore elements outside the confrontation arena and beyond the purely professional military aspects. Utilizing these cognitive processes, conceptual and theoretical frameworks were developed concerning the "nature of the confrontation" with the Palestinians and the systems of interpretative terms were enriched and adjusted to the

shifting context of the confrontation environment. One of the insights that emerged in this manner was that a major goal of the fighting in the confrontation was to shape the Palestinian “consciousness,” as well as the Israeli and international consciousness.<sup>28</sup>

The military level viewed itself as the spearhead in the effort to shape the consciousness of the Israeli public in regard to Israel’s ability to cope successfully with the Palestinian threat.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, the army sought to “burn into the Palestinian consciousness” the pointlessness of resorting to terrorism and violence. The military level was aware of the importance of international public opinion and utilized information means aimed at obtaining international legitimization for the army’s modes of operation and, at the same time, delegitimization of the Palestinians’ mode of struggle.

The cognitive processes led by the military level generated knowledge and produced insight about the need to wage an integrated and coordinated campaign. Managing such a campaign necessitated coordination among an array of bodies beyond the army, which for its part understood and internalized the importance of political, economic, and informational elements and the supreme importance of social cohesion and resilience. By leading the management of the violent confrontation and understanding the importance of the other elements, the military level found itself involved in them and exerting influence in nonmilitary spheres as well. The military’s role expansion thus became a *fait accompli*.

The military level effectively took control of the discourse space of the political level, largely supplanting it, and defined broadly and comprehensively the mode of managing the confrontation with the Palestinians, encompassing numerous elements that were not in the least military.

The military’s deep involvement in the strategic conceptualization and planning of complex political moves, some of which generate great public controversy, cast the military in a political light as a body that holds political views and is politically involved. This state of affairs was in gross contrast to the image of professionalism and neutrality that the military normally seeks to preserve. The military level and its leaders were determined to keep their distance from all public debate and vehemently rejected any attempt to portray them as being politically motivated.

The military level thus found itself caught in a trap. On the one hand, it wanted to exert hidden influence and not be seen to be shaping civilian policy doctrine; at the same time, the military level realized that no other establishment body had the capability to do the work.

In practice, the IDF's strategy planning level viewed itself as being responsible for shaping reality, furthering the aims that served the Israeli interest (according to its understanding of the political level's intentions), and manipulating adversarial forces to make their activity conform with Israeli goals. From this point of view, the perspective of the strategic planning level differed from that of intelligence, which had the task of evaluating reality.

During 2004, loud and clear voices were heard in the army asserting the irrelevance of the concepts of "victory" and "deciding the campaign" in this violent confrontation. This time, apparently, the military's thinking preceded the political thinking by the state-policy level in regard to the nature of the confrontation and the limitations accruing to its management by means of traditional military logic. The military level reached conclusions concerning the irrelevance of traditional concepts to the current confrontation with the Palestinians.<sup>30</sup>

This insight evolved and took root within the IDF senior command and was made public in statements by the sector commanders in the protracted confrontation. They showed a different facet of military thinking in regard to the management of the confrontation, in reference to the concepts of victory and military strategy: "Israeli deterrence did not prevent the outbreak of the confrontation and military force will not decide it. We are talking about a strategy of delay, which says that the conflict will continue for a very long time, that there is no solution of instant victory, and that the military effort is intended to achieve a political aim."<sup>31</sup> The chief of central command, Major General Moshe Kaplinsky, spoke in a similar vein: "I don't think this can be finished in one fell swoop. In this type of confrontation it is impossible to go all the way to the last terrorist."<sup>32</sup> Though this may be a case of delayed understanding (the interviews took place in April and May 2004, respectively), it is also evidence that the army was not entrenched in its thinking and was able to adapt its perceptions to the reality of the lengthy confrontation.

The military level is now apparently endeavoring to reshape the content of the discourse space with the political level and get the policymakers to apprehend the limits of Israeli military power in managing a confrontation of this kind: they must be led to grasp the distinction between military victory in battle and a political victory. The IDF has begun to emphasize the limits of military might and transfer to the political level the responsibility for realizing the military achievement and leveraging it to achieve a political victory.

A number of factors—the military's insights concerning the nature of the present confrontation, its recognition that victory is an

irrelevant concept in this case, its desire to avoid a repetition of the negative effect of the withdrawal from Lebanon, and the fear of creating a vacuum in the Gaza Strip—intertwined to make the senior military echelon grasp the necessity of renewing the political process and dialoguing with the Palestinian “partner.” In public statements, the Chief of Staff expressed concern that a unilateral move such as Prime Minister Sharon’s disengagement plan was liable to be construed by the other side as a victory for terrorism and that it would be better to carry it out as part of an agreement (with a Palestinian body). Such remarks by senior military figures had the effect of angering the prime minister and further heightening the tension between the political and military echelons.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in Operation Days of Penitence (October 2004), carried out in the Gaza Strip following the firing of Qassam rockets at the city of Sderot, the military espoused an approach at odds with that of the political level.<sup>34</sup> The army had reservations about a large-scale operation and pressed the political decision-makers to end the incursion a few days after it began, which they finally did. To a certain degree, then, the previous situation seems to have been reversed: the military level demonstrated moderation, the political level urged sharper military responses.

3. *Application and Implementation of the Political Level’s Directives*—This input concerns the manner in which the military field level carries out the directives of the political level. Here it is important to distinguish between active moves, which the army initiates, and passive moves, referring to the nonimplementation or “fudging” of directives. In certain cases, even when implementing signed agreements, the military level tries to reduce the uncertainty and risk by taking independent action in the field without directives from the political level or contrary to the spirit of such directives.<sup>35</sup>

The army’s senior field levels, such as the chiefs of the territorial commands, were involved in the negotiations as professional advisers and were in charge of implementing the agreements on the ground. So pervasive was their involvement that it seemed—even after the political process partially stabilized—that the political level was not taking a shaping initiative but was leaving things to be managed by the military, which came to feel that it was shouldering all the responsibility.<sup>36</sup>

The intimate partnership that existed between Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister and defense minister and the senior levels of the IDF in the first years of the Oslo accord created a sense that the political level was exercising control over the military. In practice, the political level did not demonstrate true interest or expertise in connection with innumerable day-to-day events, most of them at the level of friction

with the Palestinian population. Similarly, in the period of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister and Yitzhak Mordechai as defense minister no true control was exercised over the army's actions on the ground (apart from a brief period at the outset of Netanyahu's term, when he tried to exclude the military from active involvement in the political process). Following the eruption of violence after the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel in Jerusalem (September 1996), the political level, under Netanyahu, did not prevent the military from deploying and acting on the basis of the professional and operational conclusions that it drew itself from the violent events.

The brief tenure of the Barak government provides the most interesting and challenging examples about the military's implementation of political agreements and directives issued by the political level. This period was characterized, on the one hand, by an intensified political process, which was geared toward bringing an end to the conflict at the Camp David summit (July 2000), and by an outbreak of Palestinian violence on the other hand. In the Barak period, the continuation of the political process until the termination of the Taba talks, in January 2001, alongside the management of the violence was often characterized by insufficient control of the political level over the army's mode of implementing the policy for managing the confrontation with the Palestinians, a policy whose central principle was to contain and reduce the violence.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the high regard in which Barak was held as Chief of Staff and as a strategist, and notwithstanding his intimate knowledge of the military establishment and the tremendous public and political support he received in the 1999 elections, he was unable to translate his political conception into a clear and resolute directive to the military level. This lacuna was especially evident in regard to managing the violent confrontation and cooperation between the political and military echelons.<sup>38</sup>

The outbreak of the violence found the IDF ready and prepared, and the army's reaction in fact left the Palestinians stunned and furious at the disproportion in the casualty rate of the two sides.<sup>39</sup> The deterioration seemed to have been predetermined; Israeli attempts at the political level to stop the surging violence and get the political process back on track proved futile. At this point, the military's cooperation with the political echelon and its mode of implementing the directives issued by the political level and the agreements reached with the Palestinians can be examined.

Many testimonies exist to the fact that the military level made life difficult for the political level, found it hard to understand its intentions,

and in certain cases acted in explicit contradiction to its directives.<sup>40</sup> Was this a case of intentional insubordination? It would appear not. What seems to have happened is that the directives were fudged because of the mood among senior field commanders and the considerable space for maneuver they enjoyed. This was a type of reality-shaping that disrupted the activity and intentions of the political level, in which tactical and operative moves by the army at the field level thwarted strategic intentions of the political level. The army's readiness for the scenario of the violent outburst enabled it to rapidly implement its already prepared plan of operation. The IDF's effective—perhaps too effective—response immediately shaped the environment of the confrontation and apparently had a far-reaching effect on the Palestinians' mode of response. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, a former Chief of Staff who was a minister in the Barak government, found it difficult to explain Barak's inability (or unwillingness) to impose the political directive on the military.<sup>41</sup>

During the months between the Camp David conference and the Taba negotiations, and against the background of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, there were reports of "written directives of the political level being formulated, written, signed and sent nowhere. They remained filed in the various folders."<sup>42</sup> The army's actions on the ground and their implications were not lost on senior political figures. Some of them understood that the army's moves were thwarting the political level's intentions and aims and drew the attention of Prime Minister and Defense Minister Barak to this state of affairs, urging him to intervene, but rarely got a positive response. The Deputy Defense Minister Ephraim Sneh experienced close-up the military's mode of activity and understood well its serious implications, which were countering the aims of the political level.<sup>43</sup> Sneh wrote to Prime Minister Barak, "From the Chief of Staff down to the sergeants at the check-posts, no one is implementing your policy" and told Barak he should "Shake up the Chief of Staff, the army, and all the generals."<sup>44</sup> Shlomo Ben-Ami was even more outspoken. In a letter to the prime minister he complained that "the army is behaving like a state within a state."<sup>45</sup>

Attempts to restore calm that cabinet ministers tried to work out with the Palestinians, at Barak's instructions, got nowhere. Official Israeli commitments to relax various prohibitions on the Palestinian population were not carried out. The fact that the directives of the political level were in practice not implemented placed the ministers directly involved—Shimon Peres and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak—in embarrassing situations and cast a heavy shadow over their personal credibility in the eyes of the Palestinians.<sup>46</sup> At a certain stage the two

gave up their efforts and Lipkin-Shahak even warned that what was going on was very close to a coup.<sup>47</sup>

By its actions, were to a degree unrelated to the directives of the political level, the military level assumed responsibility for interpreting and shaping reality. The political level, by choosing not to call the army to order and forcing it to carry out the political directives in letter and in spirit, shirked its responsibility and left the arena to the military. The military level was aware that it was liable to be called to account if the situation deteriorated seriously and Israeli casualties continued to rise. With that responsibility and with the risk entailed, the army coped with the situation with what it viewed as the optimal mode of action.<sup>48</sup>

Another possible explanation as to why the military level did not always implement the political level's directives in the Barak period was the prime minister's unwillingness to impose his will on the military. This explanation cannot be substantiated, but it is possible that Barak, frustrated by his failure at Camp David, cast about for someone to blame. He ascribed the failure of the summit conference to the recalcitrance of the Palestinians and their leader Arafat, and possibly the Palestinian violence was considered corroboration of the accuracy of this claim.<sup>49</sup>

An especially interesting account, which is not consistent with the critical tone that characterizes most of the testimonies in this section, was published in the security establishment bimonthly *Maarachot* by Colonel Gal Hirsh (2004). Hirsh was the commander of the Binyamin Brigade (in the Ramallah district) at the start of the confrontation and then served for two years as operations officer of Central Command. According to Hirsh, the military level viewed itself as being a partner and to a certain degree also responsible for shaping an operative environment that would serve political purpose and logic, as understood by the military. His description shows clearly the military's commitment to the success of the political process that the political level sought to lead. In this sense, the manner of implementation of the political directive, as understood by the military, demonstrates a high level of commitment by the military to the policymakers. The military level operated in areas that went well beyond the accepted spheres of its responsibility and undertook missions of a political-state character, such as building "the tunnel to the final-status settlement" and "developing a relationship possessing inter-state logic."<sup>50</sup> Hirsh's article illustrates, perhaps even more strikingly, the conceptual and interpretative disparity between the military level and the political level over the essence of the political directive, and more

so the boundaries of operation of the military level and the manner of implementation of the political level's directives.

The findings about this input of the military level (its mode of implementing the political level's directives) reveal a salient weakness in substantive civil control. The political level was unsuccessful in balancing and regulating the influence exerted by the military level on the confrontation environment and on the decisions of the policy-making level. The military, by its operations at the field level and its responsibility for the operative management of the confrontation, became a shaping strategic element whose operative moves were not necessarily consistent with the intentions of the political echelon.

## THE THREE GRADIENTS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ECHELONS

### **Closeness: Personal Characteristics**

The personal closeness between the political leader and the officers of the IDF had been significant since the establishment of both the state and the IDF. This relationship went a long way toward shaping the personal trust that existed between leader and officer and the leader's willingness to allow the military level to take part in the political level's decision-making.

Yitzhak Rabin, who throughout his political and diplomatic career made no secret of his loathing for the political establishment and his fondness and high regard for the IDF, adopted a style of work that was based on norms and characteristics he knew from army staff work. He also preferred to work with military personnel and relied on them more than on politicians. Peri describes Rabin as a former Chief of Staff who was fond of the military style of work, which he perceived as being flexible, mission-oriented, and resolute. It was a style he preferred to the bureaucratic style, which was vitiated by personal intrigues and had a pronounced tendency to leak information. Rabin enjoyed using various levels within the military as his personal staff headquarters. The young officers admired "Mr. Security," obeyed his authority, and were loyal to him in a manner that is unusual in civilian life.

In Peri's view, Rabin's personality and style of work were among the factors that brought about the military's deep involvement in political issues in the 1990s. A similar situation recurred during the tenure of Ehud Barak as prime minister, perhaps even more intensively because of Barak's relatively rapid transition from the army to politics.



However, Barak's suspiciousness and centralistic bent led him to rely on a small, special staff he formed consisting of military men he knew and trusted.<sup>51</sup>

Benjamin Netanyahu, who was elected prime minister in May 1996, objected ideologically to the Oslo accord but was compelled to uphold the political and international commitment to its continuation. Netanyahu, who had not come up through the military and felt no special obligation toward it, viewed the military echelon, and especially Chief of Staff Lipkin-Shahak, as being identified with the previous Labor government and the Oslo approach, and tried to reduce the army's involvement in the process.<sup>52</sup>

Ehud Barak's election as prime minister ostensibly heralded a change in the reciprocal relations between the two levels, if only because of his past as Chief of Staff and his personal acquaintance with the members of the general staff at the time, many of whom had served under him and had been promoted by him. However, Barak ascribed little importance to the views of the Chief of Staff (according to Colonel Shaul Arieli in a personal interview). The personal tension between Barak and Chief of Staff Mofaz affected the relations between the echelons; Barak tended to absorb with silent understanding the expressions of ideological independence voiced by the Chief of Staff and did not respond to his personal criticism of the government.

Gilad Sher, who was one of the closest officials to Barak, believes that any tension that may have existed between Barak and Chief of Staff Mofaz was one-directional—from the direction of Mofaz. According to Sher, Barak did not attach great importance to personal relations and took a studied businesslike approach to the issues. On the other hand, Sher notes, Barak did not succeed in applying sufficient civilian authority, not least for reasons having to do with his personality, and this had an adverse effect on civilian oversight.<sup>53</sup>

The relations between Prime Minister Sharon and Chief of Staff Mofaz had their ups and downs. Sharon had a high regard for Mofaz's resolve and for his hawkish views, which Mofaz had voiced publicly already during the period of the Barak government. Despite three occasions when Sharon thought Mofaz exceeded his authority (his remarks about the Abu Sneina hills in Hebron in October 2001, about the "seam zone," and about deporting Arafat, in April 2002), the relations between them can be described as close. The ultimate proof of this was Sharon's appointment of Mofaz as defense minister (though this was also due to his electoral value for the Likud).

In contrast, the relations of Sharon and Mofaz with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon were fraught with tension and suspicion. Beyond

Ya'alon's anger at Mofaz's tendency to intervene in his spheres of authority as Chief of Staff and Mofaz's behavior as a supreme Chief of Staff (at least in the first year of his term as defense minister), their relations were further aggravated by the growing conceptual differences between them over how to manage the violent confrontation. Since 2003 Ya'alon showed a more moderate and conciliatory approach toward the Palestinians and was even critical of the political level's "stinginess" toward the Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen.<sup>54</sup> He objected to the use of massive military force and advocated coordination with the Palestinians ahead of the disengagement from the Gaza Strip. The prime minister was upset with Ya'alon's views and relations between the two were no more than correct and far from close.

### **Institutional Traits**

The institutional traits of the mutual relations between the political level and the military level in Israel were shaped in the shadow of a prolonged existential security threat, which is fundamentally military in character. Accordingly, the authority and knowledge that are needed to cope with the threat are perceived to reside in the military establishment and its representatives. In these conditions the context becomes a structural advantage for the military.

The military's inherent advantage did not lead it to deny the supremacy of the civil echelon in Israel. Even during all the years of the Oslo process, which were characterized by the military's deep involvement in the decision-making processes, the military level accepted the authority of the political level without question and recognized its sole prerogative to make state-policy decisions. Nevertheless, the military gained greater influence in the decision-making processes.

One of the important links between the political and the military levels is the military secretary—senior officers posted to the bureaus of the prime minister and the defense minister and subordinate to the ministers. The military aide has latitude of judgment and conceptual independence that at the same time must be filtered through a system of delicate and sensitive balances, based on the understanding that the officer will return to active service afterward. Military secretaries need to find the connecting points between the political leader and the military level and be capable of expressing their opinion even if it is at odds with the view of the military. Sher, who was closely acquainted with the military secretary to Prime Minister and Defense Minister

Barak, asserts that the role is “very, very significant.” Sher adds that the input of the military secretary is highly influential in terms of the political leader’s decision-making and therefore his personal qualities are crucial.<sup>55</sup>

Serious flaws in the interaction between the echelons were visible during Netanyahu’s tenure as prime minister—at one point he decided to exclude Chief of Staff Lipkin-Shahak from the decision-making process—and of Barak as prime minister and defense minister, when Chief of Staff Mofaz publicly criticized the government’s actions and decisions and made a direct appeal to the Israeli public over the prime minister’s head.

Barak’s decision to withdraw from Lebanon unilaterally only heightened the criticism in the IDF toward the prime minister and the political level in general. “The criticism of Barak within the IDF was lethal. The DMI, Major General Amos Malka, sent him (with a copy to the Chief of Staff) a trenchant, harsh letter in which he complained that the decision to pull out of Lebanon had been made without any discussion or consultation with the security establishment.”<sup>56</sup> The criticism became public and blunt,<sup>57</sup> but Barak chose not to respond and not to let the military’s criticism of the government and its decisions go beyond the confines of the meetings between them. Barak found himself in a bind. He believed in the security establishment, he knew well and from which he himself had emerged; remembering his criticism of the Oslo accord when he was Chief of Staff, he allowed the IDF greater leeway. At the same time, he understood the negative ramifications his nonresponse might entail. At this stage the military echelon appeared to absolve itself of responsibility vis-à-vis the political echelon and held it fully to blame, should the withdrawal fail, while voicing dire prophecies about the dangerous negative consequences the move would have in the Palestinian arena and for the political process.

Uzi Dayan was highly critical of the pattern of interaction between the echelons, especially during Barak’s tenure as prime minister. He notes the basic structural weakness and emphasizes the importance of the dialogue between the levels and their joint responsibility as a necessary element, in addition to recognition of the military’s subordination to the political level.<sup>58</sup>

From the perspective of eight years of service as a senior officer and then as a politician during the Oslo process (1993–2001), Lipkin-Shahak provides a clear and detailed picture of the patterns of institutional interaction between the political level and the military level. In a wide-ranging personal interview, Lipkin-Shahak described the

characteristic dynamics of the decision-making processes and shed light on the formation of security conceptions within the context of the political process—conceptions that are “manufactured” by the military establishment and formulated in a bottom-up process. He also agrees with the generalization that holds that if the military level is pushed into spheres that are perceived as political, this is due to the political level. At the same time, he finds it difficult to say where the line between the two levels passes or what the essence of civil control should be.<sup>59</sup>

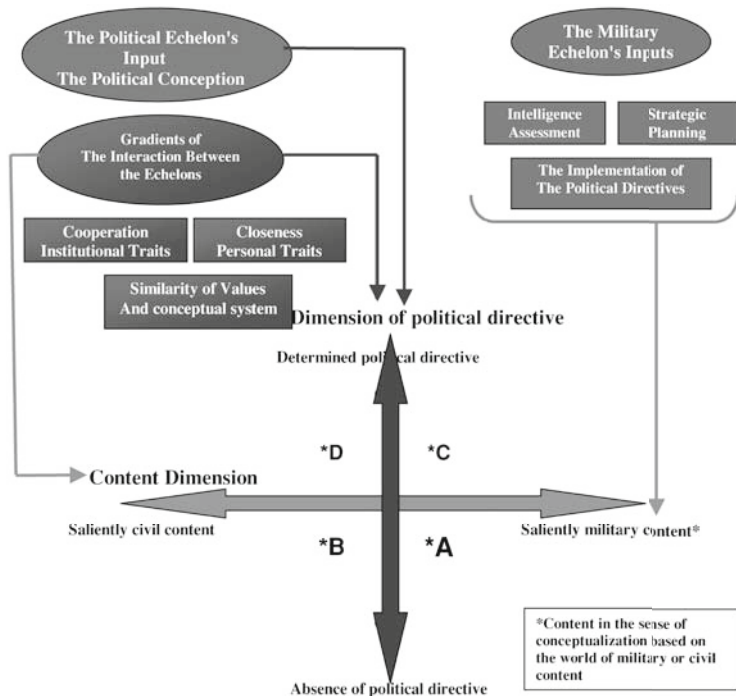
When the prime minister also serves as the defense minister, as Rabin and Barak did, a mediating ministerial link between the military level and the prime minister is missing, a situation that is liable to lead to inordinate dominance of the military. This, at least, is one of the explanations adduced by Yossi Beilin for the fact that the army felt free to criticize the government and go public with its criticism. Beilin is critical of the army’s public pronouncements on almost every subject, in a situation in which the security cabinet’s rejection of proposals by the military were immediately leaked to the media as a pressure tactic and MI assessments, which were also leaked, were perceived as the “pure truth,” even though many of them turned out to be groundless.<sup>60</sup>

The military’s solid status and the public’s faith in the army establishment enabled the military level to voice political criticism within the framework of the institutional patterns of activity and intervene in the workings of the society to a point of clashing with the prevailing viewpoints in the society and with the attitudes of the political leadership.

### SIMILARITY OF INTERPRETATIVE CONCEPTUAL SYSTEM

Army officers turned politicians find communication with the security establishment easy. They speak its language and think in its conceptual terms. This is more pronounced in the case of the immediate transition to politics, without substantive civilian experience or the enrichment of former officer’s interpretative conceptual system. The presence of many senior officers at cabinet meetings alongside ministers and a prime minister who had a career in the army make it easier for the military to get its messages across and facilitates its efforts at persuasion. The officers get an attentive, sympathetic hearing from people used to the military way of thinking.

The gradients of interaction between the levels and their characteristics shape the dialectic between participation in the political process on the one hand, and the effectiveness and quality of substantive civil control as distinct from formal control.<sup>61</sup> This is a dialectic that takes place between the military level as an element that brings about deterioration and an escalation of violence that are not the intention of the political level, and a military level that acts as a moderating influence and leads the political level in strategic thought, while carefully adapting terms such as “victory” and “deciding the campaign” to the emerging context of a protracted asymmetrical confrontation. This dialectic would appear to be a cornerstone in the discourse space between the levels (see figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2** Dimensions of the Discourse Space

*Source:* Michael, Jacob (Kobi), “The Army’s Influence on the Transition Process from War to Peace—The Israeli case,” The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, September 2004, p. 71.

*Note*—A, B, C, and D are four types of discourse space that are characterized by the dimension of the discourse space content and the dimension of the political directive.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I gave a structured and chronological account of the interaction between the political echelon and the military echelon in the management of the violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation from 2000–2004, as a continuation of the pattern of interaction that already took shape at the outset of the Oslo process. This interaction, which is conducted as a “discourse space,” is characterized by a dialectic and by countervailing tensions.

The findings paint a clear picture of the content of the discourse space between the levels throughout the years of the Oslo process, with an emphasis on the four years of the violent confrontation, which can be defined, in terms of the proposed theoretical model, as a Type A discourse space. This is a discourse space that is laden with military content and a loose political directive. It reflects a salient weakness of substantive civil control, leading most tellingly to the absence of regularization and balance in the influence wielded by the military on political decision-making processes. The military level functions as the primary shaping factor of the confrontation’s environment, and the decisions of the political level tend to reflect the influence of the military on it.

The cardinal finding concerning the weakness of substantive civil control is relevant for all four personnel combinations of the political level-military level during the years of the violent confrontation:

1. September 2000–February 2001: Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz.
2. March 2001–July 2002: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz.
3. July 2002–November 2002: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon.
4. November 2002–November 2004: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon.

Despite the differences in the patterns of interaction between the echelons in the different periods and personnel combinations, the military level continued to constitute the most influential factor in shaping the confrontation’s environment and in managing the confrontation. During the period of the Barak government and in Sharon’s first term as prime minister, the relations between the levels appear to have been characterized by tension, mutual suspicions, and

flagrant breaches of authority by Chief of Staff Mofaz. These took the form of publicly expressed objections and criticisms of moves undertaken by the political level, including the decision to withdraw from Lebanon (May 2000), acceptance of the Clinton plan (December 2000) that was endorsed by the government, and decisions concerning the management of the confrontation with the Palestinians (notably the evacuation of the Abu Sneina hills in Hebron in October 2001). Barak's reaction to the behavior of the military level was marked by moderation to the point of ignoring it. Sharon and Ben-Eliezer reacted more sharply—Ben-Eliezer threatened at one point to fire the Chief of Staff—but no substantive change ensued in the situation.

The tension in the relations between the levels was manifested in the disparity between the more militant attitudes presented by the military about how to manage the confrontation with the Palestinians, contrasted with a more moderate posture displayed by Barak and afterward by Defense Minister Ben-Eliezer. In Sharon's first term as prime minister he toned down his pronouncements and somewhat softened his actions vis-à-vis the Palestinians under the moderating influence of the Labor Party, which was his senior partner in the coalition. However, several statements he made in meetings with army officers show that his attitude was closer to that of the military. There were also cases in which Sharon expressed disappointment at the military's lack of creativity and its unsatisfactory achievements in preventing and eradicating terrorism.

In Sharon's second term, the army's militant activism appeared to be consistent with his approach to the confrontation. Indeed, until the beginning of 2004 the mutual relations between the levels, in Sharon's second term as prime minister, were more harmonious, despite tensions that were generated by statements made by Chief of Staff Ya'alon (mainly concerning the Sharon government's policy toward Abu Mazen and in regard to the disengagement plan). Evidently, after the army began to acquire new insights concerning the limits of the existing conceptualization, cracks appeared in the harmony that had emerged between the levels. Sharon's confidants made his disappointment with the Chief of Staff known publicly and rumors spread that Ya'alon's term would not be extended by another year, as is traditional.

During Sharon's second term, the military level posited a conceptual and ideological alternative to that of the political level in regard to the disengagement plan. On this subject, there had been a turnabout: in the period of the Barak government and during Sharon's first term the military favored a more militant approach toward managing the

confrontation as compared with the political level, whereas now, in Sharon's second term, the military was presenting a more moderate approach than the political level. In both cases, though, the problem concerning the effectiveness of civil control remained: the political level was unsuccessful in positing an alternative to the military's concept, which continued to be the most influential factor on the approach of the political level and especially on the decision-making process concerning the management of the confrontation.

The findings and analyses paint a complex and also worrying picture concerning the scale of the military's influence on the political level and on the political processes, and about the effectiveness of the civilian control that the political level exercises (or does not exercise) over the military level. On the other hand, it is clear that the military recognizes the unassailable authority of the political level.

In the overwhelming majority of the cases in which the military level exceeded the directives of the political level, and in the majority of the cases in which the influence of the military level trickled down into the depths of the political decision-making process, the reasons were the weakness of the political level, the vagueness and irresolution of the political directive, the political level's consent to deep involvement by the military, and in the worst case the ineffectuality of senior cabinet ministers who were totally uninvolved in the decision-making processes. In many cases the military level felt it had to fill in the intellectual and conceptual blanks left by the political level in connection with strategic planning. They felt deep commitment and responsibility concerning the implications of the protracted violent confrontation and believed it had the duty to develop a system of alternative concepts that are more sophisticated than the existing conceptual structure, which in its view was no longer relevant or suited to the reality of a protracted confrontation with the characteristics of a low-intensity conflict.

One of the interesting manifestations of the thought processes of the military level was the updating of the terms "victory" and "deciding the campaign." This conceptual revision represented a revolution in the military's strategic thinking—a revolution whose implications trickle into the political level and have influenced its perception. This influence led to political moves that, even if not yet implemented, have the potential to foment change—perhaps even concrete and meaningful change. From this point of view, the influence of the military level on the political level could turn out to be moderate and restraining. Nevertheless, as long as the political level lacked a systematic doctrine that could produce a clear directive, the army found it difficult to come up with military achievements that would bring



about the realization of political goals. It continued to grope about in conceptual darkness in an effort to interpret the intentions of the political level and their relevant context for military activity.

In summation, if the political level wished to introduce effective civil control of the military and offset its impact on the decision-making processes, it should have generated knowledge and put forward high-quality challenging alternatives to those that the army adduced. To this end a revolution was needed in governmental culture in Israel. Such a revolution would lead to the creation of a culture of strategic thought that would develop civilian state institutions with the aim of presenting and examining alternatives to managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thus freeing the political level from its almost total dependence on the abilities and qualities of military strategic planning.

## NOTES

1. Major General Giora Eiland, head of the IDF Plans and Policy Directorate, in a seminar at the Operational Theory Research Institute (MALTAM) on "Relations between the Political Level and the Military Level in a Reality of Asymmetrical Conflicts," February 24, 2003 (hereafter: MALTAM Seminar).
2. An interesting comment on the difference between the levels can be found in the talk delivered by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, in the MALTAM Seminar: *Military level and political level are two different worlds. The political level is not always sufficiently well acquainted with the army and its abilities.*
3. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Transition from War to Peace: The Complexity of Decision Making—The Israeli Case* (Tel Aviv: Steinmetz Center, 1996) (Hebrew).
4. MALTAM Seminar.
5. Yoav Limor, interview with Major General Yitzhak Eitan, Chief of Central Command, *Maariv* (March 29, 2002).
6. A personal interview, May 27, 2003.
7. In this regard, see H.R. Kohn, "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1997), pp. 140–153; C.M. Desch, "Soldiers, States, and Structures: The End of the Cold War and Weakening U.S. Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3 (1998), pp. 389–408.
8. Uri Saguy, *Lights within the Fog* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1998) (Hebrew), p. 142.
9. Yehoshafat Harkabi, "Complications between Intelligence and the Statesman," in *Intelligence and National Security* Mirkam Series, Maarachot, 1987, 2nd ed. (May 1988) (Hebrew), p. 445.

10. Amos Harel, "Israel Caught Unprepared again," *Haaretz* (January 15, 2004).
11. Isaac Ben-Israel, *Dialogues on Science and Military Intelligence* (Tel Aviv: Maarachot, 1989) (Hebrew); on the responsibility for formulating the national military assessment in Israel, see Shlomo Gazit, *Between Warning and Surprise* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2003) (Hebrew).
12. For further elaboration, see Ephraim Lavie, interview in *Haaretz* (June 13, 2004); Akiva Eldar, "His True Face," *Haaretz* (June 11, 2004); Danny Rubinstein, "The Mistaken Assessment Fulfilled Itself," *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004).
13. Yossi Beilin, *Manual for a Wounded Dove* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot, 2001) (Hebrew), pp. 256–257.
14. Ran Edelist, "MI at Your Request," [www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-1579249,00.html](http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-1579249,00.html) (January 24, 2002).
15. Dan Meridor, personal interview, May 27, 2003; Yossi Sarid, personal interview, June 12, 2003; See also, Ronen Bergman, *Authority Given* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2002) (Hebrew), pp. 96–100.
16. See Amos Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It: The Collapse of the Oslo Process and the Violent Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 47–58. In Gilad's view, it was wrong in the first place to treat Arafat's peace intentions seriously when the Oslo accord was signed with him, because he never hid his strategic political vision of establishing a Palestinian power stretching from the sea to the desert, including Jordan.
17. Yosef Kuperwasser, "The Identity of the Other: The Complex Structure of the Palestinian Society," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As The Generals See It*, pp. 35–46; Jonathan Halevi, "The Palestinian Point of View vis-à-vis the Resolution of the Conflict," *Maarachot*, no. 383, May 2002, pp. 16–25; Amos Malka, "The Regional Arena under the Test of Stability," pp. 20–21 and Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, p. 51.
18. Yoav Stern, interview with Ephraim Lavie, *Haaretz* (June 13, 2004).
19. Gilad, "Evaluation of Developments," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 47–48, 54.
20. Ben Caspit, "The Intifada Two Years On," *Maariv*, part 1 (September 6, 2002); part 2 (September 13, 2002).
21. Moshe Ya'alon, "Force Preparation for a Limited Conflict," *Maarachot*, Vol. 380–381, (December 2001), pp. 24–29.
22. Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, in an interview with Ari Shavit, *Haaretz Magazine*, August 29, 2002.
23. Brigadier General Gadi Eisenkot, a former military secretary to Prime Ministers Barak and Sharon, is quoted as telling Alex Fishman in an interview, "I was involved in writing the political directive. . . . Both of

- them defined parameters that were quite similar. Sharon made a change in one matter: he defined a goal of stopping the violence, whereas Barak spoke of reducing the violence.” *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).
24. Brigadier General Eival Giladi (then the head of the Strategic Planning Division), an interview with Ben Caspit, *Maariv* (January 2, 2004).
  25. Chief of Staff Moshe Ya’alon, interview with Ari Shavit, *Haaretz* (August 29, 2002).
  26. For further elaboration, see Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 468–469.
  27. The military commentator Amir Oren termed the intelligence community “propagandists of the political level.” (“MI as Government Propagandist,” *Haaretz* [February 6, 2003]).
  28. Colonel Shmuel Nir (Samo), *Limited Conflict*, Training Doctrine, 2001; Gal Hirsh, “From ‘Molten Lead’ to ‘Another Way’—Development of the Campaign in Central Command 2000–2003,” *Maarachot*, 393, (February 2004), pp. 26–31; Ya’alon, “Force Preparation for a Limited Conflict,” *Maarachot*, and Ari Shavit, interview with the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya’alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002).
  29. Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya’alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (August 29, 2002).
  30. Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Eival Giladi, *Maariv* (January 2, 2004).
  31. Alex Fishman, an interview with the commander of the Judea and Samaria Division, Brigadier General Gadi Eisenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Holiday Supplement (April 11, 2004).
  32. Ben Caspit, interview with Major General Kaplinsky, *Maariv* (May 25, 2004).
  33. Ben Caspit, Amir Rapaport, and Arik Bender, *Maariv* (February 11, 2004).
  34. Amir Buchbut, “Ya’alon: Brig. Gen. Zakay to be Discharged from IDF,” *Maariv* Internet site, [www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/817/509.html](http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART/817/509.html) (November 9, 2004).
  35. Yoram Peri, *The Israeli Military and Israel’s Palestinian Policy from Oslo to the Al Aqsa Intifada* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2002), pp. 34–35.
  36. A personal interview, with Matan Vilnai (June 25, 2003).
  37. Brigadier General Gadi Eisenkot, the military secretary to both Barak and Sharon, is quoted in an interview with Alex Fishman as saying, “I participated in writing the political guideline . . . in which Barak spoke about reducing the violence.” *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).
  38. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, pp. 468–469.
  39. See Ben Caspit, “The Intifada Two Years On,” *Maariv* (September 6, 2002).
  40. Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations 1999–2001* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001) (Hebrew), p. 368; see

- also Ben- Ami, "In this crisis the IDF acted according to its own spirit, not always in the spirit of the political directives," *A Front without a Rearguard*, p. 319.
41. A personal interview, with Amnon Lipkin-Shahak (June 11, 2003).
  42. Ben Caspit, "The Intifada Two Years On," *Maariv*, part 1 (September 6, 2002); part 2 (September 13, 2002).
  43. Ibid. (emphasis added).
  44. Ben Caspit, "New Year's Day, 2002, Two Years of Intifada," *Maariv*, part 1 (September 6, 2002).
  45. Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard*, p. 397.
  46. Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs, 1948–2003* (Tel Aviv: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2004) (Hebrew), pp. 140–141.
  47. A personal interview with MK Yossi Sarid (June 12, 2003).
  48. A personal interview with Shaul Arieli (June 15, 2003).
  49. Did the outbreak of violence, which can be described and explained as a planned campaign of terrorism led by Arafat, serve as Barak's alibi for a failure he found difficult to ascribe to himself (cognitive dissonance)? Did certain moves that were instigated by the military level and had the effect of preserving the violence on the ground serve Barak's intentions and provide him with the explanation and justification for the failure which he had to provide to the public in Israel? These questions remain open.
  50. Gal Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way,'—Development of the Campaign in Central Command 2000–2003," *Maarachot*, 393, (February 2004), pp. 26–31.
  51. Peri, *The Israeli Military*, p. 24.
  52. This is attested to by Lipkin-Shahak himself: "Netanyahu transmitted a clear message that I and perhaps the whole military echelon belong to Rabin. He tried to put the army in its place. *There was definitely a distancing of the army from all the subjects related to the Palestinian question*" (A personal interview with Amnon Lipkin-Shahak [July 11, 2003]; emphasis added).
  53. A personal interview with Sher (July 29, 2003).
  54. Nahum Barnea, "Army Top Brass Incensed: Government Policy Ruinous," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (October 29, 2003).
  55. A personal interview with Gilad Sher (August 3, 2003).
  56. Ibid. (emphasis added).
  57. For further comment on Mofaz's public criticism of the government, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Mofaz-Ya'alon Dispute Led to Mofaz-Sharon Dispute," *Haaretz* (October 15, 2001).
  58. Dan Shilon, interview with the head of the National Security Council, Uzi Dayan, *Maariv* (June 28, 2002).
  59. A personal interview with Amnon Lipkin-Shahak (July 11, 2003).
  60. Beilin, *Manual for a Wounded Dove*, p. 364.
  61. Yagil Levy, *The Other Army of Israel: Materialist Militarism in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2003) (Hebrew).

CHAPTER 5

CHANGES IN ISRAEL'S OFFICIAL  
SECURITY POLICY AND IN THE  
ATTITUDES OF THE ISRAELI-JEWISH  
PUBLIC TOWARD THE MANAGEMENT  
OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN  
CONFLICT (2000–2004)

*Tamar Hermann*

Following the collapse of the Oslo process, the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict moved from the stage of initial shock to everyday routine. That routine, notwithstanding its extreme violence, made it possible to begin fashioning a collective narrative about how and why the process collapsed.

Two competing narratives were discernible on the Israeli side. The first narrative, supported by the political elite of the past and the present, asserted (with differences of nuance in its various versions) that Israel did the maximum, fulfilled all its commitments within the framework of the agreements it signed, and was ready to make far-reaching concessions in order to reach a peace agreement. However, the Palestinians did not cooperate, did not uphold their commitments, did not forsake the use of arms to realize the dream of Greater Palestine, and refused to agree to declare the conflict ended even in return for major concessions by Israel. The second narrative, bearing an “outsider” character, took root within the Israeli left but was also supported by individuals who were formerly part of the decision-making system but left it or were removed from it because they disagreed with the way the conflict was being managed by the Israeli authorities. According to this narrative, Israel played a significant part in bringing

about the collapse of the process, because its decision-makers did not take into account the Palestinians' constraints, did not make true concessions, and did not adhere to the commitments they undertook in the agreements. In addition to causing the failure of the process, the Israeli decision-makers shifted the blame for the developments by claiming there was "no partner" to negotiate with, a claim that was not based on solid intelligence information.<sup>1</sup> As such, the second narrative maintains that the decision-makers were not only finding excuses for past failures, they were also blocking the way to the renewal of the contacts and a future agreement.

Other chapters in this book, focus on the shift that occurred in Israeli policy toward the Palestinians after the failure of the Camp David summit in summer 2000, and even more intensively after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada that fall, are clear examples of the second narrative.<sup>2</sup> Their underlying basic argument is that the Israeli policy shift did not follow logically from the changes that occurred on the Palestinian side but was caused by a misreading of the situation (in the best case) or by self-interested manipulation by Israel's military and political decision-makers (in the worst case).<sup>3</sup> The Israeli officials—or whoever fed them the information—construed the Palestinians' positions and actions such that the necessary conclusion was that "the Oslo process is dead." That conclusion, in turn, was successfully "marketed" to the Israeli public. From here it was only a short step to escalation, breaking off contacts, and the eruption of a protracted violent confrontation, without the majority of the Israeli-Jewish public having reliable information enabling the formation of an independent opinion about the political and military shift.<sup>4</sup> The result was the erosion of the collective hope to find a saving formula that would be acceptable to both parties and would bring the conflict to an end.

Causally, then, the above analysis is vertical and unidirectional, from the policymaking level to the public at large. As for the time element in this explanatory model, the shift at the political leadership level (as an independent variable) preceded the shift in the public consciousness (the dependent variable). However, the main argument of this chapter is that the picture is actually more complex. The interaction between the official line of the decision-makers and the attitudes of the general public was differential on three planes: (1) the perceptual shifts at the two levels—leadership and public—occurred at different times, (2) neither now nor in the past is there necessarily full congruence between the two levels—leadership and public—concerning the various issues related to the conflict and how to manage it, (3) at the public opinion level, at least, it is impossible to talk about a clear and

uniform shift, as different sectors reacted to the unfolding changes differently.

The proposition about the complexity of the interactions between the decision-makers and the public in Israel over the question under discussion here has implications at various levels. First, it sheds light on a seemingly inconsistent cognitive process/situation in Israel regarding the management of the conflict with the Palestinians in the years 2000–2004. On the one hand, we see the adoption of the concept that “Oslo is dead” and “there is no one to talk to” and a rightward electoral surge; yet at the same time we see a clear and significant increase in public support for the “two states for two nations” approach and in readiness for territorial and other concessions, including support for the unilateral disengagement plan, which entails the evacuation of settlements. Second, on a more general plane, this specific case might be able to make a certain contribution to the lively theoretical discussion about who truly influences the shaping of foreign and security policy in democracies; and, more specifically, the degree to which the public's preferences on these questions are reflected in or even influence national policy.

The following discussion is divided into four main sections. The first section presents a rapid survey of the dominant approaches in the professional literature regarding the directions of influence between decision-makers and the general public concerning foreign and security policy in functioning democracies. The second and major section cites data on the patterns of congruence and divergence between the declared positions of the decision-makers and the attitudes of the general public in Israel on subjects about which a shift was discerned in Israeli policy toward the conflict and its management since the summer of 2000. The third section addresses the question of the Israeli public's legitimization of protest against the government's foreign and security policy. The fourth and final section, consisting of a summation and conclusions tries to demarcate the map of the change in Israeli security policy in terms of time and directions of influence, as these arise from the data, and to examine whether this map is consistent with the theoretical models adduced in the first section.

### CHANGES IN ISRAELI FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY AND SHIFTS IN PUBLIC OPINION IN ISRAEL—INTERACTIONS AND DIRECTIONS OF INFLUENCE

Can foreign and security policy, by its nature, be democratic and express a connection between the public's preferences and the content

of the policy? More specifically, the researchers wonder how much leeway is now available to authorized decision-makers in policy formulation and implementation, especially on issues of war and peace. A second question, related to the first, is whether the national leadership totally controls public opinion on these subjects and how strongly the decision-makers can pull the majority of the public in their wake when they make a strategic change in their policy.

These are not new questions, but they have become more urgent and increasingly relevant in the light of the clear changes that have occurred mainly in the liberal democratic West, but also in other political and geographic realms. Specifically, we refer to the change that has occurred in the level of the public's obedience to the leadership's dictates on political issues, especially when these involve going to war or making peace.

Of all the models that deal with the shaping of policy in democratic states, the classic model of shaping foreign and security policy is perhaps the most undemocratic, as it describes a norm of decision-making that involves little or no influence by the people. According to this classic model, which some term the "Almond and Lippmann consensus,"<sup>5</sup> foreign and security policy is perhaps the most salient example of representative rule, in the sense that the public's representatives are the sole authoritative interpreters of the national interest and they decide on how best to realize it. The classic model describes the elected leaders who receive an unconditional mandate from the voters to deal with issues of war and peace according to their best understanding and judgment. In most versions this model also includes the assumption that the public at large is indifferent and uninformed or has no clear opinion on these subjects. Accordingly, the national leadership has no problem articulating policy based on its best (or worst) judgment and then to muster the support of the public.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, according to this model, any public opinion that might exist about foreign and security issues is capricious and fickle and responds emotionally rather than rationally to events and processes that occur in the state's external environment.<sup>7</sup> According to this model, then, only decision-makers are capable of constructing this environment for the general public, by adducing a systematic and consistent foreign and security policy, which the public accepts almost automatically, in the same way it rallies around the flag.

The practical conclusion that follows from this model is that the public has no meaningful input in regard to the articulation of national foreign policy, nor need it have.<sup>8</sup> For the same reason, most of the researchers who discuss foreign and security policy deal with the



decision-making level and perceive public influence or public attitudes as negligible.<sup>9</sup>

However, as noted above, recent decades have seen global changes in the elector-elected parallelogram of forces, or in what has been defined as the "relocation of authority."<sup>10</sup> This is manifested in the eroded authority of the political and professional elites (the military, for example)—authority that in the past was unchallenged—and in the heightened influence of the civil society. The erosion of authority of the political elites has several causes, and its major result is the emergence of a growing number of power centers in regard to shaping and modifying foreign and security policy. In other words, this policy is nowadays discussed and formulated not only by the cabinet or the general staff but also through an interactive process with the participation of many players—the media, economic bodies, civil groups, and public opinion as reflected in increasingly frequent polls.

What, then, has brought about this erosion and relocation of authority? First, unlike the past, the international system as a whole is fraught with a higher level of operative uncertainty than ever before. In general, albeit not yet definitively, a hegemonic international system is now dominant in which there is only one superpower, which acts as a kind of lone arbitrator even in regional conflicts. However, contrary to the logic of a hegemonic system, this superpower (the United States) is not successful in imposing authority and order on the system, and even its own territory is vulnerable to attack—witness the events of September 11, 2001—greatly undercutting its unchallenged status.

Second, the plethora of actors—governments, nongovernmental organizations, economic firms, and so forth—is creating a picture in which a multitude of trees make it difficult to see the forest. Concurrently, many competitors have arisen to the nation-state that is the central actor in the international arena—competitors that, like Al-Qaeda, lack a territorial base and are resource- and power-intensive, but are difficult to control and restrain by regular military means.

Third, in many countries all-party support for the official foreign and security policy (bipartisanship, as it is known in American politics) is waning. The result is a multiplicity of messages, frequently contradictory, from the elite to the public, heightening the feeling of uncertainty. Not only are the elites divided in their views, they are also competing with one another by presenting alternative policy plans directly to the public above the heads of the authorized decision-makers. Studies have shown that when the elite is fragmented it becomes far more difficult to enlist the general public in support of the official policy.<sup>11</sup>

The multiplicity of attitudes within the elites, combined with the growth of multicultural trends at the general societal level, has given rise to a global phenomenon in which the national consensus is shattered. Different population sectors are formulating subconsensuses consistent with their particular configuration of norms and values, some of which relate directly to issues of foreign and security policy. Thus, for example, the Jewish and Arab lobbies in the United States compete vigorously to influence U.S. policymakers on the Middle East. Both groups are motivated not only by U.S. interests but also by primary national and religious identities.

Many media outlets also play a central role in examining the various policy options. Today, unlike the past, in addition to having their own agenda, nearly all media outlets are privately owned and commercially run and operate in the format of a free market that offers its services to the highest bidder. The written media and, even more the electronic media act as a platform for the presentation of alternative agendas to official policy and provide a vast amount of information. Those who are skilled at using the media can find comprehensive information on every subject and at every level—arcane details of political discussions, the military capabilities of a particular country, and where to find dealers in radioactive materials. Thus, today, the interested public no longer feels removed from foreign and security policy and is no longer at the mercy of the system to learn about the other party to the conflict.

Finally, through the use of communications media that are not under state or other control, notably the Internet, activist citizens can organize and coordinate their activities without the authorities being able to do much to block their efforts. Organized groups of citizens, the organizations of civil society, are staging protest events throughout the world such as those opposing the war in Iraq.

These changes led to a reconsideration of questions as to whether one exclusive national center of gravity can be isolated in the shaping of foreign and security policy and what is the “quality” of public opinion on these issues. The result has been the modification of the relevant theories. Such change was further obligated because new studies examining the structure of the public’s attitudes, and especially the aspects of attitudinal consistency and cohesion, indicated—in contrast to the 1950s and 1960s—a high level of internal logic and a judicious, even rational reading of the situation.<sup>12</sup> It also emerged that the public as a whole is indeed not fully knowledgeable about the details of specific foreign policies but that the general picture is broadcast into almost every living room, prompting people to form preferences in areas that were formerly a closed book for them.

Furthermore, studies from almost every part of the world show great erosion in the confidence ordinary citizens have in the good judgment and motivation of the elected decision-makers. The new paradigm therefore speaks of the public as a factor whose support cannot be taken for granted and that cannot be counted on to support its leadership in all circumstances. Although it is difficult to prove direct public influence vis-à-vis decision-makers, there is no doubt that against the backdrop of the protests since the Vietnam War, statesmen, like generals, are trying to foresee the public's reaction to their moves. Indeed, even studies that refer to public opinion only as a limitation and not as a source of direct influence on the shaping of policy in these spheres<sup>13</sup> cite convincing evidence of high levels of sensitivity by decision-makers to ongoing and changing trends in public opinion.

One proof of this is the fact that decision-makers are constantly resorting to a variety of methods to examine public opinion. They make use of polls, focus groups, media analysis, and even ultra-active internal intelligence—and this in undisputed democracies—concerning civil groups that display subversive indicators.

The changes in the field dictated conceptual changes, as the “old, wise men” are no longer there to lead the way. Today, leaders are far less able than in the past to mold public opinion as they see fit. In this sense, perhaps, the age of the great leaders, who dared foment radical policy shifts contrary to public opinion, can be said to have passed.<sup>14</sup> For obvious reasons, in memoirs and in interviews, decision-makers try to maintain an autonomous stance, insisting that their policy is the result of a rational analysis of the situation and is not influenced by considerations of popularity or by public opinion. Yet it is obvious that no statesman in the West, or wherever true elections are held, will contemplate launching a new foreign or security policy or substantively changing the former policy without first ascertaining that it is likely to be supported by a majority of the electorate.

As noted, this attentiveness to the public's attitudes is rarely spelled out in so many words. However, as a recent book on U.S. foreign policy notes, “If decision-makers refer to public opinion or polls, they show a sensitivity to public attitudes. If they discuss the need for public support or discuss the way their decisions are limited by public opinion, they admit an influence of public opinion. If they mention or intimate that they might have done more with higher support, they suggest constraint.”<sup>15</sup> It follows, therefore, that “Public opinion is increasingly recognized as a central factor in the decisions about U.S. foreign relations. The voice of the people speaks during intervention debates, and, in this collision of public attitudes with national

security, policy continues to be of fundamental concern for citizens and policymakers.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus the present situation, especially in democracies, involves a complex process of the vertical flow of legitimate influence, from above to below and from below to above. Political initiative in foreign and security issues does not always, or exclusively, flow from the decision-making level. Today, sharp policy shifts are possible only when the electorate’s basic readiness is apparent in advance. Moreover, progress that is too rapid, even in the desired direction, but which leaves the public behind, is liable to bring about the leader’s downfall, or at least the collapse of the new policy. This is especially true with regard to waging war and making peace.

### GOVERNMENT-PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ISRAEL CONCERNING POLICY TOWARD THE PALESTINIANS

Israel faces many risks in terms of its foreign affairs and security policy, especially as compared with the majority of the Western countries, nearly all of which exist in a “democratic peace zone.”<sup>17</sup> Despite this, it appears that in recent years relations between the Jewish public in Israel and the authorized decision-makers have undergone deep changes resembling those described above.

Over the years, the freedom of action of Israel’s decision-makers has been constricted and the need has grown to receive grassroots approval for strategic moves.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, confidence in governmental institutions and in the country’s elected representatives and the readiness to entrust them confidently with running the affairs of state has declined worryingly.<sup>19</sup> The Israeli public has become skeptical of the leaders’ skills, good judgment, and even their integrity. Given this attitude, one can understand the difficulties prime ministers from both the left and the right have encountered in recent years in trying to muster general and active public support for political-security initiatives, even when they have placed their personal prestige on the line. This was the major source of difficulty encountered by Yitzhak Rabin in the first half of the 1990s in trying to enlist the entire Jewish-Israeli public in support of the Oslo process; and, alternatively, by Benjamin Netanyahu and later by Sharon in their efforts to abandon the Oslo process and erase its underlying assumptions from public opinion.

In addition to the erosion of the decision-makers’ unconditional legitimization and authority, it is now difficult—in contrast to the

past—to talk about a national consensus in Israel on how to cope with the immediate threat posed by the Palestinians and even more on the question of possibly ending the conflict. In the past there was general agreement, whose basic assumptions united all the Zionist bodies on the right and left alike, that Israel was in a perpetual situation of self-defense that was forced on it by the other side's malicious intentions; all the wars it fought were considered wars of no alternative. However, since the Lebanon War of 1982, and more intensively in the 1990s, a substantive rift has emerged between those who continue to espouse the traditional security ethos and those who oppose it. The latter believe that Israel should not be seen solely as a subject of Arab hatred and that Israel could have and still can take steps that will change the regional climate and lead to a fundamental settlement of the conflict with the Arab world in general and with the Palestinians in particular.

The sharpest dispute relates both to the question of the tactical moves Israel should make within the framework of its rule in the territories and the price it should and can pay for the termination of the conflict. Unlike the past, however, the decision-makers' positions on these issues are no longer accepted as holy writ. As examined later in greater detail, the data shows sweeping public support in favor of political protest when there is disagreement with government policy about contacts with the Palestinians,<sup>20</sup> and not inconsiderable support for the right of soldiers to refuse to obey orders, both by those who are against the occupation and by those who are against the evacuation of settlements.<sup>21</sup>

Ideological differences aside, it turns out that the public's attitudes toward the conflict are closely bound with sociopolitical and socio-economic indicators, especially religiosity and party identification, and to a lesser degree, ethnic origin. Over the years Israel has become a multicultural state, resulting in a severe erosion of its ability to preserve national consensus, even on foreign and security policy.<sup>22</sup> A major reason for this development is the multiplicity of media outlets and the vast amount of information they provide. Thus, instead of one "tribal bonfire"—a role played by the Voice of Israel in the 1950s and by single-channel television in the 1960s and 1970s—every group now lights its own bonfire in order to enjoy the warmth of group consensus and solidarity.

Consequently, it is no longer possible to talk about a strategic change dictated from above regarding Israeli-Palestinian relations, or even about interaction of one kind or another between the political and military levels alone. The possibilities that are available for a change of this kind in the relations between Israel and the Palestinians

are conditional on a large-scale interactive process in which public opinion plays a large role, either as the impetus for a new political plan or as an obstacle for a plan that conflicts with the attitudes and feelings of the broad public.

The discussion that follows focuses first on the interface between the position presented by the political-military leadership and the opinion held by the Jewish-Israeli public on the subject of the Oslo process, and afterward on the interface between the official position and public opinion concerning various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation which began in fall 2000. Data is also presented about the preferred ways to manage the conflict and the degree of public legitimization for political protest on foreign affairs and security issues.

### THE OSLO PROCESS AND THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIANS IN THE MIRROR OF PUBLIC OPINION

There is no doubt that any attitude, positive or negative, expressed today about conducting political negotiations or managing the confrontation with the Palestinians relates, whether consciously or not, to the developments of the Oslo process. It emerges that narratives have been created not only about what happened or did not happen in the contacts themselves, but also about the level of support the process garnered in its different stages.

*Support-opposition:* Figure 5.1, which charts the development of the “Oslo Index”<sup>23</sup> from June 1994 to May 2004, shows that at almost no stage did support for the Oslo process encompass the entire Israeli-Jewish public or even a large majority, and that for most of the period, including the time of shining hopes, the public was effectively split down the middle. The values of the index are meant to reflect the balance between the attitudinal index (support-opposition regarding the process) and the evaluative index (belief-disbelief in its prospects of bringing peace). This balance turns out to be of great importance. As the figure shows, support for the process (which in any case rarely exceeds 60 percent) is throughout higher than belief in its outcome. In other words, people who supported Oslo did not necessarily believe that it would bear fruit—a gap that undoubtedly affected the intensiveness of the support for the process and the degree of willingness to pay the price it entailed. Since the fall of 2000, when it became clear that Israel was facing not a passing eruption of Palestinian

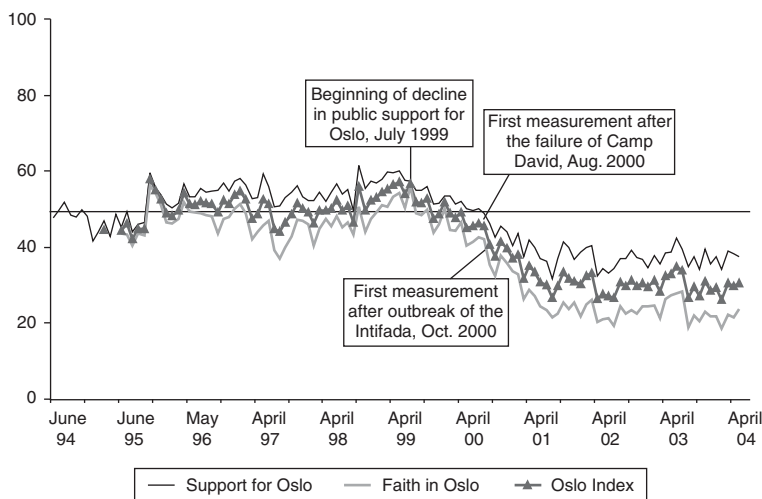


Figure 5.1 Oslo Index, 1994–2004: Changes in Public Attitudes Towards the Oslo Peace Process

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

violence but a lengthy armed struggle, support for the process has decreased to only the hard core of the peace camp—about a third of the Jewish public or even less.

Figure 5.1 also refutes the classic assumption according to which the decision-makers are the source of the initiative for strategic changes in foreign and security policy, whereas the public continues to support the old policy out of inertia.<sup>24</sup> In fact the figure shows that the support of the Israeli public for the general thrust of Oslo was eroded long before a significant political shift in this direction began (in public, at least) among the decision-makers. A steady decline in the Oslo Index was recorded beginning in summer 1999, about three months after Ehud Barak was elected prime minister on the basis of his promise to advance the peace process, about a year before the failure of the Camp David summit, and certainly before the Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted.

In other words, the public became disenchanted with Oslo while the national leadership, which was committed to the process, was still at the height of the negotiations with the other side and well before the Israeli leaders declared that they had no partner on the Palestinian side. This finding suggests that the Israeli public has its own opinion about

the value of the process and its prospects, an opinion that is influenced only partially by the attitudes of the national leadership. Possibly, then, the decision-makers adjusted their conceptions to the public's attitude and not vice versa, and perhaps turned against Oslo politically and militarily with relative ease, not fearing a negative reprisal by the voters.

Figure 5.1 also shows very impressive attitudinal stability in public opinion that was not jolted even by traumatic events such as the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in November 1995, or by political turnabouts such as the Likud's return to power in 1996 under Netanyahu and Barak's electoral victory three years later.

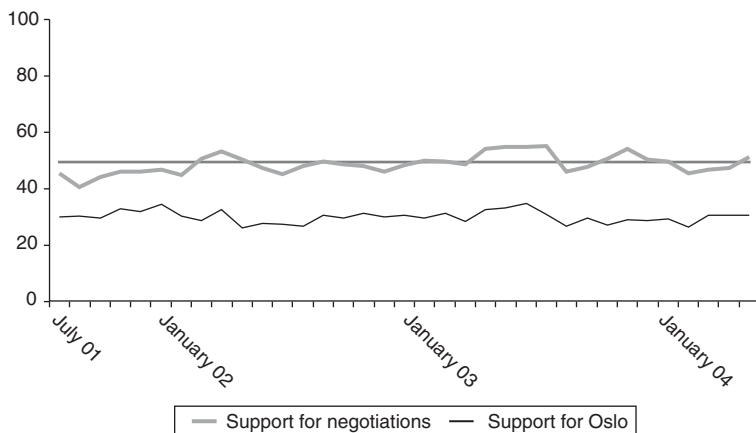
Of great interest is the interviewees' lucid memory of their attitude at the time the Oslo accord was signed, when asked about it two years and more after the process had collapsed and after two years of violent confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians.<sup>25</sup> The later response was amazingly consistent with the results the question drew during the heyday of the process. To the question, "To the best of your memory, when the Oslo accord was signed in September 1993 on the White House lawn, to what degree did you support or oppose the agreement?," 46 percent replied that they had supported the accord, 20 percent did not present a clear position or chose a middle ground, and 34 percent reported that they had been against the agreement. (The findings of the Peace Index for June 1994 were that 44 percent supported the accord, 24 percent had no clear opinion, and 32 percent were opposed.) The interviewees also reported correctly, in retrospect, their expectations at the time: "To the best of your memory, when the Oslo accord was signed in September 1993 on the White House lawn, to what degree did you believe or not believe that the agreement would lead to peace with the Palestinians in the years ahead?" Here, too, there was no significant deviation between the retrospective reporting and the real time results. Nor did the interviewees try to "correct" themselves in retrospect by adjusting their reporting of their belief or disbelief in the prospects of the Oslo process. Thus, the proportion of those who reported in 2002 that even at the time of the agreement they did not believe in the prospects of the Oslo process (33 percent) clearly exceeds the proportion who reported that they opposed it, while the proportion of those who say they believed in the process (46 percent) is a little lower than the proportion of those reporting that they supported it (20 percent report an intermediate position on this question).

However, as discussed later, there seems to be a paradoxical—though not inexplicable—gap between the low level of public support for the Oslo label in general and the attitude toward specific elements



of the process. This refers primarily to the issue of the Palestinian state, on which the public shows greater tenacity than the decision-makers, indicating that although the Oslo process may have “died” at the political level, it trickled down deeply into the civil consciousness in Israel.

1. *Negotiations with the Palestinians*—As is known, for some years the decision-makers in Israel made negotiations with the Palestinians conditional, on the replacement of the chairman of the PA, the cessation of terrorism, and so forth. However, the data indicate the existence of a large disparity between the attitudes of the public and the leadership on the basic question of whether to conduct negotiations with the Palestinians. It turns out that support for such negotiations (though within a new conceptual framework, different from the Oslo process) was espoused in 2004 by about half the public (figure 5.2). The figure 5.2 shows that since 2001, despite all the leadership's claims about there being “no one to talk to on the other side” and “no partner,” about half the public took a favorable view of such talks. Indeed, as the figure shows, support for conducting negotiations with the Palestinians stood almost four years after the intifada had broken out at about the same level as it did during the Oslo process in its prime.



**Figure 5.2** Support for Conducting Negotiations with the Palestinians Compared with Support for the Oslo Process

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

**Table 5.1** Attitudes toward Negotiations with the Palestinians According to Selected Sociodemographic and Sociopolitical Traits (Combined Sample January–May 2004)

	Support negotiations with Palestinians (%)	Oppose negotiations with Palestinians (%)
Secular	77	23
Religious	50	50
Ashkenazi generation I-II	65	35
Mizrahim <sup>a</sup> generation I-II	69	31
Likud voters	64	36
NRP <sup>b</sup> voters	62	38
Labor voters	93	7
Meretz voters	97	3
Above-average income	77	23
Below-average income	63.5	36.5

*Notes*<sup>a</sup>Mizrahim: Jews of Middle Eastern descent<sup>b</sup>NRP: National Religious Party

According to figure 5.2, it can be noted that there was a great stability in the public's support for negotiations with the Palestinians. A difference of only about 15 percent separates the low point (40.5 percent, in August 2001) from the high point (55.2 percent, in July 2003), and this in a volatile, blood-drenched period. In this period the authorized decision-makers imputed responsibility to the Palestinians and therefore decided not to negotiate with them. This trend was expressed most saliently in the unilateral disengagement plan. At the same time, it is noteworthy that according to various surveys conducted since the signing of the Oslo accord, the Israeli public, influenced by information originating with the authorized decision-makers and the military, held the opinion that the Palestinians were not reliable and repeatedly violated their commitments under the agreement, whereas Israel was upholding most of the commitments it undertook in the process, if not all of them.

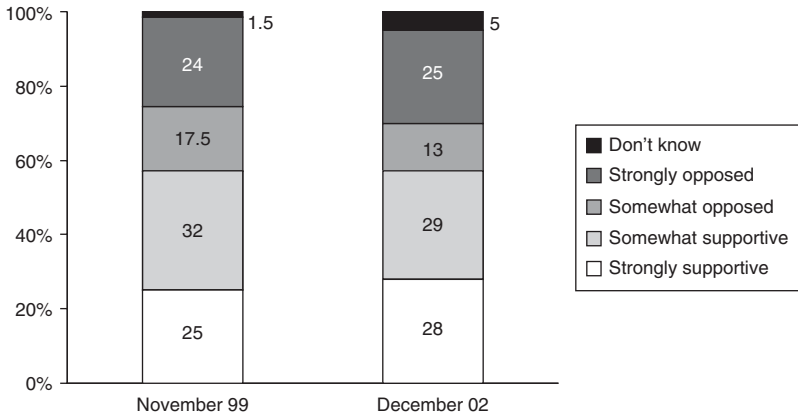
Analyses have shown that it is possible to identify a distinct socio-demographic profile of both the supporters and the opponents of the Oslo process.<sup>26</sup> Table 5.1 presents several of the major sociodemographic traits of supporters and opponents of negotiations with the Palestinians.

As expected, table 5.1 shows clearly that voters for left wing parties are far more supportive of negotiations than voters for right wing

parties, and the same holds true for those who described themselves as secular as compared with the religiously observant and for the economically established as compared with those who are less well-off economically. At the same time, as analyses of the attitudes toward the Oslo process showed,<sup>27</sup> ethnic origin as such is not a good predictor of attitudes concerning relations with the Palestinians: there is no clear difference between the levels of support and opposition among Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. The impression concerning the central role played by ethnic origin is due mainly to the high correlation between ethnicity and religiosity and between each of those two variables, and both together, with economic status.

The data in table 5.1 reinforce the argument put forward at the beginning of the chapter, namely that different population groups display political preferences in certain directions, that differentially “obey” the authorities’ “directional readings.” In other words, although it cannot be stated definitively that those who oppose negotiations take that position because they agree with the leadership, it certainly can be argued that the government’s opposition to negotiations failed to convince the economically established, secular, Ashkenazi sector or voters for left wing parties. Even if that sector’s support for the Oslo process was much weakened, it remains more open than other population sectors to the idea of a search for an agreed political solution.

2. *Two States for Two Peoples*—As figure 5.3 shows, the formula of “two states for two peoples” that underlay the Oslo process, continued to enjoy a clear majority among the Jewish public even after the negotiations at the authorities’ level had been completely halted—57 percent in the two surveys, in late 1999 and at the end of 2002—despite the three turbulent years that separate the two polls. Surprisingly, in the light of the change in the government’s position on this question, the later survey actually shows a decline in the proportion of those who oppose the concept and an increase in the proportion of those who say they have no clear-cut opinion on the subject. Among the supporters there was an increase among those who “very much support” the concept at the expense of those who “quite support” it.<sup>28</sup> Among the proponents of the establishment of a Palestinian state there were quite a few voters for right wing parties—mainly Likud voters, as the cross-tabulation of responses with voting in Knesset elections shows—since the proportion of voters for left wing parties was far lower than that of the majority which supports the creation of a Palestinian state.



**Figure 5.3** Attitudes toward the Solution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict According to the Formula of “Two States for Two Peoples”

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

The main reason cited for support of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel is based neither on moral grounds nor on empathy for the Palestinians. Support stems, rather, from selfish national reasons. In December 2000, 60 percent of the respondents stated that it is very desirable or desirable for a Palestinian state to come into being, “from the standpoint of the Israeli interest”; whereas 36 percent said this was not desirable from the standpoint of the Israeli interest. (The others had no clear opinion.) Two years later, in December 2002, among those who continued to express support for the “two states for two people” solution, the highest proportion of respondents (52 percent) explained their support by stating that only this solution would ensure Israel’s national security and the security of its citizens in the long term. The second most frequently cited reason related exclusively to the Israeli interest: only such a solution will guarantee a Jewish majority in Israel and make it possible to preserve the state’s democratic character. Only a small majority (12 percent) said they supported the establishment of a Palestinian state because this would end the occupation and relieve the Palestinians’ suffering. A similarly small percentage of respondents explained their support by stating that only this solution would make it possible for the Palestinians to realize their legitimate right to an independent state.<sup>29</sup>

3. *Vacating Territories and Removing Settlements*—In addition to disparities between the government and the public on negotiations

with the Palestinians and the “two states for two nations” formula, in the period under consideration the public was also more open to the idea of greater compromise than the national, political, and military leadership on the issue of vacating territories and settlements within the framework of a permanent settlement. Apparently it is not only within “the eccentric fringes on the left” that readiness existed to leave territories and dismantle settlements—in the West Bank as well as the Gaza Strip. This is further proof that even if Oslo was “dead” politically, its traces have been deeply etched in the consciousness of Israeli Jews. Table 5.2 illustrates this tendency. The proportion of those who think that the establishment of the settlements, with the encouragement or support of past governments, was a mistake (43 percent) was only slightly lower than the proportion of those who believed, in retrospect, that it was the right thing to do (47.5 percent). In other words, the settlement project was not a basis for consensus and its existential logic was controversial far beyond the boundaries of the “peace camp.”

Table 5.3 shows that in 2004 the commonly held assessment (44 percent) that government investments in maintaining the

**Table 5.2** Today, Looking Back, Do You Think Israel's Governments Did the Right Thing by Permitting and Encouraging the Establishment of the Settlements in the Territories (%)?

Definitely did the right thing by permitting and also encouraging the establishment of settlements in the territories	23.0
Think they did the right thing	24.5
Think they did not do the right thing	19.0
Definitely did not do the right thing by permitting and also encouraging the establishment of settlements in the territories	24.0
Don't know	9.5

*Source:* Peace Index, August 2004.

**Table 5.3** Is the Government Investing in the Settlements and the Development of the Territories in Judea and Samaria (%)?

Too much money	44.0
Too little money	13.0
The right amount of money	25.5
Don't know	17.5

*Source:* Peace Index, August 2004.

settlements were too high. Only about a quarter of the respondents said the investments were appropriate and even fewer thought investments in the West Bank settlements and their surroundings should be increased.

The survey also showed—again, contrary to the leadership’s official years-long position—that the dominant assessment among the public at that time was that the settlements were weakening (48 percent) and not strengthening (38 percent) Israel’s national interest (14 percent did not know). The findings in table 5.4 should be understood against this background. Only about a quarter of the respondents opposed any evacuation whatsoever of the West Bank settlements. The rest were divided into three groups: a large group favored vacating only settlements that are located amid or near Palestinian localities, while two smaller groups supported vacating most or all of the settlements in a situation of a peace treaty with the Palestinians.

At the time the survey was conducted, no governmental decision had yet been made about the future of the settlements in the West Bank. Nevertheless, a large majority (72 percent) said the government should offer generous financial assistance to settlers who wanted to move back inside the Green Line (22 percent opposed this and 6 percent had no clear opinion). In fact, there was a majority within the big parties in favor of offering voluntary evacuees financial assistance; this includes the National Religious Party (54 percent in favor, 45.5 percent against), though not Shas voters, among whom the opponents of financial aid (53 percent) slightly outnumbered the proponents (47 percent).

Overall, then, it can be said that Israeli public opinion generally accepted with reservations the government’s policy according to

**Table 5.4** What, in Your Opinion, Should Israel’s Policy Be in Regard to the Future of the Jewish Settlements in Judea and Samaria within the Framework of a Permanent Peace Agreement with the Palestinians (%)?

Agree to vacate all the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria	17
Agree to vacate most of the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria	15
Agree to vacate only the settlements located amid or near Palestinian localities	37
Israel must not agree to vacate Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria	25
Don’t know / No opinion	6

*Source:* Peace Index, August 2004.

which the entire Oslo process was no longer relevant, even if the Oslo accords were not annulled officially. In addition, the public appeared ready to pay a large price, both territorially and financially, in return for a final-status agreement with the Palestinians that would include the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. At the same time, it is important to note that the willingness to make concessions was not the result of "stepping into the other side's shoes" but stemmed from motives of self-interest.

### PERCEPTION OF THE CONFRONTATION

In the previous section we pointed out that on the substantive questions of policy relating to Israeli-Palestinian relations in general and to the Oslo process specifically, various disparities existed between the official approach of the national leadership and public opinion. As seen below, disparities, albeit smaller, also existed between the attitudes of the public and the leadership on the question of the causes of the violent confrontation that began in fall 2000 and how to cope with it. In general, it can be said that the public accepted the official version adduced by the decision-makers, which imputed responsibility for the outbreak of the confrontation to the Palestinians and held that a very hard hand was needed against them in order to put a stop to the terrorism. Within this framework there was broad legitimization for a military takeover of the areas of the PA, for extended closures, and for targeted assassinations. The performance of the political and military levels in coping with the Al-Aqsa Intifada also got a more positive rating. However, many in the public did not buy the argument that Arafat ruled the Palestinian street unchallenged and hence controlled the intifada, or the view that the political track was blocked, leaving only the military approach for Israel.

*Responsibility for the Eruption of the Confrontation:* In the wake of the failure of the Camp David summit and the crisis that developed between the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships, the Jewish-Israeli public was exposed to a narrative according to which the Palestinians never received a more generous offer but spurned Israel's hand, outstretched for peace. Against this background, it is not surprising that within a short time after the eruption of the violence in the territories, the view that the Palestinians were responsible for the deterioration of the situation was already fixed in the consciousness of the Jewish-Israeli public. Toward the end of 2000, 61 percent of the respondents stated that the Palestinians were mainly or wholly to blame for the

deterioration; only 8 percent thought responsibility rested solely or mainly with Israel, while 27 percent apportioned the blame equally to both sides (the rest did not know).<sup>30</sup>

However, the Israeli leadership's claim that the Palestinians had planned the violence carefully with the aim of extracting concessions from Israel cheaply was less credibly received by the public. The proof of this lies in the respondents' answers to the question, "In your opinion, is the goal of the intifada to force Israel to sign an agreement under Arafat's terms by weakening it and undermining its status, or is its goal only to fight against and attack Israel without wanting to reach an agreement?" The majority of the respondents (53 percent) chose the second option, namely that the intifada's only goal was to harm Israel, not to force it to reach an agreement by other means (41 percent chose the first option and the rest did not know).<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, the idea that the Palestinians did not balk at deliberately initiating violence—a view repeatedly expressed by Israel's decision-makers—was absorbed well by public opinion. This belief was influenced not only by the information that was disseminated about the Palestinians' intentions and plans to wage a violent struggle, but also, and perhaps more intensely, by the frequent stereotyping of the Palestinians as a violent collectivity, a stereotype that was greatly intensified in the wake of the many murderous terrorist attacks (figure 5.4).

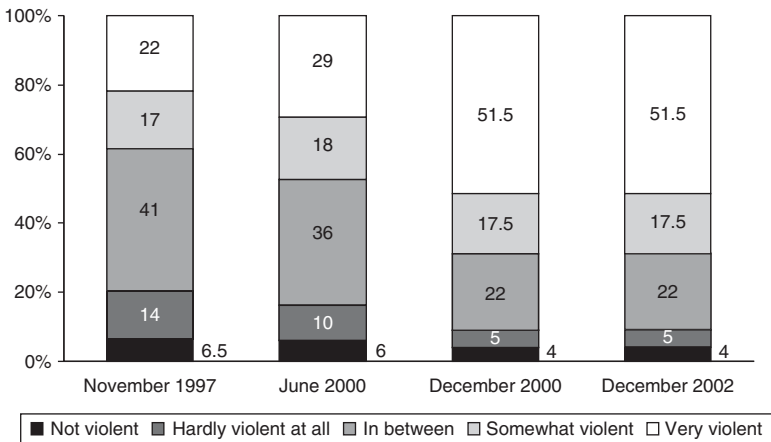


Figure 5.4 Israeli Opinions of Violence as a Characteristic of the Palestinian Collectivity  
 Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.



Figure 5.4 shows a sharp increase in the early 2000s in the perception of the Palestinians as violent—from 39 percent in 1997 to 47 percent in June 2000, even before the collapse of the process and the eruption of the violent events, to 69 percent in December 2000, a few months after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada. Concurrently, the percentage of those with no clear opinion on the subject and of those who think the Palestinians were almost not violent or not violent at all, declined; in the last survey, only 9 percent of Israeli Jews placed the Palestinians in one of these two categories.

These data reflect a highly significant stereotypical image, providing a basis for the interpretation that the majority of the Israeli public did not consider the Palestinians' violence only a tactical tool, would be abandoned if their demands were met, but an innate collective trait that, consequently, would remain unchanged even if they sign a peace treaty with Israel in the future. This viewpoint backs the official Israeli policy that called for severe restrictions to be placed on the Palestinians (closed borders, long-term separation, and so forth) even in the event of an agreement.

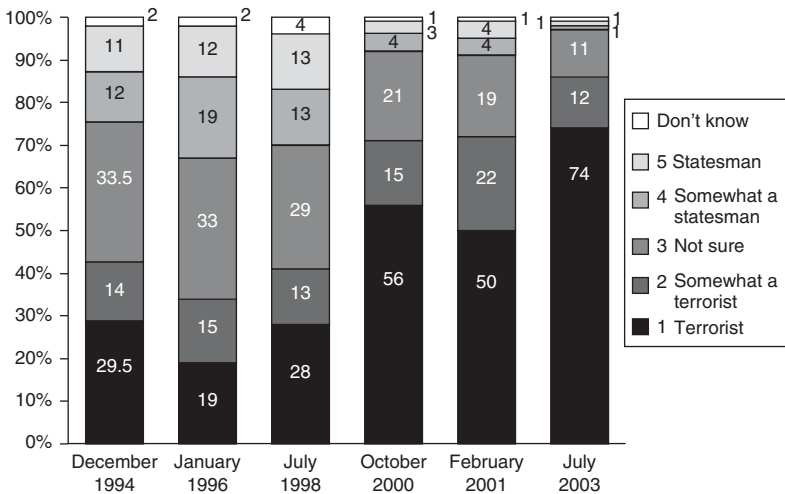
*Arafat's Image:* Probably the most convenient ground on which the Israeli public received and absorbed the message that there was “no partner on the other side” was in connection with the renewed image of Yasser Arafat as an incorrigible terrorist. This followed a period in which he was perceived, or at least portrayed, as a partner for dialogue, during the Oslo process. For years, the enmity toward the Palestinian national leader was a central motif in the public discourse in Israel. Arafat occupied a place of honor in the pantheon of the greatest Jew-haters of all time, along with Haman from the Book of Esther and Adolf Hitler. Yet suddenly, in the summer of 1993, the terrorist leader, “the man with hair on his face,” as the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin tellingly described him, became a legitimate interlocutor for political negotiations. The transformation was not accompanied by the prior preparation of public opinion or, indeed, by factual evidence that either he personally or his attitude has undergone substantive change.

The strategic shift in the attitude of the Israeli decision-makers toward Arafat was expressed dramatically in the joint signing on the White House lawn of an agreement that was intended to resolve the historic conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. However, the leadership's new attitude bore little credibility, because it was not manifested in emotional terms. The Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who cosigned the agreement, was unable—and did not try—to hide his revulsion for the person who was recognized at the event

as the official representative and definitive leader of the Palestinian people. It was obvious to everyone who watched the ceremony that Rabin retained a negative opinion of Arafat, or at best a very guarded one. True, some leaders, such as Shimon Peres, were demonstratively friendly toward him, but these were mainly leaders whose views on the regional conflict and the means for its resolution have never been very popular.

The public thus remained bewildered and divided about the other side's leader. In late 1994, more than a year after the signing of the first Oslo accord, 43.5 percent described Arafat as a terrorist, about 23 percent said he was a statesman, and 33.5 percent were unable to decide whether he was a terrorist or a statesman. As figure 5.5 shows, these percentages were largely unchanged in the 1996 and 1998 surveys. However, a substantive change occurred in the 2000 survey, which was not surprising against the background of the events that year and the unrelenting personal invective hurled at Arafat by Israeli leaders after the failure of the Camp David summit that summer. The proportion of those who considered Arafat a terrorist leaped to 71 percent and in the summer of 2003 stood at 86 percent.<sup>32</sup>

The repeated pronouncements by Israel's leaders about Arafat's part in the escalation of violence and the government resolution of December 2001 declaring the Palestinian leader's irrelevance were



**Figure 5.5** In Your Opinion, to What Degree is Arafat a Terrorist or a Statesman?

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

clearly reflected in public opinion—the proportion of those who described Arafat as a statesman in the surveys after the start of the intifada initially fell below 10 percent and in the latest survey was below 3 percent.<sup>33</sup>

Did the leadership's delegitimization of Arafat bear fruit, or was the official posture more of a response to the public's desire to identify one clear locus of blame on the Palestinian side? This question cannot be answered scientifically. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that beginning in 2000 no special effort was needed by the decision-makers to reestablish Arafat's image as an archenemy. The transformation was easily accepted, both by the leadership and by the public, to fit the historic perception of Arafat as bent on doing harm to Israel.

At the same time, the public in Israel did not necessarily support specific deterrent measures against Arafat. In fact, it is possible to point to a general line of greater sensitivity among the public than within the leadership concerning the usefulness of applying direct pressure on the Palestinians' unchallenged leader. One of the questions posed by the Peace Index survey in September 2002 was, "In your opinion, is the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] siege of Arafat in his headquarters in Ramallah (the Muqata) and the destruction of the surrounding buildings beneficial or harmful to the struggle against Palestinian terrorism?" The most common response was that the siege was more harmful (35 percent) than beneficial (29 percent); the rest (36 percent) had no clear opinion.

Concerning the implications of these moves in the international arena, the survey asked, "In your opinion, is the IDF siege on Arafat in his headquarters in Ramallah (the Muqata) and the destruction of the surrounding buildings beneficial or harmful to Israel's standing in the international arena?" A decisive majority (66 percent) viewed the siege as harmful, with only 9 percent terming it beneficial; the rest (25 percent) had no clear opinion. Manifestly, the public was not convinced that Arafat's assassination would be useful to Israel: in January 2002 only 21 percent supported such an act, compared to 74 percent who opposed it.<sup>34</sup>

Above all, it appears that the public in Israel was for a lengthy period quite skeptical about Arafat's control of the Palestinian street—that is, how much responsibility he actually bore for the conduct of the intifada. Table 5.5 shows that in February 2001 Israeli Jews were almost equally divided in their opinion of whether Arafat controlled the street (49 percent thought he did, 47 percent that he did not). In other words, only about half the public accepted the frequent assertions by the decision-makers that Arafat was completely and exclusively

**Table 5.5** How Far, in Your Evaluation, Does/Did Arafat Control the Palestinian Street in Regard to the Violent Actions against Israel (%)?

	2001	2004
Controls/controlled	49	75
Does not/did not control	47	21
Don't know	4	4

*Source:* Peace Index, August 2004.

responsible for the intifada. Over time, though, the governmental narrative trickled down to the level of the public and the percentage of those who imputed exclusive responsibility to Arafat increased steeply, as shown by the data for October 2004.

*Use of Military Force:* The decision-makers repeatedly maintained that as long as Arafat remained in power there would be no movement in the political process. At the same time, the public remained divided in its opinion as to which path, military or political, would achieve better results. In November 2000, about a month after the eruption of the intifada, 40 percent of the respondents thought the political path would bring better results and an identical percentage thought the military path was preferable (the rest had no clear opinion). The assumption that this might be a mental remnant from the Oslo period is refuted by the fact that the same percentage was found in November 2003, with 40 percent favoring the political path and 40 percent the military path.<sup>35</sup>

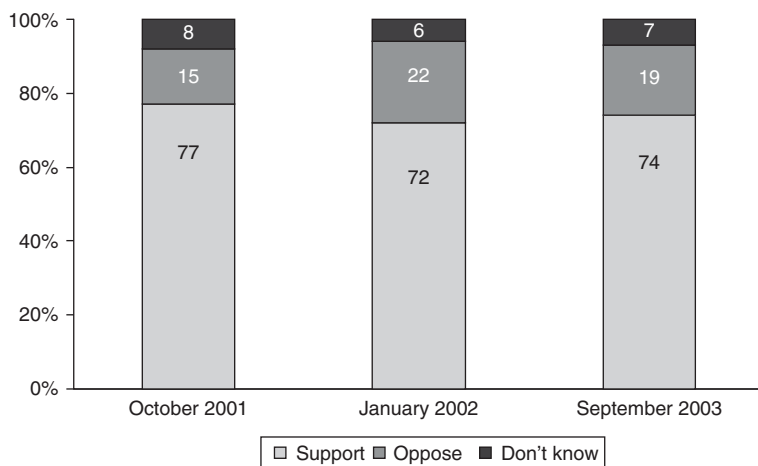
However, from the moment a military operation was launched it unflinchingly gained massive public support. Thus, in April 2002, 90 percent (!) of the respondents said the decision to launch Operation Defensive Shield was right and only 6 percent thought it was wrong. In June 2002, 80 percent expressed support for Operation Determined Path, in which the IDF entered Palestinian cities with the declared intention of remaining there for as long as was deemed necessary.<sup>36</sup> Such high approval rates for military operations would be impossible without large-scale support from left wing voters as well.

In other words, voters in both the center and on the left, who are critical of government policy in the territories and support a return to negotiations, rallied around the flag when the cannons roared. This attitude suggests that there was some justice to the Palestinian complaint about the silence of the Israeli peace camp when the IDF effectively reoccupied the West Bank and brought about the collapse of the PA's rule.

In addition to support for the troops in real time, the data show high public esteem for the effectiveness of the government's security policy. In May 2004, 40 percent of the public thought Sharon's security policy was successful or very successful, 35 percent described it as adequate, and only 21 percent viewed it as a failure. The public expressed an even higher regard for the performance of the security establishment: only 9 percent assessed the performance of the IDF as a failure, 23 percent thought it was adequate, and 54 percent termed it successful or very successful.<sup>37</sup>

*Targeted Killings:* Despite the differences about whether the military or the political path is preferable, a broad and stable consensus exists in favor of targeted assassinations in the war against terrorism (see figure 5.6). The criticism of the method, both in Israel by left wing groups and also abroad, had little impact on public opinion overall. The consensus existed despite the clear knowledge that such operations often caused casualties among innocent bystanders.

In response to a question that was asked in March 2004 dealing with the price the targeted assassinations exacted as compared with their benefit, a clear majority (61 percent) opted for the response that they were an essential measure to prevent, or at least reduce, Palestinian terrorism that was taking the lives of innocent Israelis. Only 31 percent supported the contrary argument—that Israel should



**Figure 5.6** Do You Support the Targeted Killings or Are You against Them?

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

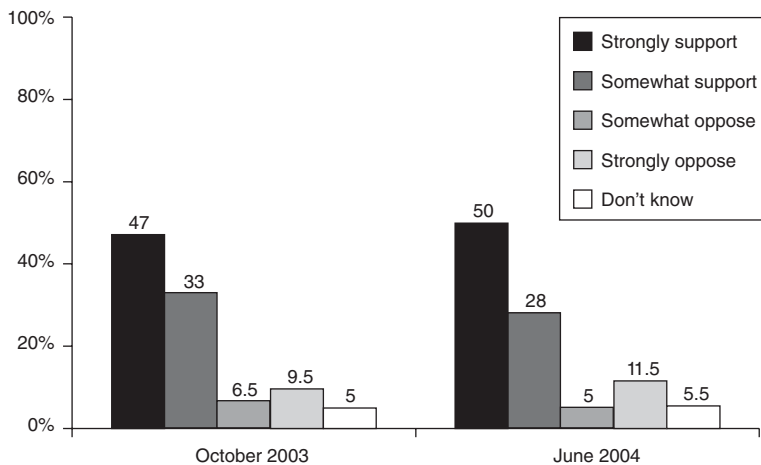
revoke this policy because the attacks often killed innocent Palestinians. A high proportion of the respondents (66 percent) said that the targeted assassination of Palestinians who were involved in terrorism against Israelis is morally justified; only 29 percent held the contrary view.<sup>38</sup>

*The Separation Fence:* The architects of the Oslo process, especially Shimon Peres, often spoke about a New Middle East, but this concept does not appear to have been assimilated by the public. An empirical examination of public opinion since the start of the process in the 1990s shows that at no stage was there significant support for Israel's concrete integration into the region, and even less for opening the border between Israel and the Palestinians for the free passage of people and goods. Even when terrorism was at a low level and hopes for peace ran high, the majority in Israel envisaged a situation of coexistence with a closed border separating the two collectivities.

As far back as March 1995, about three-quarters of the interviewees held the view that even if peace were achieved, it would be preferable for Israel to have a clearly demarcated and closed border with the Palestinian entity, in order to create maximum separation between the Israelis and the Palestinians.<sup>39</sup> In January 2000, before the collapse of the process, though after years of stalemate, only 30 percent stated that if the "two states for two people" solution were accepted, they would prefer an open border for the free passage of Israelis and Palestinians between the two states. The decisive majority preferred a closed border.<sup>40</sup>

Against the background of this longstanding preference, and in the light of the growing number of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Palestinians from the territories, it is not surprising that the Israeli public welcomed the separation policy, including the building of a fence, with open arms. In fall 2003, (See figure 5.7) the construction of the fence gathered momentum, support for it stood at 80 percent (16 percent were opposed),<sup>41</sup> and in the summer of 2004 support for the fence, by then being built, was 78 percent, with only 16.5 percent opposed.<sup>42</sup> The highest level of support for the fence was found to exist among voters for Shinui (90.5 percent) and the Likud (85 percent), the lowest among voters for the NRP (54.5 percent), and for Meretz (50.5 percent). The reason for the high level of backing was apparently the feeling, shared by about two-thirds of the public, that the fence enhanced the sense of security for the majority of the Israeli public.<sup>43</sup>

As for the route of the fence, the Green Line was far from sanctified among the majority of the Jewish Israeli public. There was no significant demand for the route to be dictated by the Green Line—most of the public preferred to leave that decision to the government.



**Figure 5.7** Attitudes toward the Separation Fence

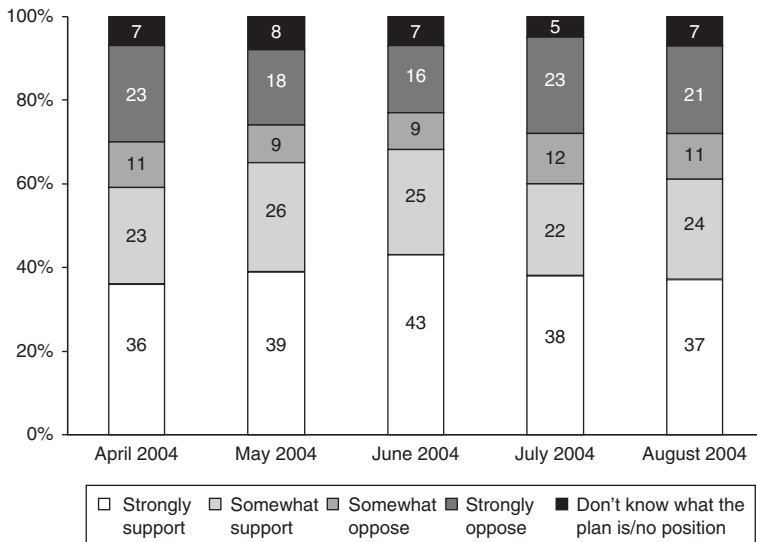
*Source:* The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.

A survey conducted in fall 2003 posed the question, “As is known, there is a debate over the route of the separation fence between those who advocate building the fence along the Green Line and those who think the Green Line need not be the exclusive factor in deciding where the fence will run—rather, security and other considerations of the government should be taken into account. Which view do you agree with more?” About two-thirds of the respondents replied that the decision should be left to the government, with only about 20 percent saying the fence route should follow the Green Line.<sup>44</sup>

Jewish-Israeli public has never trusted most international bodies and their intentions toward Israel. This attitude was well reflected in the public’s reaction to the decision of the International Court of Justice at The Hague against the route of the fence. The judgment was perceived as part of a more general syndrome according to which the international community preferred the Palestinian interest; hence also the court’s decision, calling for the immediate dismantlement of the fence, was considered illegitimate. Two indicators converged here: the Israeli public’s basic desire for physical separation between Israel and the Palestinians, combined with the assessment that international bodies, such as the court in The Hague, were inherently predisposed toward the Palestinians and therefore would never adopt a fair approach that takes into account Israel’s interests and the security of its inhabitants.

*Unilateral Disengagement:* If massive support exists for separation from the West Bank, this is even more so in the case of the Gaza Strip, which has always been considered of far less emotional, religious, and strategic value. Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan encountered opposition and reservations from several quarters. Operationally, sources in the IDF expressed doubts;<sup>45</sup> the Jewish residents in the Gaza Strip did not wish to be evacuated from their homes; the settlers in the West Bank were concerned that the evacuation of Gaza will constitute a precedent for similar moves in the rest of the territories;<sup>46</sup> the left objected to any unilateral act and was apprehensive that the Gaza evacuation would be the first and last of its kind and have the effect of perpetuating the settlements in the West Bank. However, despite all the reservations, public opinion showed overall a massive and stable support for the Sharon plan—60 percent and more in April–August 2004 (figure 5.8).

It should be noted that since the plan was first unveiled, the overall assessment by the public has been that Sharon truly and sincerely intends to implement it and that he will succeed in overcoming the opposition both in his party, in the right wing parties, and among the settlers.<sup>47</sup> In other words, it would appear that Sharon succeeded,



**Figure 5.8** Attitudes toward the Unilateral Disengagement Plan

Source: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, Tel Aviv University. <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.



albeit without the backing of the entire national leadership, in obtaining the public's legitimization for his plan on a scale and with intensity that the architects of Oslo were never able to muster. The reason for this is probably that the Oslo framework was out of step with the traditional approach to the conflict, whereas the disengagement plan is consistent with the deep and longstanding public support for separation from the Palestinians in a situation of peace and all the more so at a time of confrontation.

### LEGITIMIZATION FOR PUBLIC PROTEST ON FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY ISSUES

The data cited so far show that no full agreement exists between the Israeli public and the national leadership. This raises the question of the channels of activity that are open to those who disagree with the official policy, especially on subjects concerning the relations between Israel and the Palestinians. The term available channels of activity refers to the legitimization they are accorded, not to the possibility of utilizing them.

As a generalization, the Israeli public can be said to have internalized the democratic norm holding that citizens have the full right to freely express their opinions on subjects related to the peace process, without being harassed by the authorities. The condition is that this be done by means permitted under the law. In all the surveys, about 85 percent of the interviewees say that citizens who think the government's peace policy is harmful to Israel's national interest have the right to protest within the framework of the law, such as by organizing mass petitions and holding demonstrations after obtaining a permit. Only 15 percent would also permit nonviolent civil disobedience, such as demonstrating without a permit, refusing to pay taxes, refusing to serve in the army, and the like. A steady 6 percent would even permit violent civil disobedience, such as the use of force in resisting the evacuation of settlements.<sup>48</sup>

There is also a group that would permit the use of illegal violent protest—small in terms of percentage but not insignificant numerically (about 250,000–300,000 people, to judge by the sample). The sociodemographic profile of this group is quite uniform, with an extremely high representation of young male Orthodox and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews. Clearly, not everyone who accepts the idea of illegal violent protest will in fact resort to such tactics. Moreover, probably not everyone who advocates such action admitted this to the surveyors and may be part of the hard core who do not wish to reveal

themselves. Accordingly, this index is of dubious validity but cannot be ignored.

In July 2004, in the wake of the human chain that protestors against the disengagement plan organized between Gush Katif (the main bloc of Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip) and Jerusalem, the public perception of the event's impact was examined. One of the questions asked was whether and to what degree the decision-makers in democracies should take account of civil protests of this kind in formulating foreign and security policy. More than 60 percent said such protests should be taken into account, as compared to 33 percent who thought they should not influence policy. However, in regard to the effectiveness of civil protest in practice, opinion was divided almost equally: 46.5 percent maintained that the country's citizens have quite a lot or very great influence on policy and 49 percent thought that protests have quite small or very small influence.<sup>49</sup>

Is this democratic tolerance also seen in practice? That is, does the public in fact welcome, or at least endorse, initiatives that are intended to protest against government policy on subjects involving relations with the Palestinians? Following the publication of the Geneva Initiative, in fall 2003, for the question, "There are those who claim that in Israel, as a democratic country, every citizen or group of citizens is entitled to take initiatives of this kind as long as they do not violate the law. Others say that only the elected government has the authority to conduct negotiations and formulate peace proposals and that initiatives such as this, even if legal, undermine the status of the elected government. Which argument do you accept?," only 31 percent agreed with the first argument—that citizens have the right to take such initiatives—while 62 percent agreed with the second: that civil action of this kind undercuts the authority of the decision-makers. In other words, translation of the general principle into specific action significantly reduced the support for civic action that is contrary to the official policy. At the same time, it is possible that this is a private case only—in other words, that the only legitimate conclusion that can be inferred from these data is that the public was persuaded by the arguments voiced by the authorized decision-makers against the Geneva Initiative, mainly because of its specific content, but also because it encroached on the sphere of policymaking.

The broad public opposition to illegal protest activity is also seen in the attitude toward refusal to serve in the army, both on the left and the right. For example, 75 percent of the interviewees were against the "pilots' letter" (in which a number of reserve air force pilots declared their refusal to fly missions in the territories) and 64 percent opposed

the idea that army personnel who are against the evacuation of settlements refuse to take part in that operation.<sup>50</sup> Similar levels of opposition were also expressed in response to a more general formulation regarding the idea of refusal to serve as such.

## CONCLUSIONS

As stated at the outset, the main question this chapter deals with is the degree of correlation between the shift in Israel's official policy toward relations with the Palestinians from 2000 to 2004, and the changes that occurred in public opinion on this subject during the same period. This, then, is a variation on the old question of which came first, the chicken or the egg. The answer to this question is of considerable importance, not only for purposes of historical documentation but also because it says a great deal about the decision-makers' freedom of maneuverability.

To begin with, therefore, the correlation between the official attitudes toward the Oslo process and the public's attitudes was examined. The data presented indicate that the lessening of public support began quite some time before the decision-makers started to talk about "the death of Oslo." Indeed, while Prime Minister Barak was still busy trying to renew the momentum, meeting vigorously with ranking Palestinian representatives and Arab leaders at the highest level, the support of the general public for the Oslo package was constantly eroding. True, the message that reached the public from the elites was not uniform in content: right wing leaders expressed unrelenting opposition to the process. However, an analysis of the shifting view of the public shows clearly the erosion that occurred among center and left wing voters, even though their leaders supported and continue to support outspokenly the renewal of the political initiative.

A situation was created in which public opinion could pose a major obstacle to the renewal of talks. However, the data show that opposition to Oslo as a label does not mean opposition to its constituent parts as well and that at least where public opinion is concerned there is no congruence between the whole and its parts. Thus it turns out that the public is deeply interested—and this goes well beyond left wing voters—in resuming political negotiations with the Palestinians. Support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state—that is, acceptance of the "two states for two nations" principle—is also broad and stable, encompassing many on the right, especially Likud voters. It has been seen that the settlements are perceived more as a burden than an asset and that the cost of retaining them is

inordinately high, according to the majority. This is the background for understanding the large-scale, albeit not sweeping, support for a significant evacuation of the West Bank settlements within the framework of a peace agreement with the Palestinians. There is even greater support for the evacuation of the Gaza Strip settlements.

What this means is that the governmental rhetoric against the resumption of talks, against the establishment of a Palestinian state, and against the evacuation of settlements had only a partial impact on the public consciousness. A future vision that holds out the promise of positive change will be able to muster considerable public support for renewing the negotiations under a different rubric or with new packaging.

In regard to the confrontation itself, the leadership appears to have been successful in persuading the public that the entire responsibility for the collapse of the process and for the ensuing bloodshed rests with the other side, who are perceived stereotypically as innately violent. At the same time, the public is divided as to the preferred way—political or military—to cope with Palestinian violence despite the official position holding that it is premature to talk about renewing the contacts.

What are the public's preferences regarding a solution in the foreseeable future (in the long term, as we saw, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is considered the optimal formula)? The public takes an extremely favorable view of separation and even more so of the separation fence, whose construction Sharon is now promoting vigorously, though he was originally against it. The reason is that this idea is consistent with the longtime desire, from the first stage of the Oslo period and even earlier, for a situation in which "we are here and they are there." Moreover, the sections of the fence that have already been built are perceived as being highly effective, if not in preventing terrorism then at least in enhancing the feeling of personal security among the Israelis. Opposition voiced by international public opinion and left wing groups in Israel, and the ruling against the route of the fence by the International Court of Justice in The Hague have not diminished support for the barrier by one iota. When it comes to the fence, full harmony exists between public opinion and the approach of the leadership.

In regard to the disengagement plan, not only does the prime minister have the steady support of about two-thirds of the public, he also gets high public credit for his ability to overcome the obstacles and objections and implement his plan. Indeed, support here crosses political camps and is also shared by Likud voters, even though there is bitter opposition to the plan within the party's institutions.

On certain issues involving relations with the Palestinians, the public, or segments of it, does not necessarily agree with the political or military decision-makers. In the light of this attitude, the question of the legitimization of political protest in these spheres was raised. It emerges that the public in Israel has internalized the democratic norm of the right of protest, provided the protest is carried out within the framework of the law and does not entail violence. Accordingly, demonstrations and petitions are considered legitimate practices, where as refusal to serve in the army, and certainly violent disobedience, get only minuscule public support.

The situation has changed since the 1970s, when empirical findings showed that in foreign and security policy the majority of the public followed the leadership. Public opinion then was largely homogeneous and showed few deviations from the official line. Nowadays, against the background of the public's growing influence—some would say the process of the public's maturation—and the wealth of information available to the citizen together with the erosion of confidence in the decision-makers, public support for official policy is no longer automatic and full. The implication of this development is that it may well be possible to push forward a political initiative if conditions: change, perhaps even more easily than in the early stages of Oslo, when many of the underlying ideas of the process represented taboos that were shattered without an alternative consensus having first been established.

At the theoretical level, the Israeli case appears to reflect a more complex picture than most of the classic government-citizen models. We definitely find here correlation with the newer models concerning the behavior of public opinion in Western liberal democracies. What we see is that a relative educated public that is politically aware and involved in an ethno-national conflict willingly cannot be expected to rally around the flag automatically. Indeed, in no few of its aspects the management of the confrontation with the Palestinians was not an "initiative from above" but entailed an ongoing flow of influence or input in two directions: from the level where decisions are made to the public at large and from the public to the shapers of policy, with both sides mutually attentive, though not necessarily adjusting their opinions accordingly.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Gideon Alon, "Maj. Gen. Amos Gilad Provided Correct Appraisals," *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004).
2. Chapters 6 and 8.

3. Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations 1999–2001* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001) (Hebrew); Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front without a Rearguard* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004) (Hebrew). On the Military Intelligence assessment, see Yoel Esteron, “Kuperwasser’s Appraisal,” *Haaretz* (June 23, 2004); Yoav Stern, “Hitler Promised Quiet, Too,” *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004).
4. This chapter discusses only the interface between the leadership and the Jewish-Israeli public and not that between the leadership and the Arab-Israeli public, since the latter is quite different and requires a completely full and separate analysis. For that reason, all mention herein of “the public” refers only to the Jewish public.
5. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Penguin Books, 1946); Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950). For a critical discussion of their approach, see Ole Holsti, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36 (1992), pp. 439–466.
6. Warren Miller and Donald Stokes, “Constituency Influence in Congress,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 57 (1963), pp. 45–56; Philip E. Converse, “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” in David E. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 206–261.
7. William R. Caspary, “The Mood Theory: A Study of Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 64 (1970), pp. 536–547.
8. William Chittick and Keith Billingsley, “The Structure of Elite Foreign Policy Beliefs,” *Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 42 (1989), pp. 201–224.
9. Naomi Kies, “Policy and Public Opinion: Israel 1967–1974,” *State, Government and International Relations*, vol. 18 (1975) (Hebrew), pp. 36–53.
10. James Rosenau, “The Relocation of Authority in a Shrinking World,” *Comparative Politics* (April 1992), pp. 253–272.
11. Joe D. Hogan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993).
12. Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans’ Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Miroslav Nincic, “A Sample Public: New Perspectives on Popular Opinion and Foreign Policy,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1992), pp. 772–789.
13. Richard Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy since Vietnam—Constraining the Colossus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Burstein and April Linton, “The Impact of Political Parties, Interest Groups and Social Movement Organizations on Public Policy: Some Recent Evidence and Theoretical Concerns,” *Social Forces*, vol. 81, no. 2 (2002), pp. 381–408.

14. Michael Clough, "Grass-Roots Policymaking: Say Good-Bye to the 'Wise Men,'" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 1 (January/February 1994), pp. 2-7.
15. Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, p. 6.
16. Ibid, p. 240.
17. Philip Everts and Pierangelo Isernia (eds.), *When the Going Gets Tough. Public Opinion and the Use of Military Force* (London: Routledge Books, 2001).
18. On the learning processes of the decision-makers in Israel, see Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Transition from War to Peace: The Complexity of Decisionmaking—The Israeli Case* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University: The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, 1996) (Hebrew).
19. On this subject, see, for example, Peace Index, December 2001.
20. E. Yaar-Yuchtman and T. Hermann, "The Latitude of Acceptance: Israelis' Attitudes toward Political Protest before and after the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998), pp. 721-743.
21. On attitudes toward refusal to serve on the left and the right, see Peace Index, December 2003.
22. For a defense of Israel's multiculturalism, see Yossi Yonah, "State of All Its Citizens, Nation-State, or Multicultural Democracy? Israel and the Boundaries of Liberal Democracy," *Alpayim*, no. 16 (1998) (Hebrew), pp. 238-263.
23. The Index represents a weighting of the responses to two permanent questions in public opinion surveys of the Peace Index with regard to the Oslo process. One refers to the respondent's degree of support or opposition to the process, the other to whether the respondent believes that the process will lead to peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the foreseeable future.
24. For example, Alexander George, "Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimacy," in Ole Holsti, Robert Siverson, and Alexander George (eds.), *Change in the International System* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1980), pp. 233-262.
25. Peace Index, December 2002.
26. See, for example, Yaar-Yuchtman and Hermann, "The Latitude of Acceptance."
27. Ibid.
28. Peace Index, November 1999 and December 2002. Similar percentages were also found in the survey of March 2003, though in that case the question was worded somewhat differently.
29. Peace Index, December 2000 and December 2002.
30. Peace Index, December 2000.
31. Peace Index, March 2001.

32. Similar results were found in a survey conducted close to Arafat's death, in October 2004: 79 percent described him as a terrorist, 4 percent as a statesman, and the rest had no clear opinion.
33. Peace Index, December 1994, January 1996, July 1998, October 2000, February 2001, and July 2003.
34. Peace Index, January 2002.
35. Peace Index, November 2000 and November 2003.
36. Peace Index, April 2002 and June 2002.
37. Peace Index, May 2004.
38. Peace Index, March 2004.
39. Peace Index, March 1995.
40. Peace Index, January 2000.
41. For example, Peace Index, October 2003.
42. Peace Index, June 2004.
43. Ibid.
44. Peace Index, October 2003.
45. Amir Oren, "To Withdraw from Gaza, IDF Will Have to Conquer It," *Haaretz* (October 1, 2004).
46. This viewpoint—that the disengagement will be a precedent—was also accepted by the majority of the public. See Peace Index, September 2004.
47. Peace Index, June 2004.
48. Peace Index, September 1995, October 1996, December 1997, October 1999, April 2000, and September 2004.
49. Peace Index, July 2004.
50. Peace Index, September 2003.



## CHAPTER 6

# A PSYCHOLOGICAL EARTHQUAKE IN THE ISRAELI-JEWISH SOCIETY: CHANGING OPINIONS FOLLOWING THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT AND THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA\*

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An analysis of the relations between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians, in the context of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, turns up a sad paradox. Even at the climax of the violent confrontation, in 2002, the majority in both societies was ready for far-reaching compromises in order to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict peacefully. A national survey conducted in November 2002 in both societies at the same time shows that about 70 percent of the Palestinians and Israelis were willing to embark on a process that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, if the Palestinians would refrain from violence. Yet, at the same time, the majority in both societies stereotypes the adversary with delegitimizing characteristics and harbors fear and deep mistrust that prevent any possible negotiation and resolution of the conflict. In addition, the majority in both societies supports violent acts against the opponent, which only deepen the delegitimization and mistrust (Kull, 2003; Search for Common Ground, 2002).

These opinions, which prevail in the Israeli and Palestinian societies, indicate that even though members of both societies are very close to agreeing on the terms of a final-status settlement, powerful

\* The term *Al-Aqsa Intifada* refers to the violent confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians in the years 2000–2005. It is also sometimes called the Second Intifada.

psychological obstacles preclude a peaceful resolution of their conflict. This should not be construed as meaning that we believe conflicts are fueled merely by psychological dynamics rather than conflicts, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are real. The real issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—territories, natural resources, self-determination, justice, holy places, security, control, and so on.—must be addressed in the conflict's resolution. Nevertheless, it would no doubt be far more susceptible to resolution if not accompanied by intense psychological dynamics. These psychological dynamics are embedded in an intractable conflict over essential and existential contradictory goals, a conflict that is violent, prolonged, and continues to be perceived as irreconcilable (Bar-Tal, 1998). It deeply involves the members of the societies, who develop a psychological repertoire of beliefs, attitudes, and emotions about their goals, the causes of the conflict and its course, their own group and the rival, and the desired solution. These contents are reflected in three major psychological elements: collective memories, ethos of conflicts, and collective emotional orientation (Gamson, 1988; Ross, 1993). Eventually, this repertoire becomes an investment in the conflict, fueling its continuation; rigid and resistant to change, it thereby inhibits the conflict's de-escalation and peaceful resolution.

For several years beginning in 1993, a peace process was under way that inspired hope among many in the Israeli and Palestinian societies and reduced the mutual mistrust and animosity. However since fall 2000 the conflict escalated and again began to move toward intractability. The violence increased dramatically and both societies manifested extreme mutual hostility that played a determinative role in their conflictive relations.

This chapter examines and analyzes the dramatic psychological changes that took place in the Israeli-Jewish society within four years, since summer 2000. The analysis is based on the concept of transitional context, which will be described first. It is important to note that there is substantial evidence that similar psychological factors were operating on the Palestinian side and inducing similar effects. From the psychological perspective, each side's psychological repertoire is in large measure a mirror image of the other.

## THE CONCEPT OF TRANSITIONAL CONTEXT

Transitional context consists of the physical, social, political, economic, military, and psychological conditions, temporary in their nature, that make up the environment in which individuals and collectives function. These conditions may be man-made (conflict, revolution, or, indeed,

peace), or a natural given (storms, earthquakes), or may develop through the interaction of both types of factors (recession, famine). The conceptualization of transitional context emphasizes the fact that social contexts may be also dynamic and constantly changing, even when the broad structural characteristics of a society and of its environment remain relatively stable over a long period of time, altering slowly at an imperceptible pace. In reference to societal phenomena, transitional context consists of observable and well-defined conditions in the society that come about as a result of major events and major information that influence the behavior and functioning of the individuals and collectives who perceive and cognize them.

### **Major Societal Events and Information**

A major societal event is defined as an event of great importance occurring in a society. This event is experienced either directly (by participation) or indirectly (by watching, hearing, or reading about it) by the society's members, generates broad resonance, has relevance to the well-being of the society's members and of the society as a whole, involves those members, occupies a central position in public discussion and on the public agenda, and gives rise to information that forces the members of the society to reconsider, and often change, their previously held psychological repertoire (Oren, 2004). Examples of major events are wars, revolutions, stock market crashes, earthquakes, famines, or peace agreements. Major events create new conditions that require psychological adaptation, cognitive reframing, attitudinal-emotional change, and behavioral adjustments, and as such they often have a profound effect on the thinking, feeling, and behaving of the society's members and on the functioning of the society as a whole (Deutsch and Merritt, 1965; Sears, 2002).

Another important factor that may create a transitional context and thereby have consequences for societal functioning is major societal information. This term refers to information supplied by an epistemic authority, that is, a source that exerts determinative influence on the formation of an individual's knowledge about a matter of great relevance and great importance to the society's members and to the society as a whole. It, too, generates broad resonance, involves the society's members, occupies a central position in public discussion and on the public agenda, and forces the society's members to reconsider and change their psychological repertoire. Major information does not create observable changes in environmental conditions and therefore does not provide experiential participation, but is based on

powerful information that eventually may change the conditions of the society, influencing its members' thinking, feeling, and behaving. For example, information supplied by a society's epistemic authorities, such as the president, government officials, and intelligence agencies, to the effect that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction in violation of UN resolutions and supports terrorist activities of organizations such as Al-Qaeda is major information. This information was presented to the U.S. public shortly after the events of September 11, 2001, and served to mobilize U.S. society in support of a military attack on Iraq. It did not change the physical environmental conditions in which most Americans live, but did alter the psychological conditions by evoking feelings of threat, fear, and anger. It is clear that subsequently many Americans began to support a war against Iraq—something they probably would not have done, had it not been for the major information they received.

It should be noted that the transitional context in a society can be formed either solely on the basis of major information, or in response to a major event only, or as a result of the combined effect of a major event and major information occurring simultaneously or successively. For example, a leader, after providing major information, may then initiate a major act. President Bush provided major information about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and then initiated war against that country. Given the nature of the defining components of major events and information, transitional context is temporary in comparison to other contexts that are more stable.

Thus, the approach sees leaders, together with groups and societies, as active agents in shaping and altering the conditions in which they function, and not just as passive "recipients" who react to given environmental and/or psychological conditions. Leaders, with the support of the society's members, are the individuals, who decide to go to war, change a government by revolution, implement radical economical plans, sign peace treaties, or provide significant information about threats and the like. Such actions may lead to the formation of a transitional context, which may have a significant impact on the behavior of the society's members and on the functioning of a society as a whole.

### **Psychological Conditions**

In the conceptualization under discussion, psychological conditions are part of the context. They emerge together with other conditions (physical, political, etc.) as a result of major events and information and become part of the environment. Specifically, major events and

major information provide immediate signals and cues, which, when perceived and cognized by individuals and collectives, create psychological conditions that have an impact on the society's members. Examples of the psychological conditions that may be formed under transitional context are threat, danger, stress, uncertainty, alienation, hardship, tranquility, harmony, and so on. These psychological conditions in turn trigger perceptions, thoughts and ideas, affects, and emotions, which lead to various lines of behaviors.

### Propositions

We now adduce three propositions regarding the effects of transitional contexts on collective behavior. First, transitional contexts vary in their intensity. This intensity is determined by the extent to which the major event and/or information touches and involves the society's members. An intense context touches powerfully and involves deeply almost every member of the society. Intense transitional contexts lead to extreme reactions, by both individuals and collectives, at the cognitive, affective, emotional, and behavioral levels. They foment changes in thinking, generate strong affects and emotions, and instigate courses of action. We suggest that the more intensive the transitional context, the more extensive and unidirectional its influence on people is likely to be. That is, most of the society's members, in spite of their individual differences, act alike in situations of powerful major events and major information.

Second, transitional contexts may have either a negative or positive meaning for the society's members, and transitional contexts that include negative psychological conditions are more powerful than transitional contexts that include positive psychological conditions. This assumption is based on considerable evidence in psychology to the effect that negative events and information tend to be more attended and remembered than positive ones and that they have a strong influence on evaluation, judgment, and action tendencies (Cacioppo and Berntson, 1994; Christianson, 1992; Peeters and Czapinski, 1990; Ito et al. 1998; Pratto and John, 1991). Additionally, research in the area of life events and stress has shown that negative, undesirable events have especially powerful consequences for the health and behavior of individuals (Jacoby and Keinan, 2003; Johnson and Sarason, 1978; Monnier et al. 2002; Mueller et al. 1977; Ross and Mirowsky, 1979). This negativity bias is an inherent characteristic of the negative motivational system, which operates automatically at the evaluative-categorization stage. It is also structured to respond more intensely

than the positive motivational system to comparable levels of motivational activation. This tendency reflects adaptive behavior, since negative information, especially if related to threats, may require immediate adaptive reactions to the new situation.

Finally, the influence of the transitional context also depends on the shared narratives of the society's members regarding their past and present, and more especially shared societal beliefs contained in collective memories and the collective ethos. This shared knowledge provides a basis for the perception and interpretation of the experiences and information received from the major events and sets of information. Thus, for example, memories of collective past traumas strongly influence the understanding of present threatening events (Staub and Bar-Tal, 2003; Volkan, 1997).

The above implies that the more intensive and negative the created psychological conditions, the more extensive, profound, and unidirectional their influence on people will tend to be. It follows that a transitional context that involves extremely negative conditions may well produce a powerful effect on the psychological repertoire of both individuals and collectives and lead to predictable lines of behavior. The negative psychological conditions usually come about as a result of direct danger to the lives of the society's members, or threats to the fulfillment of their basic needs or to the society's very existence, functioning, well-being, and prosperity. In turn, they manifest themselves as negative experiences, such as insecurity, fear, anger, or frustration. There is evidence suggesting that a transitional context that is governed by negative psychological conditions such as threat and danger will result in patterns of reactions that are characterized by relatively little variation, because human beings are adaptively programmed to act in quite a specific way in such situations (Doty et al. 1991; Gordon and Arian, 2001; Hobfoll, 1998). Moreover, this tendency will be strengthened if a society carries central collective memories associated with traumas and threat (Volkan, 1997).

### **Conceptual Approaches**

There are at least four conceptual approaches that predict specific behavioral patterns in a negative context. The first approach is evolutionary, suggesting that the negative conditions created by a threatening transitional context arouse a crucial will for survival, resulting in an intensive and extensive effort to serve that aim. We can assume that in the long course of human evolution threat and danger caused both insecurity and uncertainty (Ross, 1991). As a result, homo sapiens

evolved to possess an adaptive psychological repertoire (Bigelow, 1969, Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1979; van der Dennen and Falger, 1990), including fear (Plutchik, 1980), prejudice (Fox, 1992), ethnocentrism (Reynolds et al. 1987) aggression (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1977; Eibl-Eibesfeldt, and Sütterlin, 1990), and readiness for self-sacrifice for the sake of one's own group (Campbell, 1972). This repertoire is easily triggered whenever the situation becomes threatening and insecure. As a fundamental human characteristic, it emerges automatically and spontaneously and easily overcomes the repertoire that predominates in times of peace, security, and prosperity.

A second approach focuses on human needs. Negative conditions lead to deprivation and to the frustration of various basic personal and collective needs, such as the need for security, meaningful comprehension, mastery, control, and positive identity. Hence, it can be assumed that transitional contexts that are dominated by collective threat will cause the majority of the society's members, in an attempt to restore psychological balance, to cope with the situation and attempt to satisfy their basic needs at the individual and collective levels (Burton, 1990; Kelman, 1990; Staub, 1989, 2003; Taylor, 1983). If this goal cannot be achieved constructively, they may turn to destructive modalities. In that case, they focus only on themselves, try to make simple sense of the reality, blame others for their fate, and rely on simplistic solutions. As such, their needs may be fulfilled at the expense of others, they may harm other groups, and/or adhere to other nonfunctional ways of achieving their goals. In these cases, the need for security, for effectiveness and control, and for maintaining a positive identity can actually lead to actions and reactions that eventually lessen security. This occurs, for example, when one group uses excessive violence against another group, intensifying intergroup antagonism (Staub, 1996, 2003; Staub and Bar-Tal, 2003).

Another approach focuses specifically on the fear that is automatically, spontaneously, and unconsciously instigated in negative conditions that imply potential threat and danger. The aroused fear in this situation is an evolutionary safeguard that ensures survival (Lazarus, 1999; LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 1993). Of special importance for the present understanding are findings that clearly show that fear, as a primary emotion, is responsible for fomenting a particular line of affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions at the individual and collective levels. It focuses attention and sensitizes people to threatening cues and information; facilitates the selective retrieval of information related to the perceived cause of the fear; causes great mistrust and deep delegitimization of the adversary; heightens unity, solidarity, and

mobilization among the society's members in view of the threat to individuals and to the society at large; may lead to a collective freezing of beliefs about the conflict, about the adversary, and about ways of coping with the dangers and is liable to reduce openness to new ideas; and leads often to defensive and/or aggressive behaviors, even when this can achieve little or nothing (Bar-Tal, 2001; Clore et al. 1994; Isen, 1990; Lazarus, 1991; LeDoux, 1996; Ohman, 1993).

Finally, the social-psychological theory of terror management (Pyszczynski et al. 1997; Solomon et al. 1991) proposes that innate anxiety of annihilation, combined with the human knowledge of inevitable death, creates an ever-present potential for terror. In order to cope with this terror, human beings developed culture, which functions as an anxiety buffer. The culturally constructed worldview of reality imbues life with order, permanence, and stability, and sets standards of value that, when met, allow for a sense of self-esteem. In essence, culture functions as an anxiety buffer by conferring literal or symbolic immortality on those who uphold its values. Literal immortality is provided by belief in an afterlife or in an immortal soul, and symbolic immortality is achieved by identification with larger and longer lasting entities than the self, such as nations or institutions, and by culturally valued achievements that validate one's existence. A central proposition of terror management theory, strongly supported by research (Greenberg et al. 1997), is that conditions in which mortality is made salient, which characterize many negative threatening contexts, arouse the potential for terror and the need to protect against it. Since the cultural worldview provides an anxiety buffer, conditions of heightened mortality salience engender a desire to bolster the cultural belief system and select behaviors that support those beliefs, as well as a readiness to reject and even annihilate outsiders who threaten the worldview.

We should note again that the described effects of negative transitional contexts, as of any transitional context, occur not only on the individual level, but on the collective level as well. Societal mechanisms, at both the micro and macro level, such as persuasion, communication, and dissemination, turn these effects into societal phenomena (Hobfoll, 1998, 2003).

Despite all the arguments just presented, we believe that no context is so powerful as to entirely override any and all individual differences. In any society there will almost certainly be minorities who react to the context differently from the majority. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to address the factors that might lead to such dissenting reactions, but it should be pointed out that given



the fear-arousing nature of threatening contexts, it is unlikely that there will be many individuals who will not be influenced by them at all. Still, the effect of transitional context may vary among individuals to a certain degree.

Drawing on the conception of transitional context presented above, a detailed discussion of the escalated violent conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinians that re-erupted in fall 2000 is presented. We propose that in the course of this period a powerful transitional context unfolded in the Israeli society. This transitional context consisted of major events, sets of major information, and the psychological conditions they created, which had major effects on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the society's Jewish members. In order to analyze this specific transitional context and its effects, we relied on data collected in several studies of Israeli society conducted in the relevant period of time, data from public opinion surveys published in the media, books that sought to analyze this period, and media reports and commentaries.

### TRANSITIONAL CONTEXT OF THE ISRAELI-JEWISH SOCIETY

Our analysis concerns the Israeli-Palestinian intractable conflict, which has a history of about 100 years. The conflict developed over the territory that two national movements claimed as their homeland, with Palestinian nationalism and Zionism—the Jewish national movement—clashing repeatedly over the right to self-determination, statehood, and justice (Gerner, 1991; Tessler, 1994). It was only in 1993 that the historic breakthrough occurred, when Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed an agreement in which the PLO recognized the right of Israel to exist in peace and security and Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people in peace negotiations. Moreover, the two sides signed a Declaration of Principles (DOP) that specified the various stages of the peace process and set the framework for a five-year interim period of Palestinian self-rule. This interim period was intended to allow a gradual building of trust and reduction of animosity and hatred between the two nations, which would enable them to construct relations of peaceful coexistence. Such developments were expected to eventuate in a permanent settlement of the conflict, in which its core issues would be resolved.

Seven years later, in summer 2000, the two parties met to try and complete the final agreement and resolve all the outstanding issues

peacefully. Many of the events and processes that occurred during the seven-year period were not conducive to the evolution of a peaceful climate of mutual trust, but it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to analyze the nature of those developments.

This analysis begins by describing the major events and major information from summer 2000 to show how their interaction created a powerful transitional context. The period being analyzed was marked by two major events in Israeli society: the Camp David summit, with its unsuccessful ending, and the outbreak of violence in September 2000, which is still ongoing at the time of this writing. In addition, during this time Israeli citizens were repeatedly provided with major information regarding these major events, by Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, their associates, and by army commanders, who were acting as societal epistemic authorities in this context.<sup>1</sup> This information served as a frame for the interpretation of the events.

### **Major Events and Major Sets of Information**

The first major event took place between July 11–24, 2000, when top-level delegations of Israelis and Palestinians met at Camp David, in the United States, with the participation of a U.S. team led by President Bill Clinton, to try and reach a final agreement and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the two sides did not succeed in reaching an agreement and the peace summit failed.

With regard to the major sets of information about this event, even prior to the summit Prime Minister Barak provided major information by generating the expectation that the July 2000 Camp David summit would be the time to make crucial decisions in the negotiation process with the Palestinians. This major information implied that Israelis were ready for historic compromises and that this was the moment that would reveal whether the Palestinians were ready, too, and truly wanted to settle the conflict peacefully. Second, when the negotiations failed, Barak provided further major information by saying he had done everything, had turned over every stone in the search for peace by making a very generous and far-reaching offer at Camp David. The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, it was claimed, refused to accept the offer and made no counterproposal. Thus responsibility for the failure was imputed solely to the Palestinians (Drucker, 2002; Enderlin, 2003; Pressman, 2003; Swisher, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004). This information was supported by statements from President Clinton and from all the Israeli participants at the summit. Subsequently, almost all the

country's political, social, and religious leaders, as well as the Israeli mass media, intensely circulated this information time and time again. This was major information and had a major effect on the construction of the Israelis' views. It implied that although Israel made the ultimate compromise and "gave everything," the Palestinians rejected the offer. It meant that Arafat, together with the Palestinian leadership, was not interested in resolving the conflict through compromises and in a peaceful way, but strove to annihilate Israel, especially by insisting on the right of return of millions of Palestinian refugees to Israel.

The second, still continuing, major event had its genesis on September 28, 2000, when violent conflict erupted. In response to the controversial visit of Ariel Sharon, Israel's opposition leader at the time to the Temple Mount, the site of Islamic holy places, Palestinians launched disturbances in the form of stone throwing, demonstrations, and shootings. These incidents were met with violent responses by the Israeli security forces. In the first four days of the uprising 39 Palestinians and 5 Israelis were killed; within a month the death toll rose to over 130 Palestinians and 11 Israelis. From the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada—as the Palestinians called the uprising, referring to the name of one of the mosques on the Temple Mount—until April 1, 2001, 409 Palestinians were killed and about 1,740 were wounded, and in the same period 70 Israelis were killed and 183 wounded.<sup>2</sup>

As the violence began, major information coming from the Israeli government claimed that the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada had been well prepared by Arafat and the Palestinian Authority (PA). This was the explanation offered, even though at the outset of the confrontation most of the Israeli security sources had a different interpretation of the events (chapter 3 in this book; Dor, 2001; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Nevertheless, very soon all security and government sources rallied behind this major information that was continuously disseminated by the media. As the violence continued, both government and military sources and much of the media kept providing information to the effect that the Palestinians' goal was to destroy Israel, and that Israel was engaged in a war for its survival. The same sources also relentlessly repeated major information saying that Arafat was personally responsible for every terrorist attack and that the Palestinian leadership (especially Arafat and the senior figures associated with him) was not a viable negotiation partner because of its involvement in terrorism and refusal to fight against it (chapter 3 in this book).

In the months that followed, Palestinian violence and terrorism continued, mostly in the occupied territories, and the Israeli army

carried out military operations to contain the uprising and prevent terrorist attacks. During the fall of 2000 and in early 2001 attempts at negotiation to end the violence and complete the agreement were still being made. The climax of these efforts took place in Taba, where the Israeli and Palestinian delegations made a genuine effort to negotiate the framework for a final settlement of the conflict (Matz, 2003; Pressman, 2003). However, these attempts ended on February 6, 2001, with the election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister of Israel, with the backing of an overwhelming majority of Jewish voters.

After Sharon's election, the level of violence on both sides surged and the relations between Israelis and Palestinians deteriorated. The Palestinians stepped up their terrorist attacks, mainly by means of suicide bombings in public places throughout Israel. At the same time, the Israeli security forces, endeavoring to curb the violence and especially the terrorism, initiated acts of violence against the PA, assassinating Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity, imposing harsh restrictions on the Palestinian population that severely affected their daily life, and made frequent incursions into the Palestinian territories. The climax of these actions was Operation Defensive Shield, in April–May 2002, in which Israeli forces reoccupied the West Bank almost entirely.

### **Acceptance of the Major Information**

Having described the major events and major information, we provide evidence that the sets of information provided by the epistemic sources were accepted by the majority of the Israeli Jews as truthful. Thus, a survey carried out at the end of July 2000 showed that 67 percent of Israeli Jews believed the Palestinian side to be entirely, or in the main part, responsible for the failure of the Camp David summit. Only 13 percent thought the Israelis were either solely or largely responsible, and 12 percent said both sides were equally to blame (Peace Index, July 2000). Two years later, in August 2002, 92 percent of Israeli Jews believed that the Palestinians did not fulfill their commitments as stipulated in the Oslo agreement, while 66 percent believed that Israel fulfilled its part (Peace Index, August 2002). With regard to the major information about the outbreak of the intifada, the polls showed that in November 2000 about 80 percent of Israeli Jews blamed the Palestinians for the eruption of the violence (Peace Index, November 2000). With regard to major information about Palestinian intentions, 53 percent of the Israeli Jews believed that the intifada was aimed at harming and fighting Israel as a goal in itself and not in order to improve the terms of the putative peace agreement (Peace Index, March 2001).

The major events of the Camp David summit and of the eruption and continuation of violence, combined with the major information about the causes of the failure at Camp David and about the reasons for the eruption of the violence and its continuation, created powerful psychological conditions of threat that dramatically affected the Israeli-Jewish society.

### **Psychological Conditions of Threat**

The violent acts perpetrated by the Palestinians, especially the indiscriminate terrorist attacks against the civilian population throughout Israel, together with major information claiming that the Palestinians were out to destroy the Jewish state and that the Palestinian leadership was involved in the terrorism, created psychological conditions of threat among the Israeli Jews (see also Arian, in press). Immediately after the start of the violence, in a poll conducted in November 2000, 59 percent of Israeli Jews reported feeling personally threatened and 62 percent felt that Israel's national security was under threat (Peace Index, November 2000). The perception of threat persisted throughout the Al-Aqsa Intifada: in November 2003, 61 percent of Israeli Jews reported feeling personally threatened and 62 percent thought Israel's national security was under threat (Peace Index, November 2003). Also, whereas in 1999 fewer than 50 percent of Israeli Jews thought the Arabs aspired, at the very least, to conquer the state of Israel, in 2002 this was the view of 68 percent of the Israeli Jews, and in 2004 of 74 percent. As the terrorist attacks intensified in 2002, 80 percent of Israeli Jews perceived the continued intifada as a threat (Arian, 2002).

### **CHANGES IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REPertoire OF ISRAELI JEWS**

The transitional context, which includes the events and sets of provided information, together with the accompanying experienced threat, has fomented the changes in the psychological repertoire of the Israeli Jews. Here the primary focus is on the general trends in the psychological repertoire of the Israeli Jews during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Its specific elements are discussed below.

#### **Fear**

Perception of threat induced a feeling of fear. In June 2001, 67 percent of Israeli Jews reported that they were "anxious about the future of

Israel” and 63 percent that they were experiencing greater anxiety than in the past about their personal security and that of their family (*Maariv*, June 8, 2001). As the violence surged, Israelis felt increasing fear, which affected all aspects of life, in particular, behavior in public places and the use of public transportation (Klar et al. 2002; Lori, 2002). In spring 2002 almost all Israeli Jews (92 percent) reported that they felt apprehensive that they or a member of their family might fall victim to a terrorist attack (by February 2004 this had fallen to 77 percent), as compared to 58 percent in 1999 (Arian, 2002). Even in September 2004, when the terror attacks had declined significantly, 80.4 percent of bus riders were afraid of taking the bus and 59.8 percent of Israeli Jews were afraid to go to crowded places (Ben Simon, 2004). In 1999, 80 percent of Israeli Jews were still reporting an enhanced feeling of personal security since the peace process began in 1993 (Arian, 1999); but in 2002, 78 percent of the respondents stated that their personal security had deteriorated.

### **Delegitimization of the Palestinians and Their Leaders**

Violence and threat perceptions generate a need for explanation, to justify the actions of one's membership group and to differentiate between it and the rival group. Delegitimization fulfills these functions (Bar-Tal, 1989; Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005). Indeed, the Al-Aqsa intifada has been marked by systematic, institutionalized mutual delegitimization of Palestinians and Israeli Jews (Bar-Tal and Oren, 2004; Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003). The delegitimization of the Palestinians began with their leader.

Shortly after the eruption of the violence, Yasser Arafat was ruled out as a partner for peace (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Later, he was branded a terrorist and was blamed personally for every terrorist attack carried out by any Palestinian group. This line of delegitimization intensified after September 11, 2001, when the United States and other Western countries declared a “world war against terrorism.” In this context, Arafat was likened to Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said, “There is a need to delegitimize Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. There is a need to connect Arafat to terrorism and destroy his image as a peacemaker” (Benn, 2001). Finally, the Israeli authorities dismissed him as “irrelevant” and broke off all contact with him. The Israeli public accepted this description as credible (see also chapter 6 in this book). As the polls showed, already in October 2000, 71 percent of Israeli Jews thought Arafat behaved like a terrorist, as compared with two years earlier when only

41 percent thought so (Peace Index, October 2000). It is thus not surprising that in a national survey of September 2003, 18 percent of Israeli Jews suggested that Arafat be assassinated, 28 percent that he be deported, and 27 percent that his isolation in the Ramallah compound be tightened, while only 20 percent thought that Israel should continue to keep him in his present protracted form of isolation (*Haaretz*, September 10, 2003). Similarly, the PA was presented by the Israeli government as a “terrorist entity” that initiates and supports terrorist attacks (*International Herald Tribune*, March 1, 2001), and 67 percent of Israeli Jews concurred with this view (*Maariv*, December 7, 2001).

As for negative stereotyping of the Palestinians, in 1997, 39 percent of Israeli Jewish respondents described the Palestinians as violent and 42 percent as dishonest, by the end of 2000 the figures were 68 percent and 51 percent, respectively. Similarly, in November 2000, 78 percent of the Jewish public agreed with the statement that Palestinians have little regard for human life and therefore persist in using violence despite the high number of their own casualties (Peace Index, November 2000). In April 2001, 56 percent of Israeli Jews thought that all or most Palestinians support violence against Israel and 17.3 percent thought that this was true of half the Palestinians (Peace Index, May 2001). In addition, whereas in 1999, 64 percent of Israeli Jews believed that the majority of Palestinians want peace, in 2002 only 37 percent held this belief (Arian, 2002), rising somewhat to 43 percent in 2004.

Finally, lack of trust, as a corollary of delegitimization, is clearly reflected in the following beliefs: 70 percent of the Israeli Jewish public held that Arafat personally lacked the desire, or the capability, to sign an agreement ending the conflict with Israel, even if Israel agreed to all his demands, and that he would make additional demands in order to foil the agreement; and 80 percent believed that the Palestinians would not honor an agreement signed by them (Peace Index, May 2001). Moreover, the great majority of Israeli Jews started to believe that the Palestinians were striving to destroy Israel and therefore peace with them was unattainable (Arian, 2002).

### **Self-Victimization and Self-Focus**

One clear phenomenon in group life within the context of violence, perceived threat, and fear is the emergence of a sense of victimization. This feeling began to evolve in the wake of the perception that the Palestinians had instigated the violence even though, as most Israeli

Jews believed, Prime Minister Barak had made the most generous possible proposals to end the conflict. As noted, the majority of Israeli Jews blamed the Palestinians for the eruption of the violence and thought that the Palestinians were entirely or almost entirely responsible for the deterioration in the relations between them and the Israelis. However, this was not the only cause of the deep feeling of victimization that seized most Israeli Jews. This feeling was intensified by the repeated suicide bombing attacks, which claimed many Jewish lives, most of them civilians. A feeling of victimization became pervasive among Israeli Jews because every attack against them was perceived as an act of terrorism and received immense exposure as such in the media. The Israeli media not only provided detailed accounts of terrorist attacks along with the rescue operations following them and reports from hospitals and funerals; they also personalized the victims by presenting their biographies and offering descriptions of them by friends and relatives (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003).

Collective self-perception as victim led to self-focus. The day-to-day public discourse focused on the threat and on violent events and the mass media devoted nearly all its reports to the description and analysis of the terrorist attacks against Israeli Jews and to the military efforts to stop them. Self-focus was also reflected in Israeli news reports about the violence. The reports, relying largely on Israeli military and governmental sources, provided detailed information and analyses about Palestinian violence against Israeli Jews, while showing relative disregard, in terms of both description and implications, of Israeli army actions that inflicted harm on the Palestinians (Dor, 2004; Sharvit and Bar-Tal, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 2004). One consequence of this reportage is a sense of insularity and scant exposure of Israeli Jews to information about the effects of the army's operations on the Palestinians and to their living conditions and viewpoints (Dor, 2004).

Thus trapped in their perception as victims in the vicissitudes of the violent conflict, the Israelis found it difficult to be empathetic to the Palestinians and to be attuned to their grievances, hardships, needs, or goals. In March 2001, 63 percent of Israeli Jews were against providing economic aid to the Palestinians in order to ease their suffering. Later, though, in July 2002, when reports about the Palestinians' suffering reached the Israeli public, including an U.S. report about hunger and poverty among the Palestinians, 59 percent supported the idea that the Israeli government, along with fighting terrorism, should also ease the suffering of the Palestinian people (Peace Index, July 2002). However, in the Rafah operation in May 2004, in which civilians were among those killed and homes and property were



destroyed, 70 percent of Israeli Jews thought that Israel should not offer compensation for the damage caused. In reply to another question, 40 percent said that they had no sympathy toward the Palestinians who lost their homes and property, 26 percent expressed indifference to this, and only 28 percent reported feelings of sympathy (Peace Index, May 2004).

### **Support for Violent Means in Confronting the Palestinians**

When the members of the group believe that the other group initiated the violent confrontations, they not only feel threatened and fearful and delegitimize the rival, but they also tend to support aggressive methods to cope with the violence, especially if they believe they have the necessary staying power vis-à-vis the enemy. Accordingly, Israel's Jewish population began to support the violent actions taken by the government against the Palestinians after the eruption of the intifada in the fall of 2000 (the rate of support was consistent at about 70 percent). A study by Cannetti-Nisim, et al. (in press) shows that during the four years of the intifada between 60 and 70 percent of Israeli Jews thought that every military operation initiated by Israel was justified (see also chapter 5 in this present book). In March 2001, 72 percent of Israeli Jews thought that greater military force should be used against the Palestinians (Peace Index, March 2001). A survey conducted in February 2002 found that 75 percent of Israeli Jews thought that the intifada could be tempered by military means; 57 percent thought that the measures employed to quell the intifada were too moderate, while only 9 percent considered them too harsh and 34 percent viewed them as being appropriate (Arian, 2002). In addition, 58 percent supported a policy of investing more in the country's military apparatus in order to avert another war and as an alternative to peace talks—up from 40 percent two years earlier (Arian, 2002).

With regard to specific actions, in April 2002 about 90 percent of Israeli Jews supported Operation Defensive Shield in which the Israeli army reconquered the West Bank cities that were under the control of the PA (Peace Index, April 2002). In the same year 90 percent supported so-called "targeted assassinations" of Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity (Arian, 2002); in July 2002, 62 percent of Israeli Jews supported such assassinations even if they entailed Palestinian civilian losses (Peace Index, July 2002). In addition, 80 percent backed the use of tanks and fighter planes against the Palestinians, 73 percent

supported the imposition of “closures” and economic sanctions, and 72 percent said they favored military incursions into the cities that were under the control of the PA (Arian, 2002). Even in February 2004, 44 percent of Israeli Jews thought governmental policy to maintain quiet in the territories was too soft and that a harder hand was needed: 45 percent thought the policy was appropriate and only 11 percent thought it was too harsh.

The attitudes described above can be usefully compared to the beliefs expressed in a national survey conducted in 1999 by the Red Cross (Greenberg Research, 1999). Although the questions in that study were different, it can be inferred from the responses that the Israeli Jews’ behavioral tendencies were more moderate before the Al-Aqsa Intifada. In 1999, 65 percent of Israeli Jews supported “imposition of strict security measures such as curfew to deter violent action” and 56 percent supported “the demolition of the house of an accused person,” only 42 percent were in favor of “attacking the enemy in populated villages or towns knowing that many civilians might be killed,” and only 12 percent supported “dropping bombs on populated areas.”

### **Support for a Leader Who Projects Brute Strength**

Situations of violent intergroup conflict prompt people to look for a leader who projects determination to cope forcefully with the rival and can assure security. Israelis went to the polls on February 6, 2001, and elected Ariel Sharon, the Likud Party candidate (with a 60 percent majority), over Ehud Barak, of the Labor Party. This outcome was not surprising in view of the fact that the majority of Israeli Jewish voters believed that Barak had not only made the Palestinians an overly generous offer (44 percent thought so already in July 2000: Peace Index, July 2000; and 70.4 percent thought so by January 2001: Peace Index, January 2001), but also had been too lenient (as 70 percent believed) in handling the crisis, which led to heightened Palestinian violence (even 51 percent of Barak’s supporters accepted this view: Peace Index, January 2001). The newly elected prime minister, an ex-general who took part in all of Israel’s major wars, was known for having used harsh measures in violent confrontations with Palestinians in the past, was behind the building of many of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and took an extreme hawkish stance in his vehement opposition to the Oslo agreement (Bennet, 2004). Both in Israel and abroad, Sharon was perceived as advocating the use of brute force and as being adamant in his determination to curtail and

deter the Arabs, especially the Palestinians. In his election campaign he promised “peace and security,” and once in office he broke off negotiations with the Palestinians and insisted on the cessation of Palestinian violence as a precondition to political negotiations. At the same time he began to suggest a blueprint for a resolution of the conflict, which promised the Palestinians only the most minimal political gains (interview with Sharon in *Maariv*, April 13, 2001). This policy won the broad support of Israeli Jews. In March 2001, 79 percent supported Sharon’s policy against resuming negotiations with the Palestinians as long as the violence on their part persisted (Peace Index, March 2001). During Sharon’s incumbency the terrorism and violence increased and Israel adhered to a policy of forceful and violent containment of Palestinian violence. In his own constituency, Sharon gained wide approval (about 60–70 percent) and consistent support for his security approach, policy and actions (Barzilai and Levy-Barzilai, 2002).

### Irreconcilability

In addition, the context, which partook of major events and information with the attendant perception of threat, led to the reactions described above, including a feeling of irreconcilability—the feeling that the conflict would continue to be violent and not amenable to peaceful resolution. Public opinion surveys conducted before and during the relevant period, reveal a dramatic change in the proportion of Israeli-Jews who thought that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would end through peace agreements. In 1999, optimism about a peace agreement ran high: 69 percent of Israeli-Jews preferred peace talks to strengthening the country’s military capability, 68 percent believed that peace would continue for the coming three years, 59 percent thought that terrorist attacks would be curtailed only by means of negotiations, and the majority was ready to negotiate with the Palestinians on the core issues of the conflict (Arian, 1999). However, in 2002 this mood changed: 58 percent of Israeli Jews preferred strengthening military capability to peace talks, 77 percent believed that war would erupt in the coming three years, and 68 percent thought that it was impossible to reach a peace agreement with the Palestinians (Arian, 2002). Moreover, the polls showed that the conflict was increasingly perceived as irreconcilable in the near future: in 2001 and 2002, at least 50 percent of Israeli Jews believed that the conflict would deteriorate and at least 50 percent expected it to continue for many years (Globes, 2001, 2002). In September 2004, only 18.3 percent of

Israeli Jews believed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be resolved within a few years, 30.4 percent thought it would be resolved in the more distant future, and the rest believed it would not be resolved even in the next hundred years (Ben Simon, 2004). In 2002, 77 percent thought a war between Israel and Arab states within the next three years was of medium or high probability, as compared with 44 percent in 1999 (Arian, 2002). Similarly, the polls showed a decline in support for the Oslo agreement: from 58 percent in 2001 to 31 percent in 2003 (Arian, 2003).

### **Support for Steps toward Unilateral Separation from the Palestinians**

One result of violence, threat perception, and fear is a tendency to draw clear distinctions between one's own group and the rival. Thus far we have shown that the Israelis differentiated psychologically between themselves and the Palestinians by perceiving the latter negatively as rejectionists, as being ill-intentioned, as perpetrators of violence, and as having generally negative traits. In contrast, the Jews were perceived as victims and as possessing predominantly positive traits.

But the violence not only created a tendency for psychological differentiation, it also led many Israeli Jews to support *physical* separation between them and the Palestinians (see also chapter 5 in this book). The notion that "they have to be there, we have to be here" was advanced by politicians from the entire political spectrum, who proposed at least nine different plans for unilateral separation in the relevant period (Galili, 2002). This reflected not only a desire for self-defense but also a wish for psychological differentiation from the Palestinians (Baskin, 2002; Nadler, 2002). The Israeli public (at least 60 percent) supported separation from the Palestinians by physical means (Peace Index, May 2001), and 56 percent preferred this to an agreement with the Palestinians (*Maariv*, May 10, 2002). The direct manifestation of this desire was to be the construction of a fence to separate between Israelis and Palestinians and at the same time prevent terror attacks (Rabinowitz, 2002). The government finally yielded to these demands and in summer 2002 decided formally to create physical separation between the Palestinians and the Israelis by means of a fence and other means. A survey conducted in February 2004, after the sharply divided views about the fence were voiced publicly, showed that 84 percent of Israeli Jews were in favor of building the fence. About 66 percent held that it should be built in accordance with the government's security considerations, and 64 percent

thought that the Palestinians' suffering should be secondary or of marginal consideration (Peace Index, February 2004).

In addition, in fall 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon introduced a plan for unilateral disengagement, which involved dismantling the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and four isolated settlements in the northern West Bank, as well as withdrawing Israel's military forces from the Gaza Strip. All these moves were to be implemented without coordination with the PA, as the Palestinian leadership was rejected as a negotiating partner. Although the plan had the steady support of at least 55 percent of Israeli Jews (Peace Index, April 2004), it was rejected by the majority in a referendum held among members of the Likud.

### **Unidirectional Thinking about the Adversary, the Conflict and Its Resolution**

Situations of violence, threat perception, and fear lead the parties involved to pursue an aggressive containment of violence, without trying alternative ways that might reduce and resolve the conflict. In the Israeli case, when Sharon came to power the political negotiations were halted and strict preconditions were posited for their resumption. First, as noted, Sharon insisted on the complete cessation of Palestinian violence as the condition for political negotiations. To this end he brought about the total delegitimization of Arafat and claimed there was no partner for negotiations on the Palestinian side. This policy was meant to reflect the principle that violence does not pay and must not be rewarded by political negotiations, a policy that, as mentioned above, won broad support among the Jewish Israeli public. Later, Sharon somewhat toned down this demand, insisting on seven days of complete quiet. In the winter of 2002, he began to demand that Arafat relinquish his official powers and that the PA undergo democratization as preconditions for political negotiations.

These conditions effectively prevented any possibility of trying different political approaches suggested by various mediators. On the contrary, since the conditions were not met and the violence only increased, the Israeli government responded with violent acts of various kinds to contain the terrorist attacks. Among other actions, Israel imposed military closures on Palestinian territories; established road-blocks and checkpoints; assassinated suspected planners and perpetrators of terrorism; bombed various targets of the Palestinian security forces; made military incursions into the territories of the PA; conquered

West Bank cities; and demolished the homes of those involved in terrorist attacks and expelled their relatives from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip. This policy was recommended by the army and supported by the government, which did not seriously consider political steps as an alternative (chapter 3 in this book). As noted above, all these acts were supported by the majority of Israeli Jews.

The result was the unleashing of a vicious cycle of violence. Palestinian terrorism led to aggressive acts by Israel, which in turn generated rage, a desire for revenge, and hatred among the Palestinian population, leading to its strong support for terrorist attacks; on the Israeli side, the attacks aroused fear, anger, hatred, and a desire for retaliation and harsh measures; and so the process spiraled on. As one of Israel's leading columnists wrote, "The conception has hardly changed since October 2000." This conception was based on various assumptions such as "Israel must not surrender to terror" and "We have no partner for talks on the other side" (chapter 3 in this book). Such assumptions locked "the decision makers in the Israeli army and the government into a paralyzing pattern of thought" (Benziman, 2002).

### **Internal Pressure for Conformity and Readiness to Impose Sanctions on Dissenters**

A situation of violence, perceived threat, and fear produces pressure to adhere to the consensus and to impose sanctions on those who express dissenting views. In the Israeli case, as was shown above, violence led to the development of consensual opinions about the Palestinians ("not partners for peace"), about their leader ("a terrorist and has to be removed"), about the Oslo agreement as a primary Israeli mistake, and about use of harsh measures as a primary way of coping with the threat.

Nevertheless, a minority of Israelis objected to this approach and expressed different attitudes and opinions about the focal issues of the conflict. Indeed, some groups and organizations conducted an active campaign against government policies, including a group urging refusal to do military service in the occupied territories, or to serve in the army at all as long as the occupation continued and the military carried out "immoral acts" (such calls were issued, for example, by a group of air force pilots and a group from Sayeret Matkal, an elite commando unit). In addition, members of the political opposition in the Knesset were critical of the government policy. A few journalists, mainly in the print media, expressed consistent dissent. Such opinions

were assailed by the government and many of its supporters, who regarded their proponents as, at best, naïve and unrealistic, but also as unpatriotic (*Haaretz*, September 30, 2003). Advocates of alternative plans to renew the peace process or those who proposed a model to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (such as the Geneva Initiative) were perceived as traitors (*Haaretz*, September 23, 2003). In a poll of April 2002, 58 percent of Israeli Jews held that journalists who criticize the actions of the Israeli army and government policies in the occupied territories harm the country's security, and 48 percent thought that journalists who oppose government policy should be banned from television (*Maariv*, April 26, 2002).

Moreover, social sanctions were applied to those who continued to support the Oslo agreement. In extreme rightist circles there was even talk of placing the initiators of the Oslo agreement on trial as traitors (Dayan, 2002; Shragai, 2001). Some of these opposing groups were seen as threatening Israel's staying power in the face of Palestinian violence and as obstructing the justified struggle. There were even calls to try the dissenters in military or civil courts. In practice, the military courts tried only soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories.

### **Rejection of Criticism from Outside Groups**

In a situation of violence, threat perception, and fear, a society rejects any criticism from outside groups. It cultivates confidence in its own justness, adheres to its goals, and focuses on its own victimization. In the case under discussion, Israeli Jews rejected criticism coming from outside the country, especially from Europe. The critics were presented at best as misguided but often as being anti-Israeli and even anti-Semitic (Arens, 2002).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter has reviewed the effects of the powerful transitional context of the Al-Aqsa Intifada on Israeli Jewish psychological repertoire, especially in terms of fear, delegitimization of the Palestinians, and self-perception as victim. These effects had serious consequences, which will be discussed below. First, however, it should be pointed out that the described psychological repertoire did not simply appear out of nowhere. It is based on the ethos of conflict, collective memory, and a collective emotional orientation of fear, which have dominated the Israeli-Jewish society throughout decades of intractable conflict with

the Arab world, and with the Palestinians in particular, especially during the late 1940s and in the 1950s, 1960s, and most of the 1970s. During these years, and later as well, the conflict occupied a central place in the life of the Israeli Jewish society and arose constantly in public discourse. The state of conflict has always constituted a permanent, salient, and relevant context for the society's members, in which they have experienced, directly and indirectly, its related events, and information about the conflict has featured prominently in the outlets for communication in Israeli society. In such contexts, the members of the society frequently resort to the psychological repertoire, which is invoked unceasingly and thereby becomes permanently accessible. When progress was made toward resolution of the conflict, especially in the 1990s, this repertoire became less dominant in the Israeli society. However, as it was deeply embedded in the ethos of conflict, collective memory, and collective emotional orientation of fear, it reemerged with great ease following the powerful transitional context created by the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada and the accompanying information. Thus, transitional context, powerful as it may be, does not operate in a vacuum. Its effects are dependent upon and moderated by more stable features of the context (the ongoing intractable conflict) and the prevailing, more stable psychological repertoire of the society's members.

Prominent in the re-emerged narratives of ethos and collective memory are societal beliefs about the justness of the conflict's goals, delegitimization of the Arabs and particularly the Palestinians, a positive collective self-perception, and self-perception as a victim. Societal beliefs about the justness of one's goals deal with the reasons, explanations, and rationales of the goals that are at stake in the conflict, and above all are intended to justify their crucial importance; societal beliefs that delegitimize the Arabs deny the adversary's humanity; societal beliefs supporting positive collective self-perception concern the ethnocentric tendency to attribute positive traits, values, and behavior to one's society; and societal beliefs about self-perception as victim entail one's self-presentation as a victim. These societal beliefs are shared by the society's members, emerge in the public discourse and in the mass media, are manifested in cultural products, and come through in school textbooks.

In addition to the stratum described above, any attempt to understand the psychological repertoire of Israeli Jews in times of threat must take into account what lies at the core of Jewish collective memory, namely the persecutions in the Diaspora and especially their climax in the form of the Holocaust during the Second World War.



The Holocaust, in which six millions Jews perished only because of their Jewishness, became a meta-symbol of Jewish identity and a meaningful lesson for the Jewish people. Every situation of perceived collective threat is automatically associated with these collective memories, which arouse feelings of fear and a strong motivation to overcome the threatening adversary. More specifically, it engenders suspicion, sensitivity, group mobilization, hostility, and defensive courses of action that may even disregard international behavioral codes.

In the light of the symptoms it generates with respect to the conflict, the psychological repertoire described above can be viewed as a *syndrome of animosity*. The symptoms are inferred from the ramified empirical literature in social and political psychology about the effects of stored important beliefs on cognitive processes (Cohen, 1981; Darley and Gross, 1983; Iyengar, and Ottati, 1994; Lau and Sears, 1986; Lord et al. 1979; Rothbart et al. 1979; Silverstein and Flamenbaum, 1989; Snyder et al. 1977). Specifically, the evidence suggests that the described psychological repertoire brings about a selective collection of information, which in the present case means that the members of the Israeli society tend to search for and assimilate information that is consistent with the repertoire and omit contradictory information. Yet, even when ambiguous or contradictory information is absorbed, it is encoded and cognitively processed so that it will accord with the existing repertoire through bias, addition, and distortion. Bias is manifested in a focus on the part that is consistent with the assimilated information while disregarding what is inconsistent, or in the interpretation of the ambiguous information consistent with the existing repertoire. Addition refers to going beyond the assimilated information to add elements from the existing repertoire, such that the information will be consistent with the repertoire. Distortion involves changing the assimilated information, even when it is unambiguous, to adapt it to the contents of the existing repertoire.

In sum, it should be stressed that the psychological repertoire that evolved since fall 2000 became a prism through which the Israeli society's members construe their reality, collect new information, interpret their experiences, and then make decisions about their course of action. Handling the information is characterized by top-down processing. It is affected more by what fits the contents of the psychological repertoire and less by the details of the incongruent information. That is to say, participation in an intractable conflict tends to "close minds" and facilitate tunnel vision that precludes the consideration of incongruent information and alternative approaches

to the conflict. In such a climate, in order to maintain the particular perspective on the conflict, the society member's practice self-censorship, and this is reinforced by the social pressure to conform to prevailing views. Moreover, the psychological repertoire that emerges in times of conflict serves as a catalyst for the conflict's continuation and in fact functions as part of the vicious cycle in the intractable conflict.

Considering that the mirror image of this process takes place among each of the two parties to the conflict (Israeli Jews and Palestinians), it can be understood how the vicious cycle of violence operates. As the conflict evolves each of the opponents develops a negative psychological repertoire, which plays important roles at both the individual and collective levels. With time, however, this repertoire becomes one of the factors dictating the policy lines and the actions taken by the party to the conflict by serving as the major source of motivation, justification, and rationalization. The negative actions that are taken then serve as information that affirm the existing negative psychological repertoire, and thus heighten the motivation and readiness to pursue the conflict. The behaviors of each side affirm the negative psychological repertoire and justify the harm inflicted on the adversary.

The primary condition for progress toward the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is negotiations between the adversaries that will make it possible to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. Without negotiations it is impossible to make any progress toward conflict resolution, and with it a significant reduction in violence. Clearly, though, even if negotiations get under way, it will be necessary to take concrete conciliatory steps. These can take the form of improving living conditions, carrying out acts that attest to good will, holding meetings between representatives of two groups and between their leaders, and so on. These steps will contribute further to the creation of a new transitional context that will be conducive to the peace process.

## NOTES

1. It should be noted that all three sets of major information to the Israeli public described here should be viewed at best as presenting a particular one-sided perspective. Over time, numerous works have appeared questioning and refuting the validity of these sets of information (chapter 3 in this book; Dor, 2004; Pressman, 2004; Swisher, 2004).
2. Palestinian casualty figures are from the Palestine Red Crescent Society Internet site ([www.palestinrecs.org](http://www.palestinrecs.org)) and the Israeli figures from the Israeli Foreign Ministry Internet site ([www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il)).

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## CHAPTER 7

# ETHOS OF CONFLICT IN THE ISRAELI MEDIA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE VIOLENT CONFRONTATION

*Keren Sharvit and Daniel Bar-Tal*

For many years the Israeli society has been engulfed in an intractable conflict—a total conflict that was perceived as irreconcilable—over existential goals and marked by brutal violence and unwillingness to compromise. Such a conflict consumes prodigious resources and involves all the members of the society (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000a; Kriesberg, 1993). It demands that the society adjust to the situation in order to cope successfully with the enemy while simultaneously making efforts to meet its basic needs. To deal with the challenge, societies that are caught up in an intractable conflict develop a distinct psychological repertoire, of which a key element is the “ethos of conflict.”

An ethos of conflict is made up of societal beliefs. These beliefs provide a general orientation for a society that is engaged in an intractable conflict. They explain to the members of the society the reality concerning past and present, supply justification for the society’s activities, and constitute a basis for societal mobilization and for forging solidarity. A society that is involved in an intractable conflict cultivates such beliefs, institutionalizes them, and passes them on from one generation to the next (Bar-Tal, 1998, 2000a). These beliefs play an important role in coping with the situation while the conflict continues to be waged, but constitute an obstacle to peace when the societies involved decide to open a new chapter in their relations.

The mass media is one of the major instruments that gives expression to the ethos of conflict. Because the media functions within the society and constitutes part of the social system (Caspi and Limor, 1992), it also reflects the society’s paramount beliefs, assumptions, and values

(First and Avraham, 2003). In a society that is involved in an intractable conflict and has developed an ethos of conflict, the media conveys messages reflecting beliefs that constitute the ethos and refrains from conveying messages contradicting those beliefs. At the same time, the media's role is not passive and is not confined to mirroring reality. The media also creates a framework within which to interpret the events and understand them within a broader context, which is influenced by the dominant social and cultural discourse (Avraham, 2002; Gamson, 1989; Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Wolfsfeld, 1997). As such, the media plays an active role in constructing reality for the public and in shaping the collective consciousness (Dor, 2003; Nir and Roeh, 1994). In the case of a society involved in an intractable conflict, the media helps disseminate and consolidate the beliefs that form the ethos. Accordingly, societies that are engaged in an intractable conflict tend to enlist the media in the societal effort of coping with the conflict, and in some cases the media enlists in this effort at its own initiative (Barzilai, 1996; Peri, 1998).

However, the transition from an intractable conflict to a peace process requires the recruitment of the media to transmit new messages, which can contribute to creating a social atmosphere supportive of political and military moves aimed at resolving the conflict by peaceful means. Media input in creating a new atmosphere is considerable. For example, the media can convey positive information about past enemies, describe their humanity, reinforce the peace messages, and present new information to shed light on the high price exacted by the conflict (Bruck and Roach, 1997; Calleja, 1994; Kriesberg, 1998). In democracies, such mobilization cannot be induced by fiat; rather, the country's leaders must persuade the public. In any event, media in democracies can accommodate a range of voices, some supporting peace and others against it (Wolfsfeld, 2004). In these cases the media reflects the prevailing views in the society, including the opinions of those who are opposed to the peace process. Nevertheless, even in cases of serious disagreements, the media can exert powerful influence concerning the management and resolution of a conflict by its manner of presentation. A case in point is the crucial role played by the U.S. media in bringing about the termination of the Vietnam conflict in the 1970s.

The Israeli media<sup>1</sup> has played a central role in disseminating and consolidating the ethos of conflict in the Israeli society throughout the period of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This chapter focuses on the way the ethos of conflict was given expression in the Israeli media in the period between the Camp David summit in July 2000 and the first

half of 2003. Because the expressions of the ethos of conflict in the Israel media during the period of Al-Aqsa Intifada were closely interwoven with their expressions in earlier periods and with the patterns of operation that developed in the Israeli media over the years, this chapter begins with a brief historical review of the representation of the ethos of conflict in the Israeli media throughout its existence. First, however, a brief description of the ethos of conflict follows.

### ETHOS OF CONFLICT IN THE ISRAELI MEDIA THROUGHOUT ISRAEL'S HISTORY

Like every society that has long been caught up in the throes of an intractable conflict, the Israeli society gradually developed an ethos of conflict, which includes eight themes of societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 1998; Bar-Tal and Oren, 2000). Not all of these beliefs were new in the belief repertoire of the Jewish people. Some had existed earlier in the Jewish tradition and were assimilated into the ethos, while others were forged in the course of the conflict and adapted to the emerging reality in Israel.

Beliefs in *the justness of the goals* of the Israeli society dealt with reasons, explanations, and justifications of the importance of the goals that were on the agenda in the conflict, above all the right of the Jewish people to settle in the Land of Israel and establish a state therein (Avineri, 1981; Halpern, 1961; Vital, 1982).

Beliefs concerning *security* stemmed from the feeling of most Israelis that the security of the state and its citizens was under constant threat (Bar-Tal, et al. 1998; Stein and Brecher, 1976; Stone, 1982) and referred to the conditions in which their survival could be guaranteed. In the wake of this approach, security considerations became decisive in the formulation of Israeli policy (Ben-Meir, 1995; Kimmerling, 1985; Lissak, 1993, 1994; Peri, 1983) and the subject of security became a supreme cultural symbol (Horowitz, 1984).

One of the bitterest expressions of the Jewish-Arab conflict was mutual *delegitimization*, which took the form of denying the other side's humanity (Bar-Tal, 1988). On the Israeli side extreme negative traits were attributed to Arabs (Binyamini, 1980; Cohen, 1985; Segev, 1984; Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005). They were portrayed as being bent on destroying Israel and the Jewish people and were held to blame for the conflict's persistence (Ben Gurion, 1967; Harkabi, 1977).

Contrasting with the highly negative image of the Arabs were *beliefs in the positive collective self-image* of the Jews. The Jews in Israel were depicted as courageous, industrious, determined, smart, and

intelligent and were perceived in their own eyes as a “light unto the nations” and as a chosen people. Jewish culture and the Jewish religion were viewed as the cradle of Western civilization and as representing a supreme morality (Hazani, 1993).

The beliefs about positive self-image are related to the Israeli society's *sense of victimization*, a perception that is deeply rooted in Jewish history (Hareven, 1983; Stein, 1978). The Jews viewed themselves as a nation persecuted by a hostile world, and in Israel this led to the development of a “siege mentality” (Bar-Tal and Antebi, 1992). Events connected with the Jewish-Arab conflict contributed to the development of a victimized self-perception and were viewed as the direct continuation of the persecution of the Jewish people (Zafran and Bar-Tal, 2003). Accordingly, all of Israel's military activities were perceived as acts of self-defense.

Over the years, the conflict demanded of the Israelis, great willingness for investment and self-sacrifice. Therefore, beliefs emphasizing the importance of *patriotism* and loyalty to the homeland developed in the Israeli society. Special efforts were devoted to cultivating a sense of dedication, commitment, and sacrifice (Galnoor, 1982) and to emphasizing the emotional connection between the Israelis and their homeland (Eisenstadt, 1973). The beliefs relating to patriotism called for commitment to the homeland and even willingness to sacrifice one's life in the violent confrontation with the Arabs (Ben-Amos and Bar-Tal, 2004).

True patriots were called upon to rally around the flag and to ignore ideological differences during an emergency; hence the importance and centrality of the *beliefs relating to unity* in the Israeli society. In the state's early years a sense of partnership was necessary in the light of the different origins of the new immigrants, and consequently an emphasis was placed on heritage, religion, language, and a common history. Against the background of the Jewish-Arab conflict, national unity was perceived as a necessary condition for victory. Agreed lines were thus laid down that created a societal consensus about the perception of the conflict and its resolution, and sanctions were applied to those who departed from the consensus (Smootha, 1978).

*Beliefs about peace* also played a central role in the Israeli society. Peace was perceived as a central value and as a dream, a prayer, or a hope that probably could not be realized in the foreseeable future. The Jews were portrayed as lovers of peace and as aspiring to resolve the conflict, in contrast to the Arabs, who were depicted as rejecting every effort to achieve a peace agreement and as forcing violent confrontations on the Jews.

## THE ETHOS OF CONFLICT AND THE MEDIA UNTIL THE 1970S

The Jewish-Arab conflict reached its peak in the period between the establishment of the state and the early 1970s, and in this period the beliefs of the ethos of conflict were especially prominent in the public discourse. The conditions of the intractable conflict exercised a major influence on the mass media in Israel. As part of a society involved in an intractable conflict, the media was influenced by the ethos of conflict and transmitted messages in its spirit. At the same time, it also helped shape the ethos of conflict, as a cardinal societal channel for transmitting information to society members.

The manner in which the media functioned in the state's early years abetted the process of implanting all the societal beliefs of the ethos of conflict. In this period all the media outlets operated under the influence and supervision of the political leadership; arguably, indeed, the media was an integral element of the state's political system. The close connection between the establishment and the media stemmed both from the fact that many of the media outlets were owned by the Zionist parties and from the social and ideological closeness and the shared goal of the political establishment and the media establishment.

The political establishment viewed the media as a branch of the establishment that could be utilized to promote ideological and national goals, especially with regard to the issue of security and the Jewish-Arab conflict (Ben Gurion-Schocken: *Exchange of Correspondence*, 1991). The press, for its part, accepted the role set for it by the government in the state's early years and cooperated with it. As a result, certain mechanisms were created and consolidated to ensure cooperation between the media and the authorities and for the establishment to control the media. These included the Editors' Committee, Military Censorship, accreditation of military correspondents, and the inspection and regulation of the electronic media by political elements (Caspi and Limor, 1992; Lavie, 1994; Negbi, 1985; Nosek and Limor, 1994; Peri, 1998). These mechanisms created a situation in which the media was not free but was largely dependent on the political and security establishment. Government and military sources were the major sources of information on which most of the reports relied, resulting in the media's clear preference for the official establishment positions. With regard to the Jewish-Arab conflict, the expectation was that the media would assist in mobilizing and educating the public and in maintaining morale, a role the media accepted willingly.

**CHANGES IN THE PERCEPTION OF THE  
CONFLICT, IN THE ETHOS OF CONFLICT,  
AND IN ITS MEDIA EXPRESSIONS BETWEEN  
THE 1970S AND THE 1990S**

In the period between the 1970s and the 1990s a number of events occurred that led to significant changes in the perception of the Jewish-Arab conflict by the Israeli society. The changes began with the visit of the president of Egypt to Israel in 1977 and with the subsequent signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1979, and they continued with the Lebanon War and the first intifada in the 1980s, the convening of the Madrid Conference in 1991, and the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993 and 1995. These events brought about a gradual transition from a perception of the Jewish-Arab conflict as violent, intractable, and irreconcilable, to its perception as a conflict amenable to resolution by peaceful means (Ben-Dor, 1998). As a result, changes occurred in the beliefs constituting the ethos of conflict in the Israeli society. Bar-Tal and Oren (2000) point to a number of general trends of change relating to the ethos in this period: a change from ideology to pragmatism; from a focus on security to a civil orientation; from collectivism to individualism; from blind patriotism to critical patriotism; from unity to sectarianism; and a shift from insularity to openness.

However, the changes in the perception of the conflict and in the ethos of conflict were not shared by the entire Israeli society. Certain groups continued to adhere to the beliefs of the ethos of conflict and to oppose the process of resolving the conflict by peaceful means, especially regarding the peace process with the Palestinians. The Israeli society thus moved from a situation of one dominant worldview to one of competition between two central worldviews.

The media, as part of the Israeli society, reflected the changes in the perception of the conflict and in the ethos of conflict and gave expression to the process Israeli society underwent in this period. This development was abetted by changes that occurred at the same time in the structure and functioning of the communications media in Israel between the 1970s and the 1990s, which were characterized by a gradual weakening of the influence exerted by the political and military establishments on the media. The first development was a decline in the status of the party-owned press, with a transition to dominance by the commercial press. Later, in the 1990s, the electronic media market was opened to competition, bringing about a situation of a multiplicity of radio stations and television channels (Naveh, 1998; Peri, 1998).



The major societal events described above, together with the political turnabout in Israel, in 1977, also contributed to a growing legitimacy of media criticism vis-à-vis the political and security establishment. For the first time there was no longer a consensus over confrontations with the Arab world. As a result, the media did not place itself at the service of the war effort, as it had in the past; indeed, it was extensively critical of the security forces' behavior during these confrontations. Journalists began to view the establishment as a rival rather than an ally, and the need arose for the development of alternative independent channels of information that were not establishment-dependent (Caspi and Limor, 1992; Peri, 1998).

It is particularly noteworthy that the media played a highly significant role in the political processes that changed the character of the Israeli-Arab conflict. To begin with, the media clearly supported the peace process with Egypt. The visit by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel was presented in a very positive manner, marking a clear turning point in the way in which the media presented the protracted conflict (Dayan and Katz, 1992; Peri, 1998). Subsequently, the media gave general support to the Oslo process, until the onset of the brutal terrorist acts, when a message of suspicion and skepticism came to dominate (Wolfsfeld, 1997, 2004). Nevertheless, the research shows that during the period of the peace process the media constituted an important instrument for change in the portrayal of the Palestinians. Various Palestinian leaders were interviewed, the Palestinians' hard life under the occupation was described, and a distinction was drawn between different Palestinian groups—those supporting the peace process and those opposing it (Peri, 1998; Bar-Tal and Teichman, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 2004). These findings point to the changes that took place in the functioning of the mass media as the conflict changed its character and the peace process began, and to the important role of the media in creating an atmosphere supportive of a resolution of the conflict.

However, despite the changes in the functioning of the Israeli media and in the presentation of the conflict between the 1970s and the 1990s, the media continued to maintain a conservative thrust and to prefer the official positions of the political establishment especially in situations of crisis in the Jewish-Arab conflict (Liebes, 1997; Nir and Roeh, 1994; Peri, 1998; Wolfsfeld, 1997, 2004). As a result, the media continued to convey messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict.

Thus, even at the height of the peace process of the 1990s, messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict were given prominence in media reporting and in some cases stood out over the messages that contradicted the ethos. In part, the reasons for this lie in the way the media

functioned in this period, though another reason might be connected to the psychological nature of the beliefs underlying the ethos of conflict. As noted, these beliefs played a central role in the Israeli collective consciousness for many years and a broad consensus existed around them. In contrast, the alternative belief system, which ran contrary to the ethos, was still in its infancy in this period and the consensus around it was not very broad (Bar-Tal and Oren, 2000). Furthermore, because one major role of an ethos of conflict is to assist the society in coping with the conflict, it is not surprising that violent events—which are perceived as proof that the conflict has not yet ended—generate greater adherence to the ethos of conflict. The media, being part of the Israeli society, is also influenced by these processes, reflects them, and reinforces them.

In the year 2000, a number of major events occurred in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, notably the Camp David summit in July and the outbreak of the violent events in October. These events brought about a change of direction in the media's functioning, taking the form of renewed dominance of messages in the spirit of the conflict ethos. True, the media did not revert to the behavior it displayed in the state's early years. At the same time, however, its functioning partook of various attributes that facilitated the transmission of messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict and impeded the transmission of opposing messages. The following sections, which are the core of the chapter, review these processes extensively. It should be noted that these sections cover the period of time between July 2000 and the first half of 2003. The described processes somewhat changed in later years, with the advent of initiatives for dialogue with the Palestinians such as the Geneva Initiative and The People's Voice, the introduction of the idea of unilateral separation from the Palestinians, and the eventual implementation of the disengagement plan. However, these changes are beyond the scope of the current chapter.

### THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ISRAELI MEDIA AFTER THE FAILURE OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT AND DURING THE AL-AQSA INTIFADA

In the year 2000, seven years after the signing of the first Oslo accord, Israeli and Palestinian leaders met at the Camp David summit, which was intended to bring about a permanent agreement that would lead to the peaceful termination of the conflict. However, despite the many hopes that were pinned on the summit, it ended without reaching an agreement and each side blamed the other for the failure.

In September 2000 the wave of violent events known as “Al-Aqsa Intifada” erupted, which eventually led to hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians being killed and wounded, as well as widespread property damage and destruction. In the first months of the intifada, efforts to terminate the conflict continued to be made, but these came to an end with the election of Ariel Sharon as prime minister, in February 2001. There were no further attempts to renew the dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians until the beginning of 2005.

The violent events of Al-Aqsa Intifada betokened a return to the perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an intractable conflict. The extreme violence, which occupied a central place in the life of both societies, necessitated a high level of military, economic, and psychological investment. As in the past, large segments of the Jewish-Israeli society perceived the conflict as an unbridgeable zero-sum game, and peace was once more relegated to the status of utopian dream, unattainable in the foreseeable future. In this conflict reality, attempts were made to restore the ethos of conflict to its previous dominant status, a process in which the media played a cardinal role. The following sections review the Israeli media’s coverage of the conflict with the Palestinians in the period between the failure of the Camp David summit and the first half of 2003.

The Israeli media of the nascent twenty-first century very much resembled that of the last decade of the twentieth century: largely commercial and driven mainly by economic considerations, especially popularity ratings. In most of the media outlets the reporting style was dramatic and emotional, focusing on short-term events and delivering simple messages (Wolfsfeld, 2004). In contrast, the manner in which the media gave expression to the ethos of conflict during the coverage of the violent events more closely resembled its behavior in the state’s early years than it did the 1990s.

The trends and changes in the behavior of the Israeli media in the period between the failure of the Camp David summit and the first half of 2003 can be divided into two aspects: steps that were initiated by government and the establishment, and shifts in the media’s modes of operation that were made at its initiative.

### STEPS INITIATED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT

Some of the mechanisms by which the political and security establishment influenced the media’s activity in the period under discussion were identical to the means by which the establishment supervised the

media in the state's early years. The electronic media in Israel are still under the supervision of establishment-political bodies and subject to their influence. For example, all the countrywide radio stations in Israel broadcast within the framework of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA) or are directly accountable to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), and the senior posts in the IBA are still political appointments.

Following Sharon's election as prime minister in February 2001, government supervision over the media, and especially the electronic media, grew tighter. Sharon was personally involved in the senior IBA appointments, and when the cabinet minister in charge of the IBA, Ra'anana Cohen (Labor), resigned, Sharon himself assumed responsibility for the Broadcasting Authority (Verter and Balint, 2002; Rahat and Levine, 2002). Sharon demanded that IBA broadcasts reflect the national interest, and according to press reports (Ayalon, 2002; Salzman, 2002; Salzman and Kamir, 2002) he sought to appoint a patriotic director general for the IBA, commenting, "The broadcasts are biased and not objective. Arafat is constantly seen in them, and in an emergency period such as the present one such broadcasts are harmful and injurious to the interests of the State of Israel" (Salzman, 2002).

Indeed, between 2001 and 2003 many of the senior posts in the IBA were held by individuals who were close to the prime minister. These included the director general of the IBA, Yosef Barel, and the director of Israel Radio, Yoni Ben-Menachem. Barel in fact declared explicitly his commitment to support the Israeli position in the confrontation with the Palestinians (Yosef Barel interview with Sheri Makover, *Ma'ariv*, April 26, 2002).

Barel was as good as his word. He intervened in program content, slashed current-events programs, and stifled criticism of the government, but permitted broad expression of opinions supporting the government and its policy (Alpher, 2003; Ayalon, 2002; Balint, 2002a; Balint 2003a, 2003b).

Another method by which the establishment in Israel controls information that is transmitted by the media to the public is through the Council for Cable and Satellite Broadcasting, a government-appointed body that is accountable to the minister of communications. The council has the power to enable—or deny—Israeli cable and satellite television subscribers access to foreign news channels (Caspi and Limor, 1992). During al-Aqsa Intifada, it was alleged that foreign media reportage of the events was anti-Israeli and there were demands to ban such stations (Rosenfeld, 2002; Nuriel, 2002). At a

certain point the Council for Cable and Satellite Broadcasting acceded to the cable television companies' request to stop broadcasting CNN and the BBC. The official reason for the request and its authorization involved the financial arrangements between the companies and the foreign news networks—not their coverage of the conflict (Balint, 2002b, 2002). In the end, CNN continued to be broadcast without interruption, but the BBC news channel was taken off the air briefly and was afterward made available only to subscribers to the digital services. Concurrently, the cable and satellite companies began to broadcast Fox News, which is considered more pro-Israeli than the BBC or CNN (Nuriel, 2002; Rosenfeld, 2002).

The Military Censorship also continued to be active in Israel, though its powers were reduced and the subjects under its purview diminished (Bergman, 2000). No longer able to invoke censorship as it used to, the military frequently declared “closed military areas” in the territories, which were off-limits to journalists, thus preventing them from informing the public about events there. The military frequently resorted to this means in the period under discussion, particularly during Operation Defensive Shield, in April 2002 (Balint, 2002d; Lavie, 2002b).

Yet all in all, the formal dependence of the Israeli media on the political and security establishment at the beginning of the twenty-first century was far less than what it was in the state's early years. All the daily papers are privately owned and commercially operated, as are dozens of radio stations and two of the three state television channels (though all the electronic media outlets remain under the supervision of establishment bodies). At the same time, a number of steps that Israeli media outlets took on their own initiative in order to abet the war effort can be identified. The media enlisted in support of military and government policy and voiced very little criticism against it, a situation that sometimes made the media little more than a governmental apologist (Itzik, 2001; Breishit, 2002; Molcho, 2000). We now discuss these processes extensively.

### MODALITIES OF MEDIA ENLISTMENT IN THE WAR EFFORT

Two major mechanisms can be identified relating to the media's enlistment in the national effort during the period under discussion: near-exclusive reliance on governmental and military sources of information, and patterns of editing.

### **Reliance on Establishment Sources of Information**

The press reports about the violent events were based, above all, on establishment sources of information—governmental and military (Molcho, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2004). These sources, especially the military sources, have traditionally been perceived in Israel, as epistemic authorities—that is, sources whose information is perceived as valid and credible, is immediately assimilated into the individual's knowledge, held with high confidence, and bring about a cessation of the search for additional information (Kruglanski et al., 2005). In contrast, sources of information that do not originate in the establishment are perceived as less credible than the official sources, with Arab and Palestinian sources viewed as particularly noncredible (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Thus, the media devoted much space to reports that were based on official sources of information and to interviews with official representatives, whereas reports that were based on sources of information perceived to be less reliable—especially Arab and Palestinian sources and interviews with Arab or Palestinian personalities—appeared far less frequently (Lebeau, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Furthermore, media reports that were based on governmental and military sources of information were presented as “facts,” whereas reports based on other sources of information were presented as “versions” or “opinions.”

A case in point is the directives that were issued to Israel Radio's Arabic-language news service, which prohibited the use of the word “version” in reference to announcements by the IDF Spokesperson's Office and, in contrast, prohibited the use of phraseology intimating identification or agreement with the source when Palestinian or Arab personalities were quoted (Nir, 2002). Another example of media treatment of information from military sources as reliable facts can be found in the reports about IDF actions during Operation Defensive Shield. For about ten days, journalists were denied access to the zone of operations and virtually all the media reports were based on information that was received from the IDF.<sup>2</sup> However, the media in general, and the television channels in particular, did not inform the public that it was getting second-hand information but presented the material as originating directly “from the field” (Dor, 2003).

### **Patterns of Editing**

The type of editing used by the newspapers also worked to strengthen the messages in the spirit of the war effort. In this context it is important to differentiate between messages transmitted on the news pages

and messages conveyed on the op-ed pages. Studies of newspaper readership show that the news pages are read with far higher frequency than the op-ed pages (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Furthermore, the material on the news pages is considered “hard facts,” whereas the material on the inside pages, the op-ed pages, and in the supplements and magazines, is perceived to reflect the writers’ subjective opinions (Dor, 2003). In the papers’ reporting of Al-Aqsa Intifada, material supporting the government-army information line was presented on the news pages and in the headlines, while information contradicting the official position—opposition voices, and especially reports from a Palestinian point of view—were relegated to the inside pages and the supplements and magazines (Dor, 2001, 2003). This form of editing helped consolidate the official establishment position as “factual,” whereas all criticism was presented as “opinion.” Similarly, the headlines on the news pages generally reflected and strengthened the official position, even if the body of the report contained information casting doubt on that position (Dor, 2001). Headlines have a twofold impact. First, a large proportion of readers glances mainly at the headlines and does not read the entire article and so is not exposed to information that might contradict the content of the headline. Second, even those who read the article encounter the additional information only after the headline has created a framework for understanding and interpreting it (Dor, 2001, 2003).

Moreover, the very fact that the papers carried critical views that contradicted the official position—even if in the less important part of the paper—reinforced the public’s perception that the media upholds the democratic norm of the “public’s right to know,” and thus enhanced the credibility of the reports (Dor, 2003). As such, the editing operations described above achieved two goals: the official position of the establishment was presented as “facts” and the contradictory messages as “opinions,” and at the same time the very publication of these “opinions” boosted the credibility of the messages that were presented as “facts.”

All these processes thus helped the political and security establishment in Israel to transmit to the public its informational message concerning the violent confrontation with the Palestinians. The enlistment of the media in the war effort, as described above, restored the beliefs of the ethos of conflict to their dominant status in the media discourse and marginalized contradictory messages, much like the situation that existed in the state’s early years.

We now review the way in which the beliefs of the ethos of conflict were given expression in the Israeli media in the period of time under discussion.

## ETHOS OF CONFLICT IN THE ISRAELI MEDIA FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT IN JULY 2000

As noted, expressions of the ethos of conflict have existed in Israel's media throughout the country's history; however, in the period between the mid-1970s and the 1990s increasing space was also devoted to messages contradicting the ethos. In contrast, in the period between the breakup of the Camp David summit and the first half of 2003, especially following the eruption of Al-Aqsa Intifada in October 2000, messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict became increasingly dominant, whereas messages contradicting the ethos all but disappeared from the media. We now examine extensively how each of the eight belief themes that form the ethos of conflict was given expression in media reports during this period.

### **Beliefs in the Justness of the Goals**

Following the failure of the peace conference, in July 2000, and especially after the outbreak of the violent events at the end of September, the central line of the messages that were conveyed in the media dealt with the justness of Israel's goals. According to this account, Prime Minister Barak had made Palestinian leader Arafat an extremely generous offer at Camp David, which included 98 percent of the occupied territories, half of Jerusalem, and even areas within Israel itself. Arafat, however, had rejected the offer stubbornly and stupidly and had unleashed a wave of terrorism with the aim of achieving by violence what he had been unable to obtain in the negotiations (Molcho, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Effectively, the Camp David summit was portrayed by the media as a scientific experiment, planned by the prime minister in order to ascertain once and for all whether the conflict could be ended peacefully—and if not, at least the Palestinians' "true face would be exposed" (Dor, 2001).

The central message that the media transmitted to the public, the failure at Camp David was solely due to the Palestinians' intransigence and not to the behavior of the Israeli side under Barak (Wolfsfeld, 2004). Yet even within the Barak government criticism was voiced over the Israeli conduct of the negotiations and this was reported by newspapers on the inside pages and in supplements and magazines (chapter 3 in this book). In a similar fashion, the press portrayed the violent eruption of the intifada as an initiative that was planned in advance by Arafat and was under his complete control, with Sharon's visit to the



Temple Mount on September 28 serving as a mere pretext for the outbreak of the violence. This version of events is contrary to the account offered by various bodies, including the police and the Shin Bet security service, according to which there was a direct connection between Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount and the Palestinian violent reaction (Dor, 2001).

It follows, from the picture of reality painted by the media, that the Palestinians' unwillingness to reach a peace treaty and their choice of violence instead dragged Israel into a "war of no alternative" against its will (Dor, 2001). This feeling was given expression by Yaakov Erez, then the editor of *Ma'ariv*, in an article he published on the paper's front page. Referring to the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Erez asserted, "The feeling of 'no alternative' was a central element in the national mood which prevailed among the people and among the fighters on the frontlines. We knew we had no other choice than to fight and win. Therefore, it is necessary to re-instill in the public that feeling of no choice and of being together (cited in Dor, 2001, pp. 72–73).

Even when the violent confrontation persisted, with Israel playing an increasingly active part, the media continued to depict the Israeli side as doing all in its power to show self-restraint in the face of the Palestinian violence, which stemmed not from the circumstances of the confrontation but from the Palestinians' inherent nature.

One of the aggressive acts to which Israel resorted most frequently during the confrontation was the so-called targeted killings of Palestinian terrorist activists (according to the Israeli version). These attacks generated considerable criticism, not least because in some of the cases they inflicted casualties on civilians, including children. Though the Israeli media was critical of some of these attacks, most of the reports concerning the "targeted killings" focused on justifying and legitimizing them by offering a detailed description of the acts of terrorism in which the assassinated individual had ostensibly been involved in, or of planned terrorist attacks that were prevented by the assassination (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003).

### **Beliefs about Security**

Messages relating to security also played a key role in the media reports about the violent events that began in September 2000. Indeed, from the moment the violent confrontation erupted, any discussion about whether the conflict could be resolved peacefully was shunted aside and the media discussion concentrated on how Israel could defend itself and restore the public's sense of personal security.

In contrast to the allegations voiced by the international media about excessive use of force by Israel, the public debate in Israel, as reflected in the Israeli media, revolved around the question of whether the IDF was bringing sufficient force to bear in the confrontation or whether more force was needed (Wolfsfeld, 2004). This point of view was given credence by the argument noted above, holding that Israel was constantly doing all in its power to show restraint in the face of the Palestinians' violence.

The reporting of military activities in the period under discussion focused on presenting the government and military viewpoint; other viewpoints, especially those of the Palestinians, were barely given expression (Wolfsfeld, 2004). The media rarely carried criticism of the army's actions, and any criticism that did appear dealt with operational utilitarianism rather than with moral questions concerning the treatment of the Palestinians and the scale of the use of force, or with the question of whether the military's actions contributed to the escalating violence (Breishit, 2002; Lebeau, 2002; Molcho, 2000; Noy, 2001). The emphasis on a purely combat perspective was due in no small part to the military correspondents, who made intensive use of military terminology, describing the confrontation in terms of plans, strategies, operations, logistics, and terrorist infrastructures (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003).

### **DeLegitimizing the Adversary**

Another prominent element of the message conveyed by the Israeli media about the violent events involved the delegitimization of the Palestinians as a whole and of their leader, Yasser Arafat, in particular. From the moment the violence erupted, a considerable portion of the newscasts in the broadcast media and of the news pages in the written press was devoted to the violence of the Palestinians and the anger at them, on the one hand, and to the grief and mourning over the Israeli victims, on the other hand (Wolfsfeld, 2004). The violence was presented as innate to the Palestinians, with no connection to the circumstances of its eruption (Itzik, 2001). Reporting played up the threats voiced by the Palestinian side, and the more frightening the threat, the more fit it was considered to be reported (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003).

The delegitimization of the Palestinians was also evident in the way the media ignored and marginalized the Palestinian victims and disregarded the suffering of the other side, or relegated this to the sidelines (Dor, 2001; Esteron, 2003; Itzik, 2001; Lavie, 2002a, 2002b;

Wolfsfeld, 2004). Even when the Israeli press reported about particular Palestinian victims, as in the case of the death of the boy Muhammad a-Dura, the tendency was still to portray the Palestinians in a negative light, for insisting on “sending their own children into the line of fire” (Dor, 2001, p. 122).

Paramount in the delegitimization of the Palestinians was the highly negative portrayal of their leader. Arafat was depicted as the main, if not the only cause of the violent outburst. He was described as a liar, as debased, and as demonic, and also as crafty and clever (Ezrahi, 2002; Dor, 2003). Arafat was said to be in full control of the violent events and to be doing nothing to stop them (Dor, 2001, 2003). Hence the conclusion drawn by the Israeli leadership, to which the Israeli press gave prominent place, was that Arafat was not ready for peace, was not a partner for negotiations (Itzik, 2001; Dor, 2001), and was dragging Israel into a “war of no alternative.” The terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 also contributed to the delegitimization of the Palestinians. Palestinian terrorism was likened to the Islamic terrorism on which the U.S. administration declared war, with Arafat likened to Bin Laden and to Saddam Hussein.

### Positive Self-Image

In a parallel process, and in contrast to the delegitimization of the Palestinians, the media also transmitted messages that dealt with the construction of a positive self-image of the Israeli side in the conflict. A key element in the construction of the positive self-image was the emphasis on the supreme morality of the Israeli side. As noted, Israel was described in the media as having been dragged by the Palestinians against its will into a “war of no alternative,” though doing everything in its power to preserve restraint and not bring its full force into play. When Israel’s use of force killed growing numbers of Palestinians (who, as noted, were relegated to the inside pages of the newspapers), the Israeli actions were usually described as a response of self-defense to Palestinian violence (Itzik, 2001; Dor, 2001, 2003). Even when the media reported Israeli actions that could be perceived as aggressive, immoral, unjustified, or unnecessary, they were depicted as departures from the norm or as mistakes, not as deliberate operations by the political leadership or by the senior military echelon.

As noted, hardly any criticism appeared in the Israeli media dealing with moral issues or with the scale of the use of force by the army and the security forces (Breishit, 2002; Lebeau, 2002). According to the

picture that was painted by the Israeli press, the IDF's morality did not stem from its actions but from what it could have done but did not (Noy, 2002). This presentation of the events served two purposes: it constructed a positive self-image while also sending an implicit message to the Palestinians to the effect that the IDF could be far more aggressive than it was. During Operation Defensive Shield, a similar message appeared. The heavy losses that Israel sustained at the battle of Jenin were the outcome of "our insistence on fighting morally" (*Ma'ariv*, April 10, 2002).

### Self-perception as Victim

Another central element in the message that the media transmitted to the public was the construction of the image of the Israeli side as a victim (Balint, 2000; Lebeau, 2002). A substantial number of media reports about the violent events focused on the mourning for the Israeli victims and on the grief of those who remained alive, using emotional language that dramatized the pain and suffering. The emotional reports were accompanied by brutal photographs of victims' bodies, the blood-stained ground, the evacuation of the wounded, and the funerals.

The extensive space that was devoted to the Israeli victims was in sharp contrast to the marginalization of the Palestinian victims. The reports on Israeli victims included personal biographical details about the victims and their family members, whereas the Palestinian dead, if mentioned at all, were faceless and nameless (Wolfsfeld, 2004; Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003). Journalists also frequently drew comparisons between the present events and events from the past in which Israelis and Jews were attacked, thus reinvoking the "Israeli siege mentality" (Dor, 2001).

### Patriotism

Messages of patriotism also stood out in the Israeli press during the period under discussion. One expression of patriotism was the glorification of the security and rescue forces, especially the soldiers of the IDF, who were risking their lives for the state. They were depicted as heroes committed to the state, highly motivated, and ready to serve in the reserves out of total devotion; accompanying photographs reinforced the patriotic message (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003; Dor, 2001, 2003). Reports about soldiers who refused to serve or about "in-the-field refusers" were marginalized and drew little attention (Dor, 2003; Noy, 2002). The patriotic message was enhanced by a ministry of

education campaign, “The heart says thank you,” which was conducted in the electronic and written media during Operation Defensive Shield and in emotional tones urged the public to say thank you to the security and rescue forces. The campaign’s sponsor was not mentioned in the ads.

In contrast to these messages, every criticism of the security forces was roundly condemned in the Israeli media. The veteran singer Yaffa Yarkoni, for example, was harshly rebuked for supporting the soldiers who refused orders and for asserting that the scenes from Jenin refugee camp recalled the Holocaust (Klein, 2002).

Another manifestation of the patriotic messages in the media was the use of Israeli and Jewish symbols, such as the flag, the Star of David, Jewish prayers, and so forth. The use of symbols created a sense of collective solidarity and identification with the victims of the violence (Wolfsfeld and Dajani, 2003). A different aspect of the patriotic rallying by the press was a call for the journalists themselves to display patriotism and the condemnation of journalists whose writing deviated from the central messages, such as Gideon Levy and Amira Hass, both from *Haaretz* (Weiman, 2003).

### Unity

Concomitant with the patriotic messages, the Israeli press conveyed messages calling for national unity and consensus. One of the most pronounced manifestations of the unity message was the media’s tendency to use the first person plural (“we”), especially in regard to IDF and government decisions (Alpher, 2003; Lebeau, 2002). The widespread use of this form reflected a view of Israel’s citizens as a homogeneous, unified entity, identifying completely with the IDF and the government; its underlying assumption was that differences “between us” did not exist and indeed were inconceivable.

### Peace

Together with all the messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict, the media also conveyed messages on the subject of peace—more specifically, the depiction of Israel as aspiring to peace. Paradoxically, perhaps, these messages were based on the same arguments as the messages in the spirit of the other components of the ethos of conflict. Underlying them was the argument that Israel, under Ehud Barak’s leadership, did all in its power to reach peace but was dragged against its will into a “war of no alternative” war out of the necessity to defend itself.

We have seen, then, that the messages carried by the media in regard to the violent confrontation with the Palestinians between October 2000 and the first half of 2003 (the foundation of which was laid already with the breakdown of the Camp David summit in July 2000), placed the beliefs underlying the ethos of conflict at the center of the public discourse in Israel, as in earlier periods. As seen, the ethos of conflict never disappeared from the media discourse in Israel and occupied a fairly prominent place even at the height of the peace process in the 1990s. However, contrary to the state's early years, in the period between the 1970s and the 1990s the media also gave extensive place to beliefs that were not consistent with the ethos. During Al-Aqsa Intifada, though, there was a return to almost complete dominance of the ethos of conflict in the media, with contradictory positions relegated to the margins. As shown above, some journalists even perceived enlistment in the national struggle to be part of their professional duty and role, similar to the outlook that prevailed in the state's early years of existence.

Since in recent years the official means of the establishment's supervision and control over the media have diminished compared to the past, how are we to explain the Israeli media's enlistment to transmit messages in the spirit of the conflict ethos even in these fairly recent times?

One explanation for this behavior may lie in the fact that for a lengthy period no voices in the Israeli society had come out against the official information line. At the time of the Camp David summit and in the initial phase of the violent confrontation, Ehud Barak and the Labor Party were in power—the side of the political map that was more identified with aspiring to peace and being willing to make concessions to achieve it. The fact that messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict emanated precisely from the left side of the political map, which was generally identified with the opposite worldview, strengthened the credibility of the messages, and the possibility that this was a propaganda campaign was perceived as untenable (Dor, 2001). Furthermore, in a situation in which the side that ostensibly supported the termination of the conflict was transmitting messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict, virtually no voices against the official information line were heard. Following Barak's election defeat, a unity government under Ariel Sharon was formed, so that at this stage, too, little opposition was voiced to the government's policy. The critical voices that were heard, nevertheless, were perceived as extremist and not credible, and were described in those terms in the media as well (Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Another possible explanation (which does not contradict the first one) is that in the period after Camp David and during the eruption of the violent events, the behavior of the media was expected and inevitable, in the light of the psychological attributes of the ethos of conflict beliefs. These beliefs, as explained above, have long played a central part in the Israeli collective consciousness and are implanted in all the members of the society from an early age by all the agents of socialization. As a result, the beliefs that make up the ethos exist at a high level of accessibility in the collective consciousness; since one of their roles is to assist in coping with the conflict, every event that suggests an aggravation of the conflict and of the existential threat heightens the tendency to cling to them. It can be assumed that the journalists and other media personnel, being part of the Israeli society, experience these processes like everyone else and therefore tend to revert to the ethos of conflict in emergency situations.

Moreover, some of the journalists actually believe, as shown above, that, as Israelis, it is part of their role and mission to represent the Israeli point of view and strengthen the Israeli society and its goals (Weiman, 2003). This approach is similar to the one espoused by the journalists in the state's early years, so there is no reason to be surprised, perhaps, that the behavior of the media during the violent confrontation with the Palestinians is very similar to the behavior of the journalists in those years.

Yet, as noted, the media is not only a mirror reflecting the state of affairs in the Israeli society; it also contributes to shaping the collective consciousness (Wolfsfeld, 1997; Dor, 2003; Nir and Roeh, 1994). The media's emphasis on messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict, and its marginalization of messages that contradict the ethos, helped strengthen the adherence to the beliefs of the ethos in the Israeli society and significantly weakened the status of the opposing belief system. Thus the media not only reflected the Israeli society's reversion to adherence to the psychological repertoire of an intractable conflict and the beliefs of the ethos of conflict, it also played an active role in that process.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we examined the way in which the beliefs that constitute the ethos of conflict were given expression in the Israeli media following the breakdown of the Camp David summit in July 2000, during Al-Aqsa Intifada, which erupted in September of that year, and until the first half of 2003. We analyzed the functioning of the media

in this period, drawing a comparison with its performance in earlier periods of Israeli history. We showed that although by the time of Al-Aqsa Intifada the Israeli media was largely commercial and relatively free of the authorities' close supervision, its behavior in terms of transmitting the beliefs of the ethos of conflict more closely resembled its modes of operation during the state's early years. During Al-Aqsa Intifada, as in the situation that prevailed in the period after the state's establishment, the majority of Israel's media outlets viewed themselves as being enlisted in the national effort of the struggle against the Palestinians, backed the government's policy in most cases, and helped convey the messages that the political and security establishment wanted to disseminate. As a result, the beliefs of the ethos of conflict reoccupied their dominant place in the media discourse and contradictory messages were rarely heard.

This said, several reservations about the presentation thus far need to be expressed. First, it might seem that during Al-Aqsa Intifada the Israeli media functioned monolithically and in mutual cooperation in order to transmit a uniform message to the public. In actuality this was not the case. In contrast to the past, when a certain degree of formal cooperation existed among the media outlets through the "Editors' Committee," in recent years the Israeli media have operated on a competitive basis grounded in considerations of economic profit at the expense of the rival outlets.

However, it was precisely this competitive situation that brought about the development of the dramatic and sensational reporting style that contributed to the transmission of messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict. In other words, it is not our intention to argue that the dominance of the beliefs underlying the ethos of conflict in the Israeli media during Al-Aqsa Intifada was the result of a "conspiracy" among the senior editors or between them and the political-security establishment. The media, as noted, operates within the society and tries to provide a framework to interpret and understand the events within a context that is influenced by the dominant social-cultural discourse; To this end, the media draws on the available and accessible means. Because the beliefs of the ethos of conflict, by their very nature, play a central role in the collective psychological repertoire of the Israeli society, the media tends to cling to them and invoke them to understand the unfolding events. The uniformity of the messages is due to the fact that all the Israeli media outlets operated under these conditions, without the existence of any coordination. However, in this way the media not only reflected the societal process but also contributed to its progression by assisting in the dissemination and



consolidation of the messages in the spirit of the ethos of conflict. A circular process was thus at work, in which the media was both influenced by the societal process and, in turn, influenced and helped shape it.

In the same vein, despite the striking resemblance between the messages that were transmitted by the media—as emphasized in this chapter—many significant differences can also be found between the media outlets in the manner and style of their reporting of the violent confrontation with the Palestinians. In addition, the violent confrontation went on for a lengthy period and there were ups and downs in the intensity of the violence. Accordingly, the media reporting was not uniform throughout the entire period but changed from time to time in relation to the intensity of the events. As mentioned above, shortly after the period covered in the present chapter, changes could be observed in the media's functioning. With the advent of initiatives for dialogue with the Palestinians such as the Geneva Initiative and The People's Voice, the introduction of the idea of unilateral separation from the Palestinians and the eventual implementation of the disengagement plan, the ethos of conflict beliefs became less dominant in media reports than they had been in the period described. However, examination of media functioning during this later period is beyond the scope of this chapter.

This chapter focused on the common aspects of the media reporting of the events, and there is not enough space to consider the differences. At the same time, it is important to note that throughout the entire period under review there were also other voices in the media, which opposed the dominant message. As pointed out, these voices were few, were relegated to the less central places in the newspapers and newscasts, and were presented as subjective opinions rather than as facts. As seen, the very appearance of these viewpoints sometimes served to demonstrate that the press was giving space to a variety of opinions and thus actually reinforced the credibility of the dominant reports in the spirit of the ethos of conflict. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that messages contradicting the dominant message continued to appear in the press throughout the period, attesting to the fact that at least some members of the press did not completely abandon—if only for part of the time—the norms of free and independent journalism.

It is also important to recall that the phenomenon of enlistment in a war effort and of backing the political and military leadership in situations of a threat to national security is not unique to the Israeli media. It can be seen in other societies that are engulfed in crises that

threaten security, such as the English media during the Falklands War, or the U.S. media in the Gulf War of 1991 and after September 11, 2001. In the Israeli society, however, in contrast to other societies, the situation of conflict and threat to national security is not a temporary one that ends with a return to "normal" life and with the media's reversion to operating freely according to the accepted journalistic norms in routine times. The Israeli society has been caught up in a conflict that threatens its security for decades, and, as we saw, this affects the functioning of the media in Israel in periods of "emergency" and "routine" periods alike. The Israeli journalist thus faces a unique challenge: How to maintain norms of independent journalistic reporting, based on the principles of the freedom of the press and the "public's right to know," in a society that is under a constant security threat that is not time-limited? Different journalists find different ways to cope with the challenge, and as seen, the degree of success achieved by the Israeli media in this regard varies in different periods and is bound up with variations in the intensity of the conflict, the domestic political map, and the media market.

An analysis of the manner in which beliefs of the ethos of conflict were expressed in the Israeli media in different periods is instructive not only about the functioning of the press during an intractable conflict but also about the nature of the ethos beliefs. As seen, beliefs in the spirit of the ethos of conflict have been given expression in the Israeli media in all periods, though not always with the same degree of dominance. The beliefs have been present even though the concrete issues relating to the conflict that were at the center of the Israeli public discourse and preoccupied the media, changed significantly over time. This finding reflects the status of the ethos of conflict as an ideological overview that acts as a prism through which the reality of the conflict is judged, evaluated, and interpreted, and concrete political positions formulated. Like the individuals in the Israeli society, the media, too, drew on the beliefs of the ethos of conflict during the different periods as an organizing framework for understanding reality. Accordingly, messages in the spirit of this ethos appeared in the media throughout all the periods, even when the issues differed.

We have seen, then, that the ethos of conflict appeared in the Israeli media in many periods, albeit in different forms, in different contexts, and at varying levels of dominance. In contrast, messages opposed to this ethos appeared with high frequency in certain periods (such as in the 1990s) but appeared rarely in other periods (such as in the state's early years). It can be assumed, then, that the ethos of conflict will continue to be given expression in the Israeli media in the future as

well. Realizing the possibility of future renewal of the political process to end the conflict, the question that remains open is: What place will messages that contradict the ethos occupy in the media in the future? Will the media continue to represent the official line and enlist in the war effort, or will it again adopt a more independent position? These questions assume greater importance in light of the fact that the existence of an ethos of conflict is liable to constitute a crucial obstacle in changing relations of conflict between societies. A peace process demands the institutionalization of changes in the ethos of conflict and the creation of new societal beliefs that will support a process of resolving conflict and of reconciliation between adversaries.

## NOTES

1. This chapter focus on the functioning of the Hebrew-Jewish media in Israel; we do not address the functioning of the Arabic-language Israeli media, whose situation is substantially different from that described regarding the Hebrew-language media. The rationale for this is that the discussion will address the ethos of the conflict that characterizes the Jewish society in Israel, which has virtually no exposure to the Arabic-language press.
2. An exception is the reporter Zadok Yehezkeili, from the daily *Yedioth Ahronoth*, who succeeded in entering Jenin refugee camp during the operation and provided first-hand reports about the army's activity.

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## CHAPTER 8

# THE PALESTINIAN SOCIETY IN THE WAKE OF THE VIOLENT CONFRONTATION AND ARAFAT'S DEATH

*Ephraim Lavie*

The death of Yasser Arafat after some 40 years in which he led the Palestinian national movement left the Palestinian society at a crossroads. At the end of a four-year confrontation with Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA), had become an ineffective, vacuous governmental center, whose leadership had lost much of its status both domestically and internationally. At the same time, the Palestinian society was wracked by instability and economic distress that substantially weakened the middle class.

The internal political competition over the Palestinians' national goals became extremely acute during the years of the confrontation. The veteran leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) failed in its attempts to reach a settlement with Israel on the establishment of a state within the 1967 borders and the refugees' right of return. Though weakened, the PLO remained intact, but two local rival power groups grew stronger at its expense: the national group led by Fatah, which seeks to establish a state within the 1967 borders but is finding it difficult to achieve the necessary position of power; and the Islamic religious group, led by Hamas that aspires to an Islamic state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan river and is positing itself as an alternative to the national camp. This rivalry, which remains unresolved, hampered Palestinian attempts to define agreed goals in the protracted conflict with Israel. Moreover, it led to heightened criticism of the leadership and of the national camp by the

Palestinian society, which yearned to be liberated from the occupation and has been bearing the burden of the confrontation.

In the Palestinian discourse, parallels have been drawn between the failure of the Palestinian national struggle during 1936–1939 and the *Naqba* of 1948, and the emerging current failure, after four years of confrontation (*Naqba*, which means catastrophe, is the name given by the Palestinians to the 1948–1949 war). On the one hand, the general opinion is that Israel tried to force a Palestinian surrender with its military might, and when that proved to be unfeasible carried out unilateral moves aimed at thwarting a possible agreement (the separation fence in the West Bank, the disengagement plan in the Gaza Strip). On the other hand, many prominent Palestinians (including Mahmoud Abbas—Abu Mazen—Nasser Yusuf, and Ziad Abu Zayad) believed that an opportunity to achieve national independence was missed because of mismanagement of the political struggle and Arafat's focus on the violent confrontation.

More than 10 years have gone by since the advent of the Oslo process—the first half of that period in political negotiations with Israel, the second in a violent confrontation against Israel—and once again the Palestinian establishment is facing an ideological decision about the future of the Palestinian national struggle, the character of the central government, and the need to define a new national order of priorities.

This chapter describes the developments that occurred in the Palestinian arena in the past decade, in the wake of the encounter between the society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (the “inside”) and the PLO leadership (the “outside”) that failed in self-government and whose political path did not bring about the end of the Israeli occupation. It describes the central role played by the Palestinian society in the political and security developments since Oslo and in the Al-Aqsa Intifada, as well as the challenges the society posed to the PA and to the Israeli occupation. The evolution of the intifada from a popular uprising into an armed confrontation is charted and an analysis offered of the duality within the Palestinian public: awareness of the damage that the armed confrontation was inflicting on the society and the national cause, but at the same time support for the armed struggle and for the armed militants who were conducting it. The chapter then considers the social destabilization, the erosion of the status of the veteran leadership, and its struggle with the intermediate generation in the wake of the protracted confrontation. The final section of the chapter analyzes the new trends that are emerging in the Palestinian society in the post-Arafat era.

## THE PALESTINIAN SOCIETY AS A CENTRAL ACTOR

Even though the Palestinian society in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has always been characterized by internal rifts and tensions (inside-outside, left-right, secular-religious, refugees-permanent residents, rural-urban, Gaza Strip-West Bank, and others), it has a common, permanent agenda: liberation from the occupation and political independence. This goal united most segments of the society and made it, especially after the Lebanon War (1982) and the PLO's expulsion to Tunis, a "central actor" in the fashioning of possible solutions to the Palestinian problem. In contrast, the years-long declared goal of the leadership in exile was liberation of the whole of Palestine and the return of the refugees, goals that ruled out any possibility of political dialogue with Israel.

In 1987 the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip took the reins of the national struggle into their hands and fomented the first intifada. Their national representative, the PLO, they realized, had long since been in decline and was not able to bring about liberation by itself; the only way to advance the national struggle was for the public to mobilize. The PLO leadership moved quickly to ride the wave of the intifada, but also understood that its historical role would end unless it adduced a viable political approach by means of which it would be able to influence the residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, who were now the fulcrum of the national struggle. Consequently, in 1988 the leadership, meeting for the nineteenth Palestinian National Council, adopted Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and General Assembly Resolution 194, and in 1993 affirmed the Oslo agreement, enabled the leaders to return to the territories and reassert their centrality.

## THE PALESTINIAN SOCIETY AND THE PLO LEADERSHIP: ACCEPTANCE AND ALIENATION

The majority of the Palestinian public in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip welcomed the return of the PLO leadership and was ready to pay the price of its swift takeover of the society. Gradually, though, the public became alienated from the leadership. The leaders of the PA failed the test of transition from a national liberation organization situated outside the region and preaching values and national goals

(revolution, liberation, independence) into a self-governing body capable of coping with the concrete problems of managing a society and creating the institutions of a state-in-the-making. The leadership's inability to demonstrate operative competence undercut its legitimacy: the result was that large segments of the public, including the local leaderships of the national and religious streams, were disappointed in the character of the self-governing regime. It was perceived to be overly centralistic and uninterested in social reform, to infringe on individual and societal freedoms, and to be functionally inefficient and morally deficient.

For years the leaders of the first intifada, who were born in the territories, identified with the exiled national leadership and saw themselves as its partners in the struggle. However, they took umbrage at the fact that most of the key positions in the administration were seized by the new arrivals from Tunis. Together with the educated secular class and the civil activists, they had envisaged a democratic state in which they, too, would wield political influence.

Compounding the situation was the public's disappointment that the Oslo agreement did not bring about an improvement in the economic situation, not least because of the corruption within the leadership and the system of monopolies introduced by the PA. Similarly, the feeling of being under occupation remained unchanged throughout the Oslo years for the residents of Areas A, B, and C:<sup>1</sup> Constant restrictions on movement, the presence of Israeli forces, continued building in the settlements, land expropriations, and the construction of bypass roads made it abundantly clear to the Palestinian public that the occupation remained firmly in place.

Still, this was considered a reasonable price to pay for what a large part of the public—especially those identified with the mainstream—perceived as a historic change in the PLO's national agenda: giving the highest priority to the supreme interest of the population in the removal of the occupation, ahead of the right of return, a condition that could only delay political independence. Thus the majority of the society responded positively to Arafat's rallying cry and backed him in the political confrontation with Israel—negotiations on the interim agreements and the final-status settlement. At the same time, however, the Palestinian society became increasingly alienated from the PA, both because of its incompetence, as described above, and the corruption in which it was mired. The criticism grew and the PA's legitimacy in the eyes of the public declined.<sup>2</sup>

## FROM "POPULAR UPRISING" TO ARMED CONFRONTATION

In the months that preceded Al-Aqsa Intifada, the conditions for an eruption against both the PA and Israel ripened among large segments of the society, while in the background the atmosphere grew more heated in the wake of threats of a unilateral Palestinian declaration of a state and the probable Israeli response to such a move. In the summer of 2000, when it emerged, following the Camp David summit, that the PA did not have within reach a political agreement that would end the occupation, a majority of the public, including the leadership of the first intifada, felt deluded in their hope that their interests would take priority over those of the refugees in exile. True, Arafat was viewed as a hero who had withstood the pressures of Israel and the United States at Camp David, but the impasse made it manifest that he could not bring the occupation to an end.

Again as in 1987, groups in the population, most of them identified with the national camp, felt that the national leadership would not be able to achieve liberation by itself: the only recourse was for them to take action and launch a popular protest to break the stalemate. As in 1987, the events of September 2000 were not the result of a rational collective analysis or the decision of any official body. Rather, they were, in large measure an expression of the distress and frustration felt by the majority of the public, both toward Israel and toward the PA. In both cases, the outburst was spontaneous and unplanned, welling up from below, and was then taken over by the national leadership in order to control it in the pursuit of its political purposes.

However, with a few weeks, the military dynamics turned Al-Aqsa Intifada into an armed confrontation between militant young Palestinians and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The population ceased to be an active partner to the confrontation and became a passive party demonstrating steadfastness (*sumud*).<sup>3</sup> The public accepted the harsh price this exacted in life and property, and the severe economic blow, but also granted legitimacy to the fomenters of the armed struggle. The concept of *sumud*, which in PLO terminology described the situation of the residents of the West Bank who were caught up in a day-to-day national struggle against the Israeli occupation, was invested with new meaning: pursuing a way of life of passive combat against the background of a protracted armed confrontation against Israel.

Seeking to preserve the protest's momentum, the armed elements in the Tanzim and Fatah, led by the intermediate generation, flaunted the banner of the struggle; they were later joined by the armed militants of Hamas and the other organizations. As the confrontation continued in its military mode, the armed militants became the dominant element in setting the agenda and in conducting the affairs of the society, while the PA's institutions and security units, which symbolized the Oslo agreement, were shunted aside and became targets of Israeli attack and punishment. They gradually lost their ability to function, other than in the spheres of education and health.

This change occurred with the support of Arafat, who wanted to exploit the new situation for his political purposes. He rode the wave of the intifada, had erupted from below, believing that he would be able to wage a limited, controlled confrontation and keep the armed groups under his control. His aim was to reach an open agreement in order to bypass an Israeli dictate that would force him to declare the end of the conflict without Israel recognizing its responsibility for the historic injustice that was inflicted on the Palestinians in 1948 and accepting the refugees' right of return.

At a later stage (spring 2001), when the negotiations failed to be renewed and a political vacuum emerged, Arafat sought to exploit the confrontation in order to demand that the international community and the United Nations dispatch multinational forces to the region in order "to protect the Palestinian people and lift the siege," and force Israel to implement the "legitimate international resolutions," including Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and General Assembly Resolution 194 pertaining to the refugees. However, Arafat's ability to wage a limited, managed confrontation became largely theoretical after he lost control of the grassroots forces. He was severely criticized both domestically and internationally for hesitating to throw his whole weight behind an attempt to moderate the confrontation. Arafat's working assumption—that a confrontation was likely to generate international intervention, including the dispatch of forces to the region, lest regional and global stability be jeopardized—proved unfounded. Even the Arab world made no effort to mobilize international support for actions against Israel, making do instead with limited solidarity steps, including minor financial aid.

The violent confrontation that developed in Al-Aqsa Intifada was thus not an armed struggle in the post-1967 sense—that is, not a single strategic means to liberate all of Palestine by force. Nor was it a tactical effort as part of the armed struggle, such as the PLO's adoption of the phased doctrine after 1974 as the *sine qua non* for a political process.

This time the violent confrontation had a different goal. In 1988, Arafat, under the pressure of the first intifada, had recognized Resolutions 242 and 338; now he brandished the second intifada to demand that the international community pressurize or even force Israel to implement the UN resolutions in practice as a just and fair solution of the Palestinian problem. The military escalation, which occurred after the confrontation lurched out of control, was not intended to promote the political process and was not perceived as an instrument to liberate Palestine. It stemmed, rather, from the anarchy (*fawda*) that prevailed on the ground as organizations competed to perpetrate ever more punishing quality terrorist attacks or, alternatively, to cooperate in an effort to withstand the IDF's might.

After Arafat was boycotted by Israel and confined for good in the Muqata—his headquarters in Ramallah—toward the end of 2002, he exploited the continuation of the confrontation in order to survive politically. Because Arafat considered himself to be the symbol of the Palestinian revolution and to embody the fate of the Palestinian people, he equated his survival and status with safeguarding the aims of the Palestinian revolution.<sup>4</sup> This perception affected his leadership: he worked to undermine Abu Mazen as prime minister (2003) and afterward heaped obstacles on the path of Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala), Abu Mazen's successor. Overturning the reforms in the security forces, he retook control of all the units. He appointed a lackluster figure (Hakam Balawi) as interior minister—with formal control of the security units—and did not back the security establishment in its efforts to curb the grassroot elements that were fighting Israel. Arafat also prevented Fatah's intermediate generation from carrying out an internal reform of the organization and thereby gain control of the grassroots groups. In addition, in order to retain his source of control and power, Arafat opposed some of the reforms that the Finance Minister Salam Fayad tried to implement (such as paying the salaries of the security units through banks rather than manually). By his behavior, Arafat sought to prove to all and sundry that he was indispensable in any move to end the confrontation and resolve the crisis.

**THE PUBLIC'S DUALITY: AWARENESS  
OF THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE ARMED  
CONFRONTATION, CONTINUED SUPPORT  
FOR THE STRUGGLE**

When the popular confrontation became an armed confrontation that constantly escalated and spread, eventually encompassing also the

security units, the perception of the Palestinian public was that Israel was bent on vanquishing it with its military supremacy and dictating political and military terms to its leaders. The public therefore rallied to the leadership's side—notwithstanding the awareness of its failure—and supported the suicide bombings inside Israel.

Thus the public discourse did not produce a demand<sup>5</sup> to stop the confrontation; criticism and protest against the PA were confined to the day-to-day economic difficulties that stemmed from the confrontation. The PA, for its part, was able to put out fires by means of foreign aid and especially by pointing an accusing finger at Israel. The various forms of Israel's military activity facilitated such accusations and made possible the mobilization of the public's support for the continuation of the struggle. Fired by a desire for retribution against Israel because of the army's actions, large sections of the Palestinian public viewed the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the Iz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades as instruments of revenge rather than terrorist organizations. More than half the public supported the suicide attacks inside Israel, despite being aware that such operations were detrimental to the Palestinian national interest and were creating an image of the Palestinians in Israel and in world public opinion as seeking to undermine Israel's existence as a Jewish state by means of an armed confrontation.

Even after four years of confrontation, the Palestinian public continued to support the struggle against Israel and to refrain from criticizing the militants who were carrying out the attacks. The public, feeling that it was powerless to change the situation, alternated between weariness and support for a cease-fire and a return to routine, and readiness to continue the confrontation and pay the price it entailed. This approach stemmed both from the recognition that the struggle against the occupation was legitimate and—in the absence of an Israeli interlocutor and political expectancy—was effectively the only option, and from the growing feeling that, once more, there was “nothing to lose” given the fact that Israel's military operations appeared to target the entire population and the PA and not only the militants.

Indeed, according to public opinion surveys conducted by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, director of the Ramallah-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, support for terrorist attacks inside Israel rose and fell several times following Israel's Operation Defensive Shield in March–April 2002, in accordance with developments and the public atmosphere. After the operation, support stood at 52 percent, rising to 59 percent in October 2002 and falling to 48 percent in



December. At the same time, bedrock support for the struggle and for attacks on soldiers and settlers continued throughout the confrontation (standing at 87 percent in December 2003, for example) along with high support during 2003 for a mutual cease-fire.<sup>6</sup>

### “ARMED STRUGGLE” WITH NO AGREED AIMS

The result was that the original protest by the population and its causes (the desire to take part in the political struggle against Israel and to send a message of protest to the PA) were forgotten and gave way to what was described as an “armed struggle,” but without agreement on its aims by the three major power centers in the society: the intermediate generation of Fatah, who had led the intifada at its start; the Palestinian leadership, which hoped to control the confrontation and convert it into political capital; and the Hamas, which rode the wave in order to torpedo any intention of returning to political negotiations.

As long as the political vacuum remained and violent confrontations were taking place between Israel and the Palestinians, the Palestinian power centers closed ranks for the joint struggle and temporarily set aside their different agendas. This is especially true of the low grassroots levels, where the organizational differences were blurred. The secular organizations—Fatah and the left—adopted the patterns of struggle of the religious groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. They perpetrated joint terrorist attacks, recruited volunteers for suicide operations, and distributed leaflets that often opened with the verse, “In the name of Allah the merciful and the compassionate” and ended with another citation from the Koran. The continuation and escalation of the confrontation, and above all the destruction of the PA’s infrastructures and security organizations by Israel, led to a blurring of the differences between the central secular national stream (PLO, Fatah Tanzim, Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, the left wing Fronts), whose struggle against the occupation was intended to improve the conditions for the final-status agreement that would bring about the establishment of a durable independent state in the 1967 borders alongside Israel; and the extreme Islamic stream (Hamas, Islamic Jihad), which is ideologically opposed to Israel’s very existence and espouses a holy war (“jihad”) against it.

The veteran leadership, including Arafat, viewed the armed confrontation as a legitimate means, as it was based on the people (*muqawama shaabiya*—popular resistance), even if its manifestation was military. In the last two years of the confrontation the leadership advocated its continuation, primarily in order to ensure Arafat’s

survival as leader and to demonstrate that the crisis could not be resolved if he was not accepted anew by Israel as the partner for security and political dialogue. But in the intermediate generation of Fatah the majority believed in returning to a nonviolent popular civilian struggle in order to bring about the resumption of the political process. Hamas, in contrast, wanted to continue the armed confrontation in order to force the PA to dissociate itself from the political process that would be tantamount to doing away with its very *raison d'être*. Thus, the dispute between the power centers revolved around the goals and form of the confrontation. As the confrontation escalated, the dispute between the organizations was marginalized and replaced by unity of ranks. However, once the situation calmed down, or efforts began toward a cease-fire or for the resumption of the political process, the disagreements immediately flared up again, as had occurred in connection with the Road Map and the establishment of the Abu Mazen government (mid-2003).

Following Arafat's death and the election of Abu Mazen, who advocated an end to the violent confrontation and a return to negotiations with Israel, the dispute erupted again in full force and obliged the opposition groups to make decisions about their future course.<sup>7</sup>

In the light of the damage caused by the armed confrontation, the approach of the intermediate generation, favoring a nonviolent popular struggle, has for some time been backed by the majority of the Palestinian public and the security forces. The armed struggle delegitimized the Palestinian cause in world public opinion, destabilized the Palestinian society, and undermined trust in the leadership. However, the unilateral moves by Israel—the separation fence and the disengagement plan—rekindled a sense of emergency among the Palestinians, who were concerned that Israel wanted to inflict another 1948-like calamity on them and prevent the establishment of a durable Palestinian state in the 1967 borders. Hence the feeling that the continuation of the confrontation was a “war of no choice,” even if it was very costly to both the PA and the Palestinian society.

### SOCIETAL DESTABILIZATION

Four and a half years of consecutive struggle, a climate of spreading confrontation, the multiplication of unrestrained armed militias, an absence of security, economic distress,<sup>8</sup> a weak government completely dependent on external aid,<sup>9</sup> and the inability to enforce law and order<sup>10</sup>—these were the crucial factors that brought about societal destabilization.

The middle class was seriously weakened and the extended family (whether privileged or not) became increasingly important as an economic prop for the needy and as a social and legal mechanism of supervision in dealing with the rampant negative phenomena. In conditions of a protracted confrontation, when the PA is unable to help, the extended Palestinian family plays a crucial role in the society's survival. The years of the confrontation saw no substantial change in the political and social status of the veteran established families, which lack an independent political framework. These families lost some of their political power and public status to the PLO leadership and to the leadership of Fatah's intermediate generation. Although they were better off under the PA, which viewed them as a convenient governmental prop and integrated their young generation in its institutions and the security forces, they were unable to recoup their political power at the national level. Their political strength was not enhanced by the PA's enfeeblement during the confrontation, and they did not try to seize meaningful positions of power vis-à-vis the other forces that were active in the society. (For example, nothing came of the idea, which came up during the confrontation, to appoint Munib al-Masri, from a well-known Nablus family, prime minister.)

The Palestinian society showed "steadfastness" in the protracted confrontation by maintaining its routine way of life and accepting the rule of the grassroots activists. The individual in city and village found personal and economic security within the *hamula* (clan) or under the aegis of religious institutions, charitable societies, and civil organizations. However, the level of criminal activity in the society and within the family rose. Young people and gangs used weapons to perpetrate criminal acts without being called to account and on a scale that threatened the society's very foundations. Palestinian intellectuals and establishment figures expressed concern that the situation would degenerate into anarchy, which would create fissures in the society that were liable to cause its collapse.<sup>11</sup> Drawing comparisons with the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939 and with the events of 1947–1948, they pointed an accusing finger at Arafat and the PA. (The word *intifawda*, a fusion of "intifada" and "fawda"—anarchy—is sometimes invoked to dramatize the damage done by the intifada.)

### THE EROSION IN THE STATUS OF THE VETERAN LEADERSHIP

In the perception of the majority of the public, the veteran leadership, with Arafat at its head, failed in guiding the national struggle during

the confrontation years, mainly because it did not factor in the needs of the population in a protracted armed struggle. Arafat himself was criticized and condemned by domestic circles for allowing the confrontation to persist and escalate without blueprinting a clear direction and specific goals or issuing coherent directives for the confrontation's continuation or containment. Indeed, Arafat issued ambivalent instructions and played a double game, directing the security forces to maintain law and order and allow only a "popular struggle" but urging the Tanzim and Fatah to go on with the confrontation and escalate it. As a consequence of this duality, the security establishment and the PA institutions did not fulfill their duty as a governmental authority. In addition, Arafat did not bring his full weight to bear in order to moderate the confrontation, when this was still possible.

The rule of the centralist establishment created by the veteran leadership was weakened and it remained largely a symbol. Many civil spheres were taken over by extra-establishment groups, secular and religious alike. The Hamas movement, whose civil bodies and charitable societies stepped up their efforts to provide welfare, education, medical, and economic services to the population, succeeded in pulling the ground out from under the PA and showing it to be utterly powerless.

In various places, societal control passed from the PA to grassroots activists, after the police, the security units, and the judicial system were paralyzed. In Jenin, for example, activists of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, led by Zakariya Zbeidi, declared that they were taking power in order to ensure the physical security of the population and to serve as a substitute for the police and the judicial system. At the same time, they said they were continuing to cling to Arafat as a ruling symbol.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the veteran leadership did not get credit for the "miracle of the armed struggle," because the confrontation was not conducted by the Palestinian security forces, which are based mainly on soldiers who arrived from "outside," but by the young generation of the national stream (Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the militants of the left-wing groups) and of the Islamic stream (Iz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Islamic Jihad units). Indeed, the veteran leadership was not even capable of demanding that these organizations observe a cease-fire or stop carrying out attacks inside Israel. Moreover, foreign organizations, such as Hezbollah, exploited the governmental vacuum that was created to link up with grassroots groups in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

One effect of Operation Defensive Shield was to intensify the Palestinian population's feeling of alienation vis-à-vis the PA and the leadership, due to the perceived hopelessness of continuing the confrontation and the aggravation of the economic and social situation. These developments brought about a phenomenon of "retreating from the state."<sup>13</sup> Although the public continued to view the PA as the governmental authority responsible for its situation, it was clear that the PA was no longer setting the agenda of the Palestinian society—that was now being done by the terrorist groups and by Israel. With the exception of Arafat, who retained his symbolic status, the veteran leadership lost its status in the eyes of the majority of the public and especially in the perception of Fatah's intermediate generation. The situation was further aggravated when Arafat (whose working assumption, as noted, was that he would protect the national goals by preserving his power) was perceived to be systematically torpedoing reforms that were intended to reduce his power, thus causing the public to lose hope for a return to normal life, for a cease-fire, and for Israel to uphold its promises to relax the strictures imposed on the Palestinians after the establishment of the Abu Mazen government in the summer of 2003. Many believed that the veteran leadership and Arafat were to blame for undermining Abu Mazen and his security chief, Muhammad Dahlan, and for the failure to achieve the national goals as well as for the damage done to the Palestinian cause by Israel's unilateral plans. Such criticism was voiced publicly and in the Palestinian press (see below).

### TRENCHANT INTERNAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE

The societal destabilization and the continuing decline of the veteran leadership, especially since Operation Defensive Shield, created a window of opportunity for power centers within the national camp and outside it to make their voices heard and influence developments in the Palestinian arena. There were some who even questioned the usefulness of the PA's continued existence. What was the point if the PA was totally dependent on the good graces of Israel and on outside aid and was not functioning in the crucial areas of daily life, if unrestrained armed militias were in control and the PA was incapable of imposing law and order, and if charitable societies and NGOs were supplanting the PA in providing services to the population?

The internal critical discourse was especially trenchant as the fourth anniversary of the intifada was marked. Conducted in Palestinian media outlets, it focused on clarifying the goals of the intifada and its

profit and loss balance, against the background of a lack of aims and strategic planning<sup>14</sup> and a dearth of political achievements.<sup>15</sup> In the opinion of Palestinian public figures and columnists writing in the Palestinian press, the vast damage sustained by the Palestinians was due mainly to the suicide bombing attacks; they called on the society and the leadership to stop and take stock and contemplate the future of the national struggle. They noted the PA's declining status and its loss of control and the manifestations of anarchy, and some expressed their belief that the Palestinian society was closer to defeat than to victory.<sup>16</sup>

The call to take stock of the situation, which was raised in the public discourse, was accompanied by an emphasis on the basic legitimacy of resistance to the occupation, especially in view of Israel's military operations. At the same time, there was an implicit though clear call to move to a popular struggle—nonviolent and integrated with negotiations—and to abandon the armed struggle, which was doing enormous damage to the Palestinian cause.<sup>17</sup> The criticism focused on the fact that the intifada lacked strategic planning or guidance, had failed to become a full-scale popular uprising, and had not succeeded in generating Arab and international solidarity or in generating a political-diplomatic process that would put an end to the occupation or bring about the dispatch of international forces or observers to protect the Palestinian people.<sup>18</sup>

### INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT IN THE NATIONAL CAMP

Thus, amid a complex social and political reality, and in the shadow of a protracted conflict and growing criticism of Arafat and the PA, the intergenerational struggle for the leadership within the elite of the national camp was intensified. The rivals were the members of the intermediate generation, who were born in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after the *Naqba*, and the veteran PLO leadership, whose members were born before 1948 and arrived in the territories with Arafat from Tunisia in 1994. The intermediate generation, who were in their forties or fifties, consisted mainly of Tanzim activists who came into contact with the Israeli society, led the first intifada, and spent years in Israeli prisons. Some of them, such as Marwan Barghouti and Kadura Faris, are members of the Palestinian Legislative Council or were senior figures in the security forces, such as Jibril Rajoub and Rashid Abu Shabaq. They are younger than the veteran leadership, that sprang up and was active in the diaspora and is now in its seventies, but older than the "young generation," those who are in their teens

or twenties and constitute the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and know Israel mainly from clashes with the IDF.<sup>19</sup>

The activists of the intermediate generation supported the Oslo agreement with Israel in 1993 and together with the young generation experienced the subsequent disappointment. For the past two years and more, many of them have shared the aspiration to extricate the Palestinians from the impasse into which Arafat and the veteran leadership plunged them. Many would like to see the armed struggle curbed—even though they themselves led it from the onset of the present confrontation—and a return to a popular civilian struggle as in the first intifada. They aspire to restore to the Palestinian national struggle its lost international legitimization and to regain the Palestinians' moral supremacy over the IDF. In their view, the armed struggle voids the just case against the occupation of content, especially when terrorist attacks are perpetrated inside Israel. The intermediate generation was also concerned about the disintegration of the Fatah movement—the backbone of the PA—and its transformation from a leading national movement to a collection of institutions (the Executive Committee, the Central Committee, and the Fatah bodies at the district level) without a central leadership and a relevant policy, or the authority to enforce movement discipline. For some leaders of the intermediate generation the armed struggle in Al-Aqsa Intifada was a source of power and influence, but for some time they have been aware of the difficulty of imposing their authority on the armed militias and of the dangerous fact that the armed militants sometimes use their weapons for criminal purposes as well.

The members of the intermediate generation draw their strength from the Palestinian street and from the local coalitions they have forged, in contrast to the veteran leadership, for whom Arafat was the source of power. They know, of course, that the old guard will no longer be on the stage within a few years, if only because of its age, but they want to enhance their political strength now and influence the direction of the national struggle. Even before Arafat's death they defied the veteran leaders and sought to reduce their influence and accelerate the process in which power would be transferred to them. Time is pressing, they say, and Israel is liable to implement unilateral plans that will rule out the two-state option and thus put an end to the political path of the national movement under Fatah's leadership. Most of them were ready to openly support a position according explicit priority to the establishment of a state over the realization of the right of return, which they do not believe is attainable in the foreseeable future. Among them were also refugees who put forward an

identical pragmatic line, without forgoing the demand for recognition of the right of return; they included Issa Karaka, Khusam Khader, Jamal Shatti, and Ziad Abu Ain (who was also among the salient supporters of the Geneva Initiative).

Accordingly, the activists of the intermediate generation tried to promote initiatives for a cease-fire and for the renewal of the political process, sometimes in cooperation with European and Israeli groups, and in some cases in partnership with some of the veteran leaders. Muhammad Dahlan, for example, was a central figure in the truce initiative of Alistair Crock<sup>20</sup> in mid-2002. A year or so later he was a member of the short-lived government of Abu Mazen, and toward the end of 2003 he was involved in the British-Palestinian initiative for a cease-fire and for the renewal of Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation. The efforts to achieve the first cease-fire (*hudna*) during the period of the Abu Mazen government were conducted by Marwan Barghouti from his prison cell through Kadura Faris and Ahmad Ghanim, who were in contact with Hamas leaders. Kadura Faris, Jamal Shubaqi, Muhammad Hourani, and others joined Yasser Abed Rabo in formulating the Geneva Initiative. Their response to critics was that they played key roles in both the first and second intifadas and therefore their national loyalty and their legitimacy to make such a move could not be doubted. Similarly, the initiative of Seri Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon, calls for giving priority to the Palestinians' right of self-determination in the West Bank and Gaza Strip over the right of return to Israel,<sup>21</sup> should be seen within the context of the intergenerational struggle.

Nevertheless, despite their efforts and the broad public recognition of the need for change and for rethinking the armed struggle and its aims, the intermediate generation was unable to bring about concrete change during the Arafat period. They lacked a true leader, while Arafat, for his part, resorted to divide-and-rule tactics and encouraged the factionalism among them. In the West Bank, the camps of Marwan Barghouti and Hasin ash-Sheikh neutralized each other, and in the Gaza Strip the same situation prevailed between the Dahlan camp and the camp of Muhammad Khils. Dahlan himself strove to augment his power and undermine the current government. Power struggles were also fought between the intermediate generation and members of the second rank of the veteran leadership, such as Hanni al-Hassan, Abbas Zaki, and Sakher Habash, who felt threatened by the growing power of the intermediate generation and by the inability of the veteran leadership to impose its authority on the young generation which manned the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.



These developments prevented the activists of the intermediate generation from becoming a cohesive power center and thereby fomenting change. Moreover, at this time they lacked a realistic and relevant policy program that would set them apart from Hamas.

### ACTIVISTS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Another group that exploited the PA's weakness to enhance its strength and make itself heard anew was the civil society activists. This group, which included academics and intellectuals (such as Salim Tamari, Ali Jerbaui, Raja Shehadeh, Manuel Hasassian, Samir Abdullah, Mussa al-Budiri, and Hisham Awartani), was identified with the intellectual and economic elite of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The civil society advocates have a common democratic civil agenda and are fundamentally nondependent on the establishment. They have their own organizational base (they are connected via several networks and together number more than a thousand organizations) and are supported by international aid organizations and foreign NGOs. During the period of Israeli rule they played an important part in the national struggle and in the processes of nation-building and creating the institutions of the state-in-the-making, and aspired to establish a civil society. However, they were blocked during the period of self-rule and failed to become a meaningful force in the society. More recently, this group began taking advantage of the fact that the PA was falling apart and was no longer able to control them or the public arena, and of the fact that the population needs services and economic aid, to consolidate their status and enhance their influence. They stepped up assistance to the population in social welfare, health, and human rights, and concurrently were involved in the stocktaking that took place in the public discourse, demanding that the confrontation revert to the popular struggle, urging administrative reforms in governmental institutions, and calling for the adoption of an agenda that would deal with social problems also.

However, the civil society activists are divided over the order of priorities the Palestinian society requires at this time, and they lack internal cohesion, political power, or public support.<sup>22</sup> Thus were dashed the hopes that ran high in Israel and in the international community toward the end of the Arafat era, that this social stratum would produce a moderate and pragmatic leadership that would promote reforms and join with moderate political forces to replace the old leadership.

## THE NATIONAL CAMP'S VIEW OF THE ORDER OF PRIORITIES IN THE WANING PHASE OF THE ARAFAT ERA

The point of departure of the majority of Fatah's intermediate generation, led by Marwan Barghouti, is that the only practical and moral solution to the conflict is the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel and not in its place. Believing that the United States and the international community are committed to this idea, they have thought for some time that if the Palestinians could reembark on the political road with Israel this solution would still have a realistic prospect of being implemented. Thus, in the past two years and more they have urged parallel activity on a number of planes:<sup>23</sup>

1. Adoption of a national order of priorities that will lead to liberation from the Israeli occupation and the establishment of a durable state in an agreement, even if no complete solution is found for the refugee problem. (This agenda will also set them apart from Hamas.)
2. Implementation of social reforms that will strengthen the society and make it possible to conduct a popular civil struggle that is necessary to accompany the political struggle.
3. A deep change in the structures of government, which will enable the establishment of a democratic "state of institutions."

As noted, the civil society activists, who are identified with different factions in the national camp, were divided over the national order of priorities that the situation called for. Some, like Khaider Abd el-Shafi and Mustafa Barghouti, continued to espouse unbending views—including realization of the right of return—about a settlement with Israel and presupposed that no political solution would be feasible in the near future. Their conclusion was that at this time exclusivity should be given to an internal scrutiny of the society, not least to reinforce "steadfastness." As secular leftists who were disappointed by the PA's policy of hindering the development of the civil society, they viewed with concern the blossoming of the Hamas-run charitable organizations during the period of the confrontation and the successes enjoyed by Hamas in elections to various civil bodies. Their fear was that Hamas would take over the civil society.

The Islamic stream, which was much strengthened during the years of the confrontation, posited a challenge to the activists of both Fatah's intermediate generation and of the civil society. According to the Islamists, the political path of the national camp had failed, even

though it had purported to reach an agreement in which the maximum concessions Israel was ready to make would converge with the minimal Palestinian goals. This argument led the national camp activists to believe that they would be able to advance their ideas and plans and muster support for their cause, if they succeeded in showing the public a practical way in which the occupation could be ended and a durable state established. Such a course could be a practical alternative to both the Hamas and Islamic Jihad path of “escalation until victory”<sup>24</sup> and to the path of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades and the left-wing factions, which espouse “continuation of the intifada until victory,” meaning a violent struggle until the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The national camp recognized that their success would depend also on Israeli policy, as Israel’s unilateral measures undercut the logic of the intermediate generation’s plan for a state within the 1967 borders in an agreement with Israel.

#### THE RELIGIOUS-ISLAMIC STREAM DURING THE CONFRONTATION AND TOWARD THE END OF THE ARAFAT ERA

During the years of the confrontation, Hamas grew stronger and consolidated its hold on the Palestinian street, especially in the Gaza Strip, where it has more convenient conditions for operating than in the West Bank. Indeed, as the Arafat era entered its final phase the movement had become the major opposition force, commanding public support and political legitimacy. Hamas succeeded in bringing the PA into disfavor among the public, portraying it as a corrupt and degenerate government that was incapable of assisting the population in its economic distress: Hamas also emphasized the PA’s role as the progenitor of security cooperation with Israel in the past, which created the phenomenon of the collaborators who helped Israel attack the activists of the armed struggle. In contrast to the national leadership and to Fatah, which in the public perception had strayed from the path, lost their political direction, and were operating with no clear goals, Hamas continued to boast an impeccable, corruption-free image, a clear and coherent political platform, and concern for the society and the individual in the realms of social welfare, education, health, and so forth. Hamas doubled its strength in elections to trade unions and student societies near the end of 2003 (obtaining 20 percent of the votes, as compared with 10 percent in the past), whereas Fatah’s share of the vote decreased by 10 percent, to stand at about 25 percent.<sup>25</sup>

In the situation of protracted confrontation and political stalemate that prevailed at the end of the Arafat era, Hamas enjoyed veto power vis-à-vis the PA, even without a majority. A case in point is the Cairo talks (late 2003) in which the cease-fire was discussed, at which Hamas rejected an Egyptian request to grant power of attorney to the PA so it could enter into political moves with Israel for a cease-fire and renewal of negotiations: Hamas stood by its position against a truce. This was the first time the PA had approached Hamas through Egypt in order to receive its go-ahead to enter into a political move with Israel.

The back-to-religion phenomenon, which is pervasive throughout the Muslim world, was heightened in the confrontational conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and played into the hands of Hamas. The movement's leaders exploited the confrontation to expand its civil infrastructure (the *daawa*) and to establish a military-civilian militia, a kind of people's army. Its aim was to increase its strength among the public for "the day after Arafat" and consolidate its status as a legitimate political element whose support would be crucial in any future government. At the same time, Hamas took precautionary measures to ensure its survival and preserve its achievements. The movement flaunted its strength vis-à-vis the PA, rejected its request to arrange a cease-fire with Israel, held large-scale ceremonies and military parades in the Gaza Strip, and berated the PA for going astray and for losing its public legitimacy. On the other hand, when Hamas found itself in distress, following Israeli attacks on its leaders and its categorization as a "terrorist organization" by the European Union, its leaders took the pragmatic step of unilaterally ceasing the suicide bombings in Israel. Concurrently, they heeded the public's wishes for a respite from the violence and expressed support for the establishment of a state in the 1967 borders as a first stage, provided the right of return was guaranteed and that there would be no recognition of Israel's right of existence.<sup>26</sup> This approach by Hamas can be seen as a rejoinder to Israel's disengagement plan: a temporary solution with no agreement, including a unilateral Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, the establishment of a state without recognition of Israel, and no opportunity granted to Israel to demand Palestinian concessions.

### BEGINNING OF THE ABU MAZEN ERA: NATIONAL CROSSROADS

Arafat's death, in November 2004, and Abu Mazen's election as his successor in the two key positions—chairman of the PLO and president

of the PA (until the elections, which were held on January 9, 2005, the acting president was Ruhi Fatouh, the speaker of the Palestinian parliament)—placed the Palestinian society and its leadership at a crossroads in regard to the future of the national struggle.

Immediately upon Arafat's death, Abu Mazen effectively set the general policy direction of the Palestinian government: restoring modes of operation based on the rule of law, upholding the principles of democracy, and respecting the separation of powers. Thus, the transfer of power was carried out in accordance with the PA constitution, the speaker of the legislative council (parliament) being appointed acting president, and presidential elections being held within 60 days of the former president's death. Likewise, Abu Mazen's election as PLO chairman was carried out according to the organization's charter, by the executive committee. In his election campaign, Abu Mazen adduced a clear political platform, based on forsaking the armed intifada. He explained that the violent confrontation had been detrimental to the Palestinian national cause and said he intended to bring about an extended truce, rehabilitate the security forces and the PA's governing institutions, get the economy back on track, and return to a security and political dialogue with Israel, with the aim of reaching a permanent agreement and a full resolution of the conflict, based on the conception of two states for the two nations.<sup>27</sup>

Abu Mazen's election on the basis of this platform legitimized his policy constituted a national decision concerning the future of the national struggle: reserving the right to conduct a nonviolent popular struggle alongside the political struggle and abandoning an armed struggle conducted by militants bearing arms illegally. The broad public support for this decision and the public's anticipation of a return to normal life and the restoration of law and order was also clearly reflected in public-opinion surveys and in writing by Palestinian publicists.<sup>28</sup>

These developments created an opportunity to rehabilitate Fatah and make it a stable political foundation for the new government. During his election campaign, Abu Mazen reunited the organization's various groups, including the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and promised to hold the Sixth Fatah Convention within several months. He thus laid the foundations to restore Fatah's status as the leader of the Palestinian national movement, whose political-diplomatic path has the support of the majority of the people and is differentiated from the militant approach of Hamas.

Hamas, as a social-political movement, was compelled to reexamine its policy in the new reality that emerged after Arafat's death and the election of Abu Mazen as president of the PA. The Hamas leadership

was aware of the decline that began to appear in its public strength,<sup>29</sup> in contrast to the rejuvenation of Fatah, and had no choice but to show readiness for a compromise that would ensure the preservation of its achievements and its public status.

## CONCLUSIONS

From its outset, Al-Aqsa Intifada, which began as a popular eruption and quickly became a constantly escalating armed confrontation, was conducted without specified goals being set for it at the national level. It reflected, in no small degree, the dispute, that grew more acute, between the national camp and the Islamic-religious camp over the Palestinians' national goals. The national camp was split, mainly between the veteran leadership and the young guard, and found it difficult to decide on the desirable order of priorities for its demands: the resolution of the refugee problem, the right of return, and the realization of the right to self-determination in a state within the 1967 borders. Countering it was a cohesive religious-Islamic camp that was determined to preserve the right of armed struggle until the establishment of a theocracy throughout Palestine.

This dispute had not been decided at the end of the Arafat era. It also found expression in the lack of decision concerning the central government, as militias and other armed power groups eroded the authority of the PA and imposed their will. The fear shown by both sides of a civil war and the equal balance of forces between Fatah and Hamas prevented a decision and brought about a modicum of unity, as long as the violent confrontation with Israel continued.

Although criticism of the continuation of the armed struggle was voiced on the public plane, especially after Israel's Operation Defensive Shield (March–April 2002), as long as the confrontation went on, the society continued to support the struggle and even the suicide bombings, as an appropriate response to the IDF's use of its armed might. Thus, after four years of confrontation and as the Arafat era drew to a close, the "armed struggle" remained a lofty value in the eyes of the Palestinian society—a value that united and strengthened the armed elements in the national and Islamic camps alike.

In these circumstances, Fatah's intermediate generation was unable to bring about a change of guard in the leadership, mobilize political and public support to decide the intra-Palestinian debate over the armed struggle, or adduce a practical plan to end the occupation and bring about the establishment of a durable state. Thus, even though the members of this generation were eager to assume national

responsibility and extricate the Palestinians from the quagmire in which they found themselves, their activity was confined to internecine struggles within Fatah and separate, sporadic efforts aimed at consolidating their strength among the public and within the international community in the post-Arafat era. In the meantime, the Islamic stream, led by Hamas, grew constantly stronger.

Although the unity of the camps and the factions was largely preserved during the struggle against Israel, the internal rifts in the society grew deeper, to the point where the society's very stability was threatened. The sacrosanct principle of "national unity" (*Al-Wahda Al-Watania*) was jeopardized, as was the principle of "exclusivity of representation" (*Wahdaniat Al-Tamsil*). This situation created a governmental vacuum and a sense of urgency in the public and within the Palestinian establishment concerning the future of the national struggle, especially because of the fear of unilateral moves by Israel. The public was sharply critical of both the impotence of the Palestinian government and of its inability to define goals and set a policy that would make it possible to reunite the society and cope with the looming dangers. Nonetheless, the public continued to view the PA as the central body that bears responsibility for its situation. From the public's point of view, the PA fulfilled its national duty by being steadfast in the confrontation and bearing the steep price it exacted. For this very reason the public expected the PA to improve its performance and formulate a policy to cope effectively with the threats entailed in Israel's unilateral actions.

Against this background, Abu Mazen's election as leader, succeeding Yasser Arafat, reflected high expectations within the Palestinian society for a general overhaul and a fundamental change in the security, economic, and political-diplomatic situation. Abu Mazen's pragmatic policy approach, his willingness to discard the path of violence, and the credit he received from the international community can be linked to three processes that developed among the Palestinians since the death of Arafat and might have signaled the path to change:

- The organizational and ideological rehabilitation of Fatah as a leading national movement. This process began when the organization ran a successful election campaign at the end of which its candidate was elected president of the PA, and was expected to continue with the convening of the Sixth Fatah Convention, in which the members of the organization's Central Committee were to be reelected for the first time since Oslo<sup>30</sup> and the movement's policy platform formulated and approved.

- The integration of Hamas in the PA establishment.<sup>31</sup> The movement's leadership decided in favor of participating in the elections to the municipal governments and to the Legislative Assembly in order to give political expression to its public strength at the national and local levels.<sup>32</sup>
- The renewed building of the state and the society ahead of the establishment of a sovereign state in a political agreement. This would entail the abandonment of the revolutionary system that seized control of the society and a return to the logic of a state system, including rehabilitation of the governmental institutions and the civil society, with their activity grounded in law, democracy, and the separation of powers.

However, the weak leadership of Abu Mazen, his powerlessness to rehabilitate the PA and *Fatah*, and his inability to bring about a renewal of the peace process with Israel, disrupted the path of change. On the eve of the elections to the Palestinian legislature in January 2006, the public saw the disintegration of the ideology and the performance of the governing party's leadership (Fatah) and their incapacity to deal with the basic problems of the society. Lacking a mainstream alternative, such as a liberal-democratic party, the Hamas seemed to be, in the political strength it showed, and in the circumstances that developed, a deserving alternative to Fatah. Thus for the first time since Fatah's creation, the leadership of the Palestinian people was turned over, in democratic fashion, to the Hamas.

## NOTES

This chapter is an expanded and updated version of my article "The Palestinian Society in the Wake of Four Years of Confrontation," in *Middle Eastern Zones of Conflict, 2004* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2004), pp. 51–66.

1. Under the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestinians, the two sides recognized the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as one territorial unit whose integrity and status would be preserved in the interim period. The interim agreements divided the territories into Area A, consisting mainly of major cities, in which the PA exercised full civilian and security control; Area B, consisting mainly of built-up rural areas, in which the Palestinians received powers of civil administration but greater security responsibility accrued to Israel; and Area C, consisting largely of farmland with a sparse Palestinian population, in which Israel possessed full security control.
2. The public's criticism of the PA became increasingly acute during 2000 and for the first time also included Arafat. The criticism focused on the



- economic inefficiency shown by Arafat and the PA, the governmental corruption, the infringement of human rights and freedom of expression, and the weakness shown in negotiations with Israel. Palestinian publicists and academics argued that the social and political failures were engendered by the despotism and corruption of the PA and Arafat. On November 28, 1999, for example, a document known as the “Declaration of the Twenty” leveled fierce criticism at the PA’s domestic performance and in the negotiations with Israel. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *Palestinian and Israeli Intellectuals in the Shadow of Oslo and Intifadat Al-Aqsa* (Tel Aviv: Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, 2002), p. 34.
3. Guy Bechor, *PLO Lexicon* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1991) (Hebrew), pp. 294–295.
  4. Danny Rubinstein, “Yasser Arafat Will Prefer To Die and Not Implement Reforms that Mean Forgoing His Powers,” *Haaretz* (July 26, 2004).
  5. There were some public protests in the Gaza Strip in the wake of Israeli military Operations that followed the firing of Qassam rockets, but they were not translated into a demand to stop the rockets from being fired, and in any event the protests took second place to criticism of Israel for inflicting “collective punishment” on an innocent population. Publicists wrote articles in the Palestinian press calling for a reexamination of the armed struggle, and especially the suicide attacks inside Israel and the firing of Qassam rockets, in the light of the negative repercussions such actions were having on the Palestinian interest and the legitimacy of the national struggle.
  6. See [www.pcpsr.org](http://www.pcpsr.org).
  7. On the essence and components of the dispute, see Ibrahim Dais, “On the Militarization of the Intifada and Other Central Problems,” *Al-Quds*, January 8, 2005; Samih Shabib, “Internal Reform and Halting the Military Intifada Are Two Sides of the Same Coin,” *Al-Iyyam* (January 24, 2005); Mahmoud Yagi, “Emerging from the Security File,” *Al-Iyyam* (January 27, 2005).
  8. The protracted confrontation gave rise to a system of security restrictions imposed by Israel, which included external and internal closures, permanent and mobile checkpoints, and blocking of roads, as well as restrictions on the movement of people and goods between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and on the transfer of goods from Israeli ports and across the border crossings to the PA. These measures had a crushing impact on Palestinian economic activity. Yitzhak Gal, “The Palestinian Economy under Arafat and Beyond,” lecture delivered to researchers’ forum, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, January 17, 2005. According to Gal’s findings, the main economic indicators at the end of 2004 were: per capita GDP \$900—a real-term decrease of more than 40 percent compared to 1999; unemployment of 30 percent as compared to 10 percent in September 2000, and unemployment of 70 percent among young people; and between 50 percent and 70 percent of the population living below the poverty line, as compared to 20 percent in 1999 (average income for a poverty-stricken family of six: NIS 1,000 a month).

9. The aid from the donor states to the PA was doubled in the period of the confrontation, reaching an annual level of about \$1 billion. These funds, which made it possible for the PA to survive, were utilized to finance the high current debt that was created in the PA's budget, to pay the salaries of about 125,000 PA employees, to keep the essential government systems intact, and to fund a social support network for the poor.
10. Anarchy became an increasingly acute problem in the PA during the period of the confrontation: the struggles and violent incidents between the security units and the bearers of illegal arms in the various organizations and groups became more widespread; and phenomena such as "settling accounts," collection of "protection money," and attacks on "symbols of government," including mayors, governors, and senior security personnel grew frequent. Arnon Regular, "Settling Accounts in Nablus: Fatah Activist Shot to Death," *Haaretz* (December 2, 2004); Arnon Regular, "Escalation in Gaza: Hundreds of Armed People Attack Mussa Arafat's HQ in Rafah," *Haaretz* (July 19, 2004).
11. In July 2004, the seriousness of the situation led the Legislative Council to appoint an investigative commission to examine the causes of the spreading anarchy and the societal rifts. On the commission's findings, see Amos Harel, "Conclusions of PLC Investigative Commission's Report on Anarchy," *Haaretz*; Arnon Regular, "PA Security Chiefs: We Have Lost Control, No One Is Doing Arafat's Bidding," *Haaretz*; Arnon Regular, "Seven MPs Examine Reasons for Chaos in PA," *Haaretz* (August 10, 2004).
12. See interview by Zvi Yehezkeili with Zakariya Zbeidi on his taking control of Jenin, Channel 10 in Israel, January 6, 2004; more on Zbeidi in Gideon Levy, "Dead Man Walking," *Haaretz Magazine* (March 26, 2004).
13. One aspect of "retreating from the state" is to forgo (in whole or in part) the services of the state in various spheres, in favor of parallel organizations or competing traditional structures (such as the tribe). This generally follows a concrete decline in the state's efficiency and its internal strength, as well as in its legitimacy and validity of the group identity it represents. See Baruch Kimmerling, *Between State and Society: The Sociology of Politics*, vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Open University, 1995), p. 195.
14. Muhammad Yagi "Coping with the Three Mistakes," *Al-Iyyam*, September 30, 2004.
15. Ashraf al-Ajrami, "After Four Years of Struggle: Where Do We Stand Today?" *Al-Iyyam* (October 1, 2004).
16. Hani al-Masri, *Al-Iyyam* (August 28, 2004).
17. Ahmad Majdelani, *Al-Iyyam* (October 6, 2004).
18. Hana Amira, *Al Quds* (September 29, 2004). See also the Internet site of Memri, specifically [www.memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?enttype=4&entid=1671&language=Hebrew](http://www.memri.org.il/memri/LoadArticlePage.asp?enttype=4&entid=1671&language=Hebrew).

19. Khalil Shikaki, "Palestine Divided," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 1, (January/February 2002), pp. 89–105.
20. Alistair Crock, a former British secret service man, was the security adviser to Miguel Moratinos, the European Union envoy to the Middle East. Among other initiatives, Crock and Dahlan worked together on the plan to establish Common Operational Centers for the security Apparatus in the Gaza Strip and were in contact with Hamas and Fatah figures to bring about a truce. See [www.intelligence.org.il/sp/11\\_04/prot.htm](http://www.intelligence.org.il/sp/11_04/prot.htm) (in Hebrew and Arabic).
21. See the site of the People's Voice: [www.mifkad.org.il/en/index.asp](http://www.mifkad.org.il/en/index.asp).
22. Hanni Habib, "The Third Stream . . . Be Silent No Longer!" *Al-Iyyam* (January 12, 2005).
23. On the efforts of the intermediate generation activists to press Arafat to execute reforms, see, on the Aljazeera Web site, "Fatah under Pressure to Reform," February 10, 2004; and "Mass Resignations Hit Fatah Movement," February 8, 2004.
24. "Victory" in the sense of the liberation of the whole of Palestine.
25. An example is the serious defeat sustained by Fatah in the elections to the engineers' union in Gaza, in which Hamas won seven seats to Fatah's two: *Al-Iyyam* (December 21, 2003).
26. In January 2004, a Hamas leader, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, stated: "We will agree to a state in the West Bank, which will include Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. We are offering a ten-year cease-fire in return for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 borders and the establishment of a Palestinian state": Y-Net, quoting Reuters, "Hamas Offers 10-Year Cease-Fire," January 26, 2004. Within the framework of the phased doctrine strategy, Hamas occasionally puts forward the *budna* idea, accompanied by clear provisos for Israel's full withdrawal to the 1967 lines and the uprooting of all the settlements. On the meaning of "*budna*" for Hamas and the conditions for its acceptance, see Khaled al-Haroub, Beirut, 1996, pp. 86–98.
27. Abu Mazen's pragmatic approach had been made manifest in the policy he sought to introduce in his short-lived government in the summer of 2003, and he continued to espouse it to media outlets even before Arafat's death. See, for example, an interview with Abu Mazen in the Jordanian paper *Al-Rai* on September 27, 2004, English translation by Memri: <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP79304>.
28. The editorial in *Al-Hiyat al-Jedida*, "Change Is a Necessity, Change Is Life!" January 15, 2005, "New Horses for New Stage," January 25, 2005; and Samih Shabib, "Domestic Reforms and Halting the Militarism of the Intifada Are Two Sides of the Same Coin," *Al-Iyyam* (January 24, 2005).
29. One cause of this was the decrease in the assistance that Hamas was able to make available to the population, due to international and Israeli

preventive action to block the flow of terrorist funds and the PA's freezing of the funds of the societies associated with Hamas.

30. The activists of Fatah's intermediate generation expect to be elected democratically to the organization's institutions and to displace the old guard of the PLO, thus advancing the process of passing the torch of leadership to them.
31. Hassan al-Batal, "The Political Wisdom of the Hamas Movement," *Al-Iyyam* (January 29, 2005).
32. In the partial municipal elections held in Gaza on January 26, 2005, Hamas scored a particularly impressive victory. Hamas won in seven of nine municipalities, and Fatah won two councils, tenth win by [candidate of] extended family (*Al-Hiyat al-Jedida* (January 29, 2005).

CHAPTER 9

THE ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT  
PLAN AS A CONFLICT MANAGEMENT  
STRATEGY

*Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov and Kobi Michael*

The disengagement plan of Israel's prime minister, Ariel Sharon, can be described as an alternative Israeli strategy to the management of the violent confrontation with the Palestinians. This initiative (dating from December 2003) was intended primarily to moderate the violent confrontation that erupted almost three years earlier, by means of a unilateral decision by Israel. The new move was embarked upon after other strategies failed and the possibility of cooperation with the Palestinians in managing the conflict were perceived as unrealistic, in the light of the rejection of Yasser Arafat as a partner. The disengagement, although presented as a unilateral plan, was the most creative initiative since the onset of the confrontation in September 2000 and had the greatest potential to modify it.

This chapter examines the following issues: (1) unilateral disengagement as a conflict management and resolution strategy; (2) the components of the disengagement plan; (3) the reasons for the plan and its goal; (4) the process of formulating the plan as an adaptive process; (5) implications of the plan as a change in Israeli policy; and (6) the disengagement as an opportunity to modify the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

DISENGAGEMENT AS A CONFLICT  
MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION STRATEGY

Unilateral disengagement can serve as a means to manage and resolve an ethnic international conflict. Disengagement is an initiative taken

by an intervening actor aimed at terminating military intervention, colonial rule, or international mandatory rule, after it has failed to ensure the achievement of its political-military goals by means of physical military presence, or as a way to break an impasse or escape from a trap, or as a means to create mutuality in the process of conflict management or resolution. In practical terms, this strategy entails the physical departure of one of the sides from a controversial area that is a source of conflict between the sides, with the aim of terminating or moderating the conflict by depriving the other side of a source for its motivation to violence. A distinction can be drawn between disengagement by agreement and disengagement without agreement, and between disengagement without a shared border (with the other side) and disengagement with a shared border.

Disengagement, whether with or without an agreement, in a situation in which no border is shared by the two sides exists, generally leads to the conflict's termination or moderation because the nexus of the conflict is eliminated (examples are Britain's withdrawal from Palestine and the withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam). Disengagement with both a shared border and an agreement can bring about the moderation and termination of a conflict (as with Israel's disengagement agreements with Egypt and Syria in the 1970s, and the subsequent peace treaty with Egypt). Disengagement with a shared border but without an agreement (in a case where one of the sides is not interested in an agreement) will not necessarily terminate the conflict but might moderate it and enable it to be managed without leaving forces in the field (such as Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000). In such a case, much depends on the way the other side perceives the motives for the disengagement. If the move is interpreted as meeting some of its needs and satisfying its wish, the result can be the moderation or even termination of the conflict. However, if the disengagement is construed to be a sign of weakness, the other side is liable to persist with the violence and escalate it, in order to reap more gains.

Where a shared border exists, disengagement with an agreement is thus preferable and more effective as a means to manage the conflict and perhaps resolving it. Accordingly, the initiating side should seek an agreement even if it is not formal (an implicit agreement) in order to ensure that the other side will allow it to execute the disengagement without violence and perhaps also agree to moderate the conflict after the disengagement is completed. It is rare to find a situation in which the initiating side prefers, from the outset, unilateral disengagement without an agreement as a conflict management strategy: the initiating side will generally seek an agreement. The problem usually arises

when the other side refuses to reach an agreement or to cooperate without one.

Unilateral disengagement is fundamentally a default strategy that is generally adopted after the failure of other strategies and in a situation in which an agreement with the other side is not achievable; its aim is more to minimize damages and losses than to maximize gains.<sup>1</sup> The strategy is intended to effect a change in the political-military situation related to a territorial status quo that is perceived as a dangerous and costly trap, when the policymakers reach the conclusion that continuing to invoke the existing strategies will only aggravate the loss. Disengagement is thus perceived as being less dangerous than an existing strategy or than another alternative to manage the conflict. On the one hand it can be viewed as an attempt to adapt a new strategy to an existing reality through a more effective utilization of means for existing goals, but also as a learning process signifying a modification of beliefs or of the importance of beliefs in the wake of the reassessment of a failed policy, when the need for significant modification is recognized.<sup>2</sup>

### COMPONENTS OF THE DISENGAGEMENT PLAN

The disengagement plan, which was approved by the Government of Israel on April 18, 2004, was a plan for the unilateral management of the conflict with the Palestinians. Its most significant clauses were the removal of all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip as well as four settlements in Northern Samaria. The U.S. commitment, in the form of a letter from President George Bush to Prime Minister Sharon dated April 14, 2004, is cited as part of the plan.<sup>3</sup> As regards the settlements in Gaza, the plan stated the following: "The State of Israel will withdraw from the Gaza Strip, including all Israeli settlements, and will redeploy outside the area of the Strip. The method of the withdrawal, with the exception of a military presence in the area adjacent to the border between Gaza and Egypt (the Philadelphi route), will be detailed below."<sup>4</sup> As to the settlements in northern Samaria, the plan stated the following: "The State of Israel will withdraw from northern Samaria (four settlements: Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur and Homesh) as well as all permanent military installations in the area, and will redeploy outside the evacuated area." The process of implementation was slated to be completed by the end of 2005. The plan also emphasized that "the State of Israel will continue to construct the security fence, in accordance with the relevant cabinet decisions. In deciding on the route of the fence, humanitarian considerations will be taken into account."<sup>5</sup>

## REASONS FOR THE DISENGAGEMENT PLAN AND ITS GOALS

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, the initiator of the disengagement plan, had explained the reasons that prompted him to put forward the plan at that particular time and had elaborated his motives and goals. However, lack of clarity persisted due to the uncertainty of the plan's implementation and doubt as to whether it could modify the confrontation with the Palestinians. Nor was it clear how the decision-making process was carried out, who was involved, or whether alternatives to disengagement were adduced—and, if so, which considerations led to the choice of disengagement over other options. A thorough examination of the revised plan and of the prime minister's statements after the Herzliya Conference of December 2003—when the idea was first made public—together with the interview that attorney Dov Weissglas, the prime minister's adviser, gave to Ari Shavit in *Haaretz* in October 2004, suggested the existence of internal contradictions both in the plan itself and in its goals.

Based on an examination of the disengagement plan and statements made by Sharon and Weissglas, we can note the following factors as underlying Sharon's decision to initiate the disengagement:

1. The absence of any prospect of renewing the political process due to the Palestinians' unreadiness and above all the absence of a serious Palestinian partner. Yasser Arafat, who was considered to be exclusively responsible for derailing the peace process and for the outbreak of the violence and its escalation, was not viewed by Israel as a worthy partner for a dialogue of any kind, either for reaching a peace treaty or even for joint management of the conflict. Arafat's undermining of Abu Mazen, the Palestinian prime minister, in the summer of 2003, demonstrated this decisively.<sup>6</sup>
2. The impossibility of deciding the violent confrontation with the Palestinians or obtaining a military and political victory in it. The hope of "burning the Palestinians' consciousness" was disappointed: their motivation to continue with the violence despite the heavy price they were paying—in the belief that ultimately this course would result in the realization of their national goal—far from increased rather, than declined.<sup>7</sup>
3. Insufficient effectiveness of other conflict strategies. Although these strategies led to a significant moderation of the violence overall, and of the suicide bombings in particular (and thus to a sharp fall in the number of Israeli casualties), they were unable to



- bring about an end to the violent confrontation or modify the conflict substantively.<sup>8</sup>
4. The security and political impasse in which Israel found itself after three years of violence was dangerous for Israel, and its persistence was fraught with even greater risk. Accordingly, Israel had to initiate a unilateral move that did not depend on cooperation with the Palestinians.<sup>9</sup>
  5. Despite Israel's impression that the United States held the Palestinians to blame for the failure of the political process and for the violence, the absence of an Israeli initiative was likely to confront Israel with heightened international pressure to make undesirable political and territorial concessions. Israel's paramount fear was that the Bush initiative would get bogged down and vanish, after which a less convenient political initiative would be put to Israel, which would compel it to negotiate under conditions of terrorism.<sup>10</sup>
  6. There was a feeling that Israel's resilience had been damaged during the years of the violent confrontation and that there was a cumulative internal erosion of morale. The cardinal indicators of this were the letters of refusal to serve in the territories signed by reservists from the air force and from Sayeret Matkal, the elite commando unit, together with the Geneva Initiative and the People's Voice project (of Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh). The concern was that such feelings would grow if the impasse was not broken.<sup>11</sup>
  7. The emergence of diplomatic initiatives such as the Geneva Initiative, the People's Voice, and the Arab League plan, indicated the existence of a reasonable prospect to achieve a political settlement and showed that there was a Palestinian partner, contrary to the government's claims.<sup>12</sup>
  8. The decline of the prime minister's standing in the public's eyes, in large measure because he had failed to make good on his promises (in two election campaigns) to deliver security and peace.<sup>13</sup>
  9. The internalization of the "demographic threat": in the absence of a political settlement based on the "two states for two nations" formula, Israel would find itself in a situation of "one state for two nations," meaning in practice the end of Israel as a Jewish state.<sup>14</sup>
  10. The assessment that Israel would not be able to go on ruling all the territories in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip indefinitely, and therefore it would be worthwhile to forgo the settlement project in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria in favor of retaining the large Jewish settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the disengagement plan was being presented in security rather than political terms, it was unquestionably also a political plan (see also the discussion on this subject below), which was intended to address the problems that arose during the violent confrontation in both the security and political spheres and achieve the following goals:

1. To reduce the losses and risks involved in the continuation of the violent confrontation in its present format by reducing the friction with the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria.<sup>16</sup>
2. To prevent the army's entanglement as a result of military operations amid a civilian population and to exempt Israel of responsibility for managing the day-to-day life of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
3. To reduce the danger of pressure being applied on Israel to make undesirable political and territorial concessions, to transfer the political initiative to Israel while doing only the minimum required, and to win broad U.S. and international support for the disengagement move.<sup>17</sup>
4. To freeze the political process, which was liable to bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state, with all the security risks this would entail (evacuation of settlements, return of refugees, partition of Jerusalem).<sup>18</sup>
5. To improve the Palestinians' fabric of life and their economy and make it possible for them to leave the cycle of violence and reintegrate into the process of dialogue.<sup>19</sup>
6. To impute to the Palestinians the responsibility for the violent confrontation and for the political deadlock and force them to "prove their seriousness" and their ability to manage their lives by themselves. This would include pressuring them to make good on their commitments—as stipulated in the Road Map—to combat terrorism and make reforms, so that the sides can resume the political process.<sup>20</sup>
7. To prevent U.S. pressure aimed at renewing the political process with Syria.<sup>21</sup>
8. To extricate Israel from the impasse entailed in the present situation and make progress toward a better security, political, economic, and demographic reality.<sup>22</sup>
9. To ensure that the large settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria will remain under Israeli rule, with American backing.<sup>23</sup>
10. To strengthen Israel's hold in the existentially vital territories, with international support.<sup>24</sup>

## THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING THE PLAN AS AN ADAPTIVE PROCESS

The disengagement initiative did not necessarily originate with Ariel Sharon. Like many other ideas, the plan was conceived in the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and was presented to the prime minister by the IDF's Plans and Policy Directorate already in late 2001. At that time Sharon rejected the idea, only to adopt it about two years later and present it as an Israeli policy initiative.<sup>25</sup>

Until late in 2003, Sharon continued to declare that Israel would not abandon its demand for the implementation of the first stage of the Road Map. He also imputed to the Palestinians full responsibility for the political impasse and reiterated his commitment to battle terrorism until its eradication. Israel, he asserted, would not agree to negotiate under fire and terrorism, and he rejected vehemently every initiative or proposal for the renewal of the political process.<sup>26</sup> Even though he declared his willingness to make "painful concessions" for the sake of true peace, he insisted on adhering to the Road Map.<sup>27</sup> Sharon reiterated that the approach to resolving the conflict must be controlled and gradual, with maximum attention paid to the fulfillment of the sides' commitments—by which he meant the commitments of the Palestinian side.

Initial indications of a possible change in Israeli policy could be detected in several speeches that Sharon delivered in the second half of 2003. Apparently he hoped that after Abu Mazen became the Palestinian prime minister it might be possible to enter into dialogue with the Palestinians at some level and he reaffirmed his adherence to the Road Map.

However, this approach was not put forward again in public statements. The resignation of Abu Mazen appears to have eliminated any hope of concrete change in Palestinian policy, and from then until the speech at the Herzliya Conference, in December 2003, when he placed the disengagement plan on the public agenda, Sharon hinted in his public statements that he intended to turn to unilateral moves. He seemed to threaten the Palestinians with a unilateral approach, as though this were the price Israel would exact from them for being recalcitrant and choosing the path of violent struggle.

Indeed, in a statement to the Knesset at the opening of the winter sitting, on October 20, 2003, Sharon laid the foundations for the unilateral move he would declare two months later.<sup>28</sup> On November 27, 2003, in an appearance before the Editors' Committee in Tel Aviv, Sharon hinted at what was to come: "I told the Palestinians as well

that they do not have unlimited time at their disposal. In the last analysis, our tolerance also has its limits.” Sharon warned the Palestinians of the loss they would incur and for the first time stated explicitly the possibility that Israel might take unilateral steps.<sup>29</sup>

The first time the disengagement concept was referred to officially was in December 2003, at a meeting of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Sharon disclosed to the committee that he was preparing a “complex, unilateral security move.”<sup>30</sup> On December 18, 2003, Sharon declared at the annual Herzliya Conference that, in the absence of a Palestinian partner to renew the political process, he was planning a unilateral Israeli move of disengagement from the Gaza Strip.<sup>31</sup> In this speech, Sharon gave the Palestinians a few months to fulfill their part in the Road Map and said that if they should fail in this, Israel would initiate a unilateral course of action of disengagement from them. The disengagement plan, he said, would be carried out in full coordination with the United States and had as its primary goal “to reduce terror as much as possible and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security.” The plan, Sharon said, would improve Israel’s economy, reduce to a minimum the friction between Israelis and Palestinians, and facilitate the work of the security forces in according Israel maximum security, including by means of the security fence. Sharon warned that Israel would not be a hostage in the hands of the Palestinians and would not wait for them indefinitely. He emphasized that the disengagement plan was a security move and not a political step. However, along with the security rationale, Sharon was quick to supply political grounds as well. Within the framework of the disengagement plan, he said, Israel would retain control of those parts of the Land of Israel that would remain an integral part of the State of Israel in any future settlement. He warned the Palestinians that in the disengagement plan they would receive far less than they could obtain in direct negotiations based on the Road Map.

In the first half of 2004, Sharon continued to promote the disengagement plan. In an interview with Yoel Marcus in *Haaretz* at the beginning of February he described the main points of the plan, most notably the evacuation of the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and in northern Samaria.<sup>32</sup> On April 14, 2004, Sharon presented the disengagement plan to U.S. President George Bush. In a letter to the president, the plan was described as the only option left to Israel because of the fact that “there exists no Palestinian partner with whom to advance peacefully toward a settlement.” The aim of the plan was to improve Israel’s security and to stabilize the political and economic situation. Sharon also noted that he intended to submit the

plan for the authorization of the cabinet and the Knesset and that he was convinced it would be approved.<sup>33</sup>

The plan gained the president's blessing and support. In a letter to the prime minister, Bush noted for the first time that the United States recognized Israel's demand for border modifications that would incorporate into Israel the large settlement blocs and backed the Israeli approach that rejected the right of the return of Palestinian refugees to Israel.<sup>34</sup>

Sharon glorified the strategic and historic significance of this turning point in U.S. administration policy; despite this, he was forced to agree to a referendum within his party, the Likud. The referendum was unprecedented in the Israeli political-parliamentary system and was fraught with considerable risks for the status, prestige, and authority of the prime minister and for his ability to function in the face of his internecine political opponents.<sup>35</sup>

In the Likud referendum, which was held on May 2, 2004, the opponents of the disengagement plan were victorious (winning a majority of about 60 percent, though only about 50 percent of those eligible turned out to vote). The outcome was a serious political and morale setback for Sharon, which was not offset by the efforts at support mustered by the political left in Israel.<sup>36</sup> Yet Sharon continued to promote the disengagement plan, his determination to see it through bolstered by the backing of the United States and broad public support in Israel.<sup>37</sup>

Although the prime minister tried to shrug off the results of the referendum, he found himself in a political trap that threatened his status inside his party and therefore was forced to take the results into account. His response was to submit to the cabinet a revised plan for disengagement. In order to ensure a majority, Sharon fired the two National Union ministers, Avigdor Lieberman, and Benny Elon. This move intensified the criticism leveled by the plan's opponents about the prime minister's undemocratic tactics and the illegitimacy of the decision-making process in connection with the disengagement plan. On June 6, 2004, following heavy pressure exerted by Sharon on the Likud ministers, and after a compromise was reached according to which the disengagement would be approved and implemented in four stages, the cabinet passed Resolution 1996, authorizing the revised plan. (The compromise enabled three senior Likud ministers—Benjamin Netanyahu, Silvan Shalom, and Limor Livnat—to retract their opposition to the plan and paved the way for a cabinet majority.)

The cabinet decided that each of the plan's four stages would require its authorization prior to being implemented. Under the plan,

the settlements slated for evacuation in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria were divided into four groups, with the cabinet to meet from time to time in order to authorize the evacuation of each group. In practice, the plan was to evacuate the settlements in four controlled stages, but no decision was made about the length of time between one stage and the next. The plan's goal was expanded, its aim now being "to lead to a better security, political, economic, and demographic situation." Another argument was added to the plan's purported advantages: its implementation "will serve to dispel the claims regarding Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."<sup>38</sup>

As for the plan itself, it stipulated that Israel would continue to control the Gaza Strip "envelope." Other changes from the original plan had to do with the future of the Israeli assets in Gush Katif (the bloc of settlements in the Gaza Strip), which Israel sought to transfer to a third party (other than sensitive installations, which would be dismantled), and to the future of the Erez Industrial Zone, which, under the revised plan, Israel is ready to transfer to a Palestinian or international body.

The cabinet resolution declared that "The Government of Israel attaches great importance to dialogue with the population that is slated for evacuation on the various subjects relating to the plan's implementation, including evacuation and compensation, and will act to hold this dialogue." It was decided that the Security Cabinet would be responsible for implementing the governmental decision, and in addition a Relocation, Compensation, and Alternative Settlement Committee was established. A Disengagement Administration was created, called Sela (Hebrew acronym for "assistance to the residents of Gaza"), whose purpose was to implement the decision with regard to the civilian evacuation and the compensation to be paid to the evacuees.<sup>39</sup>

The government's approval of the plan set in motion a series of well-publicized organized protest actions. One of the most spectacular of these events was a 90-kilometer-long human chain that the Yesha (Judea, Samaria, and Gaza) Council of settlements organized on July 13, 2004. The human chain was formed by 130,000 people who linked hands along the roads from Gush Katif to the Knesset in Jerusalem. The protest activities soon became more acute, including organized refusal by soldiers to obey evacuation orders. Leading rabbis, such as former Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira, issued open calls to torpedo the disengagement plan and ordered soldiers to refuse any evacuation orders.<sup>40</sup> The political rift in the country became deeper and more serious, but Sharon continued to act with uncompromising

determination and seemingly boundless energy to push the plan ahead, all the while engaging in sharp clashes with opponents of the plan in his party.

The countermoves fomented by Sharon's opponents, both in his party and outside it, only heightened his determination to bring the plan to fruition. His resolve was given expression in the grounds he adduced for the plan in the context of his national vision and the essence of the leadership that is required to enhance national resilience. On August 30, 2004, the security cabinet approved the outline for the evacuation of the settlements that was proposed by Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz. It stipulated that the IDF would be responsible for the entire evacuation, with the Israel Police to be in charge of evacuating the settlers.

On October 24, the cabinet approved the draft Disengagement Plan Implementation Law (the "Evacuation-Compensation Law"), which set forth the principles for carrying out the plan and for calculating the compensation to the evacuees. Thirteen ministers voted in favor and six against.<sup>41</sup>

The Knesset approved the plan on October 26, 2004, by a vote of 67–45 (7 abstentions). Minister Uzi Landau and Deputy Minister Michael Ratzon, who voted against the plan, were fired from the government. On November 4, 2004, the Knesset approved the Evacuation-Compensation Bill on first reading by a vote of 64–44 (9 abstentions), and the bill was referred to the Knesset's Finance Committee for discussion.

Sharon did not consider the death of Arafat (on November 11, 2004) and the subsequent change in the Palestinian leadership as obliging any change in the Israeli approach. Sharon did not term the new Palestinian leadership as a partner for negotiations or even for coordinating the disengagement. In his view, the Abu Mazen government had to prove first that it had changed its goals and mode of operation. Sharon proposed two easier test cases, which were under the direct control of the Palestinian leadership and did not require, at this stage, the collection of weapons or the dismantlement of the terrorist organizations: the cessation of the ongoing virulent propaganda and incitement in the Palestinian media, and a reversal of the tendency toward incitement and demonizing Israel, Israelis, and Jews in the Palestinian education system. These two spheres of activity, the prime minister said, could be initial test cases for the new leadership. He added that in his view the achievements of the disengagement plan lay in the very agreement on it with President Bush and its approval by the Israeli government and Knesset.<sup>42</sup>

The approval of the disengagement plan and the Knesset's adoption of the Evacuation-Compensation Law on first reading did not calm the political situation. On the contrary after opposition in the Knesset failed, the plan's opponents turned to the extraparliamentary arena with a campaign for a national referendum and intensified protest, including public calls by some settler leaders (such as Daniella Weiss, the head of the Kedumim council) to IDF soldiers to refuse the evacuation order. Reservist officers also joined the protest actions, notably in the form of a letter by 34 officers from the Binyamin Brigade of the Judea-Samaria Division, a document that came to be known as the "letter of the right-wing officers."<sup>43</sup>

Chastened by his bitter experience in the Likud referendum, Sharon rejected the initiative for a national referendum on the disengagement plan. He viewed it as an empty attempt to delay the disengagement, a plan that in any event commanded broad public support. Speaking in the Knesset on January 25, 2005, at a special session marking the 56th anniversary of the founding of the Israeli parliament, Sharon rejected the demand for a referendum and stated that the Knesset was the sovereign authority to make fateful decisions.<sup>44</sup>

The legislative processes involving the Evacuation-Compensation Law were concluded in February 2005 and on the eighth of the month the wording of the law was approved by the Knesset's Finance Committee.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, it was also approved by the Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee. On February 16, the law was approved on second and third readings in the Knesset plenum by a majority of 59–40 (5 abstentions). In accordance with the law, the government approved the disengagement plan on February 20. The directive issued by the prime minister in the wake of the decision set July 20, 2005 as the date for the start of the evacuation process. However, following protests by rabbis against carrying out disengagement in the period known as "between the straits" (the three weeks of mourning that begin, in the Hebrew calendar, on the seventeenth of Tammuz and end on the ninth of Av, marking the destruction of both the first and second Temples), the starting date was changed to August 15.

### THE DISENGAGEMENT PLAN AS A CHANGE OF ISRAELI POLICY

The disengagement plan was fraught with a broad range of meanings and implications that were mutually complementary yet also mutually contradictory. On the one hand, it adapted conflict management strategy to the military-strategic reality that developed during the



years of the confrontation with the Palestinians, following the failure of other strategies. From this point of view, it could be seen purely as a security plan. On the other hand, it was a salient political plan, a revolutionary attempt to set a different order of priorities, for the first time since 1967, concerning the fate of Gaza, and part of the territories in Samaria, based on the assessment that Israel will not be able to retain control of all the territories. The plan was presented, on the one hand, as a tactical attempt to gain time, freeze the process, and moderate the international pressure on Israel; and also as a strategic move that was intended to break the political deadlock. The plan was perceived as a further adaptive policy process and not necessarily as concrete learning. At the same time it could also be seen as the outcome of a protracted and painful learning process, manifested in a dramatic change of beliefs or of the importance attached to them. Furthermore, although the disengagement was described as a unilateral strategy by which Israel would be able to manage the conflict more efficiently, it was also said to be a strategy bearing the potential for joint conflict management and perhaps also as an initial step toward the conflict's resolution. Although there were no clear resolutions to these contradictions in the plan itself or in the statements made about it, they would appear to stem primarily from the duality entailed in its very presentation, the uncertainty about its future, and the need to ensure that it gained domestic and international legitimization.

The prime minister's decision to initiate the disengagement as a conflict management strategy, without an agreement with the Palestinians, was presented as a default option after Sharon became convinced that not to disengage would be more dangerous. Alternate strategies for managing the conflict that were adopted since the start of the confrontation had been exhausted and failed in their attempt to end the violence, though they reduced the suicide bombings and the number of Israeli casualties substantially. Overall, the disengagement was presented more as purely a security strategy, aimed at minimizing losses and risks, than a strategy geared to the renewal of the political process. It was intended to moderate the conflict with the Palestinians, at least in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, by reducing the friction with the Palestinian population. The removal of the Jewish settlers from those areas was also meant to diminish the friction, as there would no longer be any need for the army to protect and defend Israelis there. In addition, the disengagement was described as the end of the occupation in the Gaza Strip, thus freeing Israel from any further responsibility for the population there.

The presentation of the disengagement plan as having purely a security character indicated that its aim was to facilitate Israel's security deployment for managing the confrontation in the present or the future. Together with the construction of the fence, the disengagement was an attempt to develop a more defensively oriented strategy, in the hope of improving the country's security situation. However, it was not clear how the disengagement would accomplish this in the absence of an agreement or coordination with the Palestinians. Although the Israeli departure from the Gaza Strip and from northern Samaria was likely to reduce the friction with the Palestinian population in those regions, it could not necessarily ensure security stability there or in the rest of Judea and Samaria. Moreover, because the disengagement was only a partial plan that excluded most of Judea and Samaria, it could not bring about a substantive change in the management of the conflict there, should the Palestinians shift the bulk of their violent activity to those areas.

The disengagement initiative was also perceived as a move that undermined the organizing logic of the Palestinians' strategy and was intended to exact a price for their violence by means of unilateral steps that were coordinated with and received the blessings of the United States. The disengagement plan was intended as well to force the Palestinians to demonstrate the seriousness of their intentions and to assume responsibility at least for the conduct of life in the Gaza Strip.<sup>46</sup>

The presentation of the disengagement as purely a security plan, with the emphasis that it was not a political plan, was both incorrect and misleading, as it ignored both the plan's rationale and its goals. The disengagement was unquestionably also a political plan by its very definition. It was described explicitly as a means to break the deadlock or the political trap in which Israel found itself. In the absence of an Israeli initiative, international pressure on Israel could have been expected to intensify in order to break the stalemate, as it was viewed by the international community, and to confront Israel with worse political options. The disengagement was presented as a tactical political step intended to thwart negative international political initiatives and to freeze a political process that would bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state under conditions of continued terrorism.

Beyond this, the disengagement plan, which included the evacuation of all the Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and four settlements in northern Samaria, was a policy revolution. For the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and even in the Israeli-Arab

conflict, Israel adopted a strategy that incorporated a territorial withdrawal and the evacuation of settlements without a peace process and without the guarantee of a quid pro quo. Even though this strategy was based on the view that there was no Palestinian partner for a political move, its adoption constituted a significant conceptual shift by the political echelon. It was a strategy that showed that Israel has despaired of the possibility of joint management of the conflict with the Palestinians and of the possibility of promoting political-diplomatic moves, notably the Bush plan and the Road Map. The new strategy, was far-reaching, not only for the management of the conflict with the Palestinians but also for the possible resolution of the conflict.

The disengagement was clear testimony that Sharon has internalized the formula of “two states for two nations,” due to demographic fears. In the absence of this option, Israel would find itself facing a situation of one state for two nations, which appeared to be a worse alternative. The demographic fear obliged a reassessment of Israel’s control of the whole of the Gaza Strip and Judea-Samaria. For the first time since 1967, the plan embodied a different order of priorities with regard to Israel’s control of the territories. The basic assumption was that in the present conditions Israel could not continue to hold all the territories and all the settlements and that it was necessary to forgo some of them in order not to lose the rest. The coordination of the disengagement with the United States, as manifested in Washington’s adoption of the plan and Bush’s letter of guarantees (April 14, 2004), was intended to ensure U.S. support not only for the plan but equally for its implicit new territorial arrangement.

Sharon’s disengagement plan could also be seen as the outcome of a learning process. The cardinal expression of this process was the significant change in Israeli beliefs or the change in the importance that was attached to them.<sup>47</sup> The disengagement was not only an unprecedented event in Israel’s history of managing the conflict; it was also a meaningful change in basic principles of Israel’s—and Sharon’s—foreign and security policy in regard to three traditional territorial principles: the principle of territory as a security asset, the principle of territory for its settlement value, and the principle of territory as a bargaining card.

The change in the principle of territory as a security asset reflected a retreat from a conception that developed after the 1967 war, to the effect that territory possesses high security value by providing strategic depth that enables better defense of Israel’s territory. Indeed, Gush Katif was created in order to establish a territorial buffer between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, especially after the signing of the

Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty in 1979 and the subsequent Israeli withdrawal from Sinai in 1982.

The change in the principle of territory for its settlement value was also striking, as it entailed a retreat from the conception that settlement enhances security, even sanctifies land and ensures it will remain under Israel's control. The evacuation of the settlements would set a precedent and would show that Israel has forsaken this principle and would be willing to evacuate settlements in the future as well.

The change in the principle of territory as a bargaining card was the most meaningful of all, as it attested to a retreat from the conception that Israel would neither withdraw from territory it conquered in 1967 nor evacuate settlements without a peace agreement. It also represented the forsaking of the "land for peace" formula that was the basis for the peace process in the Middle East and was adopted by Israel, the Arab states, the Palestinians, and the international community. The full withdrawal to the border of June 4, 1967, in the Gaza Strip also created a precedent with respect to Judea and Samaria. In addition, disengagement without an agreement or a *quid pro quo* was perceived by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other Palestinian entities as a capitulation to terrorism, because it was only in the wake of the violent confrontation that the plan was put forward. Disengagement without a political *quid pro quo* might also set a precedent for the future and indicate that because of the Palestinian violence the territories and the settlements in the Gaza Strip (including Gush Katif) and in northern Samaria became a burden rather than an asset and had to be disposed of even without an agreement.

The disengagement thus effected a revolutionary recasting of values and principles that had been sacrosanct in the Israeli society since 1967. The move fomented a particularly acute crisis among the opponents of disengagement, who in addition to their ideological objections saw no justification for the revolutionary change or its price and found no security or political benefit in it. From many points of view, the disengagement could be seen as the continuation of two earlier processes that tried to cope with the political and territorial reality that was created in the wake of the Six-Day War: the peace process with Egypt and the Oslo process. They too generated a sharp conflict of values, but in contrast to the earlier processes, which were intended to bring peace, the disengagement was not part of a declared peace process.<sup>48</sup> Yet even if the disengagement had been part of a peace process, the acute clash of principles could not have been averted: it would still put at risk values with consequences for territory and settlement that were viewed as untenable by the opponents of disengagement.

### THE DISENGAGEMENT PLAN AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MODIFY THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

The great advantage of the disengagement lay not only in the initiative per se but in its implementation, and in its ability to realize the goals that its conceivers and planners had set themselves: to bring about a significant moderation or cessation of the violent confrontation and to renew the political process. Any other outcome would constitute a genuine failure for Israel and prove that the high domestic price that would be exacted by the disengagement was not only unjustified but would generate a security deterioration. It was thus a vested Israeli interest to ensure that the disengagement would be implemented without violence and bring about security stability.

The relatively peaceful implementation of the disengagement, both in the Palestinian domain and in the Israeli domestic domain was a great success. Even though the Palestinians did not view the unilateral disengagement as the end-of-occupation, as a goodwill gesture, or even as an opportunity—but rather as a decision stemming from Israel's failure in the violent confrontation and subsequent flight from the field of battle,—they tacitly cooperated with Israel and enabled its peaceful implementation. By doing so, they not only prevented a severe escalation of the confrontation that might have prevented the implementation of the disengagement but also behaved as a responsible actor.

Palestinian acquiescence was indeed viewed by Israel and the international community as a positive development that could serve as an initial act of minimum confidence building, which was required for the continued moderation of the violent confrontation and indeed for its termination and the onset of the political process.

The fact that the disengagement was carried out almost peacefully in the domestic domain was significant too. Both the settlers and their supporters on one side, and the army and the police on the other side, restrained themselves throughout the implementation: this was a very positive development in the ability of the government to carry out a value-conflict decision without violence.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 2006, more than four months after the implementation of the disengagement, the disengagement had still failed to reach its military and political objectives. The unilateral process had not yet developed into a joint course of action for a significant moderation of the violent confrontation, its termination, or the renewal of the political process. No effective joint management

of the conflict has been developed yet, although the level of the confrontation has been reduced. Israel blames the Palestinian authority for its incompetence or unwillingness to do its best to eliminate the violence and refuses to resume the negotiations until the violence has ceased. Israel continues to argue that the Palestinians are not yet a partner even for a joint conflict management and certainly not for conflict resolution. The Palestinians on their side, blame Israel for triggering the violence and for not resuming the peace process. The argument that the Palestinians are not a viable partner is not less than a cover for Israel's refusal to renew the peace process. The disengagement, has, yet failed to trigger any breakthrough in the conflict and both sides remain in the old stalemate without a real hope for a change.

The break-up of the Likud Party by Sharon and the establishment of his own new party, Kadima, signaled that Sharon, who still believed that the Palestinians are not partners, would like to manage the conflict with the Palestinians by further unilateral disengagements. Sharon's disappearance from the Israeli political map because of his sickness has not ended his strategy of unilateral conflict management, and the Kadima Party adopted it as possible management option. Indeed, following the coming to power of the Hamas Movement, the prospects for conflict resolution or joint management have been reduced even more. It seems that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has again reached a new phase whose future it is still too early to evaluate.

## NOTES

1. This strategy can be understood through the "prospect theory" formulated by Tversky and Kahneman. In this connection, see: Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk," *Econometrica*, vol. 47 (1979), pp. 263–291; Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, "Advances in Prospect Theory: Cumulative Representation of Uncertainty," *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, vol. 5 (1992), pp. 297–323; Jack S. Levy, "Loss Aversion, Framing, and Bargaining: The Implications of Prospect Theory for International Conflict," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 17 (1996), pp. 179–195; Jack S. Levy, "Prospect Theory and the Cognitive-Rational Debate," in Nehemia Geva and Alex Mintz (eds.), *Decisionmaking on War and Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rinner, 1997), pp. 33–50.
2. On theoretical issues relating to entrapment, adaptation, and learning in conflict management and resolution, see: Christopher Mitchell, *Gestures of Conciliation: Factors Contributing to Successful Olive Branches* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 196–206; Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov,

- “Adaptation and Learning in Conflict Management, Reduction, and Resolution,” *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 8 (2003), pp. 19–37; Jack S. Levy, “Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield,” *International Organization*, vol. 48 (1994), pp. 279–312.
3. The most significant commitments of Bush refer to refugees and borders that both will be fixed according to Israel’s defense and settlement considerations. The United States expressed its unequivocal view that Palestinian refugees will not be allowed to return to Israel and that there will be no return to the 1967 borders, due to two principal considerations: Settlement blocs and implementing the idea of “defendable borders.” (For the full communiqué, see the Internet site of the Prime Minister’s Office, at: [www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/cabmeet/2004/04/Speeches7871.htm](http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/cabmeet/2004/04/Speeches7871.htm); the original letter from President Bush also appears on the site.)
  4. Under the plan, Israel was to continue to maintain a military presence along the borderline between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. Israel evacuated the area following reaching an agreement in which the latter committed to control. A latter agreement with the United States included the deployment of monitoring observes from European Union.
  5. Text from *Haaretz* English-language Internet site: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=432763&contrassID=1>.
  6. Ari Shavit, Interview with Dov Weissglas, *Haaretz Magazine*, October, 8, 2004.
  7. This subject is discussed extensively in the third chapter of this book. See also Raviv Drucker and Ofer Shelah, *Boomerang* (Tel Aviv: Keter, 2005) (Hebrew), pp. 335–348.
  8. See note 7.
  9. See the background to the May 28, 2004, disengagement plan, above.
  10. Ibid.
  11. See the discussion in the third chapter of this book, and Drucker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, pp. 356–357.
  12. See note 7.
  13. See the third chapter in this book; Drucker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, p. 355.
  14. Sharon statement in the Knesset (April 25, 2004), cited in *Haaretz* (April 26, 2004); Drucker and Shelah, *Boomerang*, pp. 358–359.
  15. Disengagement plan of May 28, 2004, clause I(C).
  16. See “Disengagement Plan—General Outline,” April 18, 2004 at the Israel Foreign Ministry site: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Disengagement+Plan+-+General+Outline.htm>.
  17. Nahum Barnea and Shimon Shiffer, interview with Prime Minister Sharon, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (September 15, 2004).
  18. “The disengagement plan is the preservative of the sequence principle. It is the bottle of formaldehyde within which you place the president’s

formula so that it will be preserved for a very lengthy period. The disengagement is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde that's necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians. . . . The disengagement plan makes it possible for Israel to park conveniently in an interim situation that distances us as far as possible from political pressure. It legitimizes our contention that there is no negotiating with the Palestinians." Dov Weissglas in the interview with Ari Shavit, *Haaretz Magazine* (October 8, 2004).

19. See note 17.
20. *Ibid*; and Shavit interview with Weissglas (October 8, 2004).
21. Barnea and Shiffer, Interview with Sharon, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (September 15, 2004).
22. "To breach boycott and siege"—from the statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Sharon (October 26, 2004).
23. *Ibid*.
24. Sharon statement in the Knesset, April 25, 2004, cited in *Haaretz* (April 26, 2004).
25. Aluf Ben, "The Plan Sharon Didn't Want to Hear," *Haaretz* (August, 29, 2002); for a similar report, see Amir Oren, "The Secret Study on the Withdrawal from Lebanon and the Hidden Future of the withdrawal from Gaza," *Haaretz* (January, 21, 2005).
26. Sharon, speaking at the Herzliya Conference, December 4, 2002; full text on Israel Foreign Ministry Internet site, at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches%20by%20Israeli%20leaders/2002/Speech%20by%20PM%20Sharon%20at%20the%20Herzliya%20Conference%20-%204>.
27. *Ibid*.
28. Full text at the Knesset Internet site: [www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/sharonspeech03.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/sharonspeech03.htm).
29. Full text (in Hebrew) at: [www.pmo.gov.il/nr/exeres/4292B05E-1DBC-4856-B476-06906A5A761E.htm](http://www.pmo.gov.il/nr/exeres/4292B05E-1DBC-4856-B476-06906A5A761E.htm).
30. Ilan Marsiani, "Sharon Talked about Moving Settlements," Y-Net, December 9, 2003: [www.ynet.co.il/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-2835320,00.html](http://www.ynet.co.il/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-2835320,00.html).
31. Full text at: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Archive/Speeches/2003/12/Speeches7635.htm>.
32. Yoel Marcus, "Planned Evacuation of 20 Settlements in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank within a Year or Two," *Haaretz*, February, 3, 2004.
33. For the full text of the letter, see <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/DisengagemePlan/bush1404.htm>.
34. See note 3.
35. Sharon initially examined the possibility of holding a national referendum on the subject, but following an examination of "the processes involved" in holding such a referendum, Sharon told the Knesset on April 22, 2004, "it appeared that it would be too time-consuming in the case of such a complex political step."



36. On May 14, 2004, the “Majority Camp,” a group uniting left-wing organizations and the Labor Party, sponsored a large demonstration of support in favor of Israel’s vacating the Gaza Strip. However, this period also saw an escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, and the losses sustained by the IDF further undermined Sharon’s political status and support for the disengagement plan.
37. All the public opinion polls showed that at least 60 percent of the public in Israel supported the plan. The June 2004 Peace Index of the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University noted, “The urge to separate from the Palestinians is also evident from the high support—68%—for Sharon’s plan of unilateral disengagement from Gaza.”
38. Quotations from the June 6, 2004, version of the plan. The original wording was that “the plan will lead to a better security situation, at least in the long term.”
39. The complete text of Resolution 1996 can be viewed on the Internet site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at: [www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Revised+Disengagement+Plan+6-June-2004.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Revised+Disengagement+Plan+6-June-2004.htm).
40. Nadav Shragai, Yuval Oz, and Zvi Zrahiya, “Religious Ruling: Precept to Settle the Land Overrides Army Orders,” at: <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/1/611894#section1> (in Hebrew).
41. Voting for the plan were, from the Likud: Prime Minister Sharon and Ministers Ehud Olmert, Benjamin Netanyahu, Silvan Shalom, Limor Livnat, Shaul Mofaz, Gideon Ezra, Tzipi Livni, and Meir Sheerit; and, from Shinui: Yosef Lapid, Avraham Poraz, Eliezer Zandberg, and Ilan Shalgi. Voting against, from the Likud, were Uzi Landau, Yisrael Katz, Danny Naveh, Natan Sharansky, and Tzachi Hanegbi, as well as Zevulun Orlev from the National Religious Party (*Haaretz*, October 25, 2004).
42. See (in Hebrew) [www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/PMSpeaks/speech1811.htm](http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/PMSpeaks/speech1811.htm).
43. On January 30, 2005, 150,000 people took part in a demonstration that called for a national referendum. On the refusal of the Binyamin Brigade officers, see Y-Net, “Reservist Officers in Binyamin Brigade: We Won’t Evacuate, Sharon has Lost Legitimacy,” at: <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3029163,00.html>.
44. Full text at: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speech250105.htm>.
45. The law was approved thanks to the support of M.K. Muhammad Barakeh (Hadash-Ta’al).
46. Interview with Eival Giladi in Ari Shavit, *Dividing the Land* (Tel Aviv: Keter, 2005) (Hebrew); Ari Shavit, Interview with Dov Weissglas, *Haaretz Magazine*, October 8, 2004.
47. For a discussion of learning as a source of policy change in a conflict, see Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, “Adaptation and Learning in Conflict Management, Reduction and Resolution,” *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, vol. 8 (2003), pp. 19–27; Jack S. Levy, “Loss Aversion,

- Framing Effects and International Conflict: Perspectives from Prospect Theory,” in Manus I. Midlarsky (ed.), *Handbook of War Studies II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), pp. 199–221.
48. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *The Transition from War to Peace: The Complexity of Decisionmaking—The Israeli Case* (Tel Aviv: Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, 1996) (Hebrew).

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