Institute for Palestine Studies

The Peace Process and the Politics of Conflict Resolution

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This analysis of the Middle East peace process argues that the applica-
tion of conventional Western conflict resolution mechanisms has at-
tempted to remove the justice principle from the Arab-Israeli conflict.
The author contends that the shift from a "closed agenda" determined
by core values to an "open agenda" where everything is open for bar-
gaining, and from a justice-driven "entitlement-benefits" matrix to a
utility-driven "cost-benefits" one, can only lead to issue transformation
and the progressive scaling back of goals. Acceptance of the adver-
sary's framework has reduced Arab negotiators to supplicants rather
than counterparts whose perceptions can be managed by the oppo-
nent. After examining Arab options, the author concludes that
whatever settlement emerges from the current process is bound to fail
because it cannot fulfill basic demand for justice, resulting in a redefi-
nition of the conflict in its broader religious and strategic horizons.

THE FANFARE SURROUNDING THE MIDDLE EAST "PEACE PROCESS" has obscured how
little it has been subjected to systematic and objective analysis. Nor have its
negotiation principles been sufficiently scrutinized to bring out the underly-
ing nature and structure of the process or its ability to deliver on its promises.
If a yet more violent and bitter future of the Arab-Israeli collision is to be
avoided, distinction must be made between conflict resolution as "the trans-
formation of relationships in a particular case by the solution of the
problems which led to the conflictual behavior in the first place" and "the
suppression or settlement of conflict by coercive means, or by bargaining
and negotiation in which relative power determines the outcome."[1] The dis-
tinction must be made, then, between resolution and settlement. For unless
the former obtains and incorporates the principle of *justice* (particularly in
the conflict's core Palestinian issue), the "peace process" cannot but collapse
into a reduced and unstable settlement arrangement.

PEACE TRANSFORMATION AND THE POLITICS OF INJUSTICE

The current "peace process" has attempted to circumvent, transform, and
conceptually obliterate the justice principle of the Arab-Israeli conflict by

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resorting to conventional Western conflict resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms have fundamentally altered the political agenda of the conflict through subterfuge and issue transformation. This development was facilitated by systemic and regional changes arising from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the second Gulf War and the destruction of Iraq, and American-Israeli military and scientific cooperation.

The application of Western "conflict resolution" mechanisms required the introduction of superordinate axes to change the region's regime of alliances. "Moderate" Arab and Jewish forces supporting "peace" were to be aligned against "radicals" or "extremists" opposing it in both societies. Arab leaders were to make common cause with Israel in fighting not extremism per se, but Islamic resistance to the concessional schemes being worked out—in other words, they were to fight their own so as to claim shared ground with Israel. Parallel to these changes in the political constellation was a shift from a "closed agenda" determined by immutable core values to an "open agenda" where everything is open for bargaining. Thus, instead of a closed agenda setting Islamists and existing regimes as natural allies against a common Israeli enemy, the new open agenda evolved into one of confronting the effects of injustice rather than its causes.

The negotiating strategy adopted by the Arabs after the Gulf War was articulated by President Husni Mubarak of Egypt, who in January 1989 proclaimed that he and other Arab leaders were supported in their search for peace by "the peace loving forces in Israel itself." He indicated that after all the sacrifices in previous wars with Israel, he "was not ready to take more risks."[2] This statement basically acknowledges the conflict to be one of costs rather than of entitlements, of pragmatism rather than rights, and conveys a willingness to play by the rules of the opponent. Expressing his rather limited understanding of the Vietnamese case as an example of a war that "was settled only through negotiations," Mubarak failed to relate the outcome to conditions on the ground. The Vietnamese were successful in imposing their will on a far more powerful adversary precisely because they had been willing to take risks, while the Arab party's *starting* point for negotiations was to concede entitlement claims. Since the Arabs were willing to relinquish what they had considered sacred since 1948, further pressure could be expected to lead them to concede other rights and Jerusalem as well—after all, the precedent had been set. This introduced structural transformations capable of changing the psychological distribution of power heavily in favor of Israel and altering the Arab position from one of defiance to one of virtual submission. As a settlement mechanism, the "peace process" has recast the substance of the conflict by steadily creating the appropriate environmental means-ends framework for such "concessions" to be made.

Negotiation constitutes the "art of the dialectics of wills that use force (and/or peaceful measures) to resolve their conflict."[3] Strategies and tactics, in addition to options and the available resources, constitute the pillars of negotiating dynamics. Their overriding principle is to take advantage to the

extent possible of the adversary's weaknesses and oversights. The configurative outcome determines the agreements reached and how they are implemented. In this sense, negotiation is a double-edged sword: it can resolve conflicts or exacerbate them. While it is impossible to predict with certainty the result of a negotiating process, a number of premises may indicate its direction. Thus, the final outcome of negotiations usually reflects the relative power configuration of the parties concerned; "where one ends up depends on where one starts";[4] and negotiating outcomes emanate not only from objective material conditions but, as importantly, from subjective psychological fortitude. The weaker side in particular must thus exhibit considerable firmness to establish a credibility threshold sufficient to make demands or uphold positions. Otherwise, in cases of asymmetrical power, diminished will inevitably translates into a one-sided open agenda in which—as far as the privileged party is concerned—agreement may not necessarily be preferred to nonagreement. Failure of will also allows for the unilateral alteration of the rules of the game and for redefining the norms that *all* actors must follow in their mutual relations.[5] Once this stage has been reached, negotiation substantively ceases, since, as Henry Kissinger noted, "the weak do not negotiate."[6]

Both the Americans and the Israelis believed that a step-by-step rather than a comprehensive negotiating approach would contribute to undermining the Arab consensus of "no talks, no recognition, no peace" that emerged at the Khartoum summit in August 1967. The purpose was to divide the Arab world, win de facto recognition of Israel, and put Israel in a stronger position when it came to negotiate directly with the front-line states and the Palestinians.[7] Israel's tactic was to bring the Arabs into "step by step, practical settlements and interim agreements as a gradual incremental process of 'interlocking' the rivals into positive arrangements which may make it more difficult for them to revert to open conflict and war."[8] Such tactics were consistent with the overall strategy of detaching Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict, isolating Syria, and, on the Palestinian front, pursuing a policy of cantonization in Gaza and the West Bank. Above all, the approach succeeded in breaking the necessary link between statecraft and war. Once all this had been achieved, Israel reversed its position, with the current prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, calling for "a package approach" that circumvents the agreements signed earlier.[9]

PEACE-JUSTICE DIALECTICS

Power relations based on considerations of might frequently offend a "sense of justice" and fuel the emotions of resentment and anger that ultimately lead to violence. Notions of injustice "as a reaction to a perceived discrepancy between entitlements and benefits" always remain an inherent risk factor.[10] "Peace" as the opposite of violence rather than as a reflection of justice is unlikely to overcome such concerns. Bereavements inflicted by the

West on the Arabs in general, and on the Palestinians in particular, have from
the outset characterized the conflict in Arab eyes as one of *entitlement*-bene-
fits (as opposed to the more pragmatic bargaining approach of *cost*-bene-
fits), meaning that it is the notion of rights that is the determining factor and
that whatever benefits derive from the conflict's resolution are secondary.
The Arab sense of injustice has triggered intense emotional responses that
cannot be quantified solely in tangible terms or reduced simply to an aver-
sion to loss. Phenomenologically, the sense of justice "engage(s) powerful
passions that have the effect of increasing the stridency of demands, amplify-
ing intransigence, reducing sensitivity to threats and value trade-offs, in-
creasing the willingness to run risks, and increasing the likelihood of violent
behavior."[11] This helps explain the violence associated with militant Muslim
organizations such as Hamas, Hizballah, and Islamic Jihad. Their acts are
largely the observable symptoms of the unobservable need to respond to
group insult with rage.[12]

Referring to the Islamist organizations as terrorist structures opposing
peace is part of an alternative discursive mechanism that seeks to eliminate
the entitlement-benefits discrepancy context in favor
of one based on cost-benefits, the former being
depicted as irrational and the latter as rational. But
historical experience shows that when basic entitle-
ments are at stake against overwhelming odds, *less*
rationality actually fares better than *more* rationality.
For instance, the Czechs' behavior with respect to
Nazi Germany's demands for their land was "too
rational" in the face of a military threat they believed
they could not win against in the long run.[13] In contrast, the Finns and the
North Vietnamese were less rational and more emotional, more determined
to fight against the overwhelming power of the Soviet Union and the United
States, respectively. Finland, while losing twice, earned respect and perhaps
made itself less attractive as a potential satellite. The North Vietnamese, of
course, ultimately prevailed,[14] winning a war in which they had lost virtually
all the battles. It hardly bears mentioning that, within the context of the U.S.-
constructed "peace" discourse, it is far easier to manipulate parties whose
calculating matrix drifts toward cost-benefit quantifications (the Czech op-
tion) than parties who are not prey to such calculations (the Finn or
Vietnamese option).

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The justice motive differs from aversion to loss both prescriptively and
extensively. Prescriptively, the desire to see justice done "though the earth
may perish" is a drive embedded in basic human values and is indifferent to
material valuations based on economy or self-interest. Extensively, the jus-
tice motive differs from gain-loss considerations in that it involves not what
people would like to have but what they consider their due, their entitle-
ments. People within the entitlement-benefits value matrix usually are will-
ing to incur a heavy price for potentially less useful things they consider

theirs as a matter of right and are willing to trade off or foreswear goods that they would like to have but to which they do not feel entitled. "The mode of reasoning involved in the defense of one's entitlements," therefore, "differs fundamentally from the mode of reasoning involved in the pursuit of other goods: it tends to be categorical and deontological rather than utilitarian."[15]

In substance, Israel, aided by American indifference if not complicity, attempted to reconcile the entitlement-benefits discrepancy not by meeting legitimate Palestinian demands but by transforming the rules in such a way that the Palestinian Authority (PA), led by Yasir Arafat, would increasingly act—if not actually believe—as if it had misconceived the scope and content of Palestinian entitlements.[16] As Yehoshafat Harkabi, former chief of Israeli military intelligence, pointed out: "Making the opponent uneasy and apologetic about his objective, is a first small step in the process of its erosion, inducing him to start discarding it."[17] Thus, recent years appear to have witnessed a progressive scaling back of Palestinian expectations. Indeed, with the exception of the highly skilled negotiator Hafiz al-Asad of Syria, a look at the negotiating patterns of Arab decision makers reveals a significant propensity to modify the values at stake in a fashion that ultimately challenges their own entitlements. Israel, on the other hand, continues to maintain its own constants and payoffs in terms of a unified Jerusalem under its control, possession of most of the West Bank (despite redeployment maneuvers), monopolized access to nuclear weapons, priority of Israeli security concerns over all other considerations, and eventual access to the water resources of the Nile and the Euphrates.[18]

Israel's delinking of security from changes on the ground in Jerusalem and the West Bank, and therefore from the political heart of the "peace process," reflects a further attempt to divest the purported Palestinian/Arab negotiating formula of its substance. During his August 1997 visit to the region in the wake of Hamas bombings in Jerusalem, U.S. envoy Dennis Ross sought further to entrench the Palestinian negotiator within this delinking structure. He called upon Israelis and Palestinians to work as partners against the "common threat" from militants, emphasizing that "security is something that serves Israeli interests and Palestinian interests."[19] Israeli security was thus to become the PA's objective, whether or not Palestinian demands for statehood could or would be met. In return for Arafat's resumption of security cooperation with Israel, Ross gave a vague promise of an upcoming broad U.S. peace initiative that supposedly would address Palestinians' complaints against Israel, including "some kind" of freeze on settlement expansion.[20] But when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited the region the following month, she responded to complaints that Israel was strengthening its grip on Jerusalem, expanding colonies, and leveling the homes of Palestinians by declaring that "there is no moral equivalent between killing people and building houses. . . : The Palestinian Authority must take unilateral steps and actions to root out the terrorist infrastructure."[21]

The problem with unilateral gestures, as Kissinger noted, is that they "re-move a key negotiating asset. In general, diplomats rarely pay for services already rendered." Moreover, he continued, they tempt the adversary "to drag out the negotiations in order to determine whether other unilateral ges-tures may be forthcoming."[22] Not only did Albright demand such unilateral gestures of the Palestinians, she refused to acknowledge any connection be-tween the militant acts of some Palestinian groups and the Israeli govern-ment's breaking of agreements and settlement expansion. Ross's promises to Arafat can be likened to Britain's World War I commitments to support inde-pendence for Arabs if they joined the war effort against Ottoman Turkey.

Arafat's relationship with Islamist groups, however, is too complex to en-able him to accede to U.S.-Israeli demands for a crackdown on their infra-structure, at least not to the extent desired. For much as Arafat would like to clamp down on the Islamists, he knows that destroying them could mean political suicide. Eradicating Hamas and Islamic Jihad would diminish his usefulness as a negotiator: the Islamists are his last trump card. This is where the inherent contradictions of a common security framework can be felt most strongly. While the Israelis would like to see Islamic opposition elimi-nated totally, Arafat cannot without jeopardizing his own survival do more than contain and weaken them. Thus, the PA and Israel cannot pursue a *com-mon* security policy, but only a *parallel* one. Arafat's dilemma is that this situation projects him simultaneously as a collaborator (to the Islamists, as well as to some secular nationalists) and as an ineffective and uncooperative leader (to the Americans and Israelis). The result is a concessionary outcome that can lead only to the erosion of the PA's legitimacy, forcing it to control its own people by increasingly coercive measures.[23]

However much Israelis may loathe Arafat, he represents for them the lesser of evils and a kind of safety valve. His rumblings about not being dictated to by Israel cannot conceal that his real concern is fear of generating sympathy for Islamic militants by acquiescing in Israeli demands. Moreover, the concentration of power in Arafat's hands, his personal control of the funds provided by international donors, his virtual lack of accountability, and his efforts to weaken all other forces and social institutions—in short, the fact that he has become the PA in all but name[24]—significantly consolidates Israel's position. Thus, and notwithstanding the Islamist militants, Israel by controlling the "chief" can control the "tribe." In this respect, the PA, though short of being a state, is not an aberration but a typical regional player.

PEACE CONCESSIONS AND THE STRATEGY OF DEFEAT

Empirical studies regarding winners and losers in negotiations indicate that the parties with higher aspiration levels actually get more. Opponents with high aspirations, irrespective of their skill or power, ended up as win-ners in every case where they opposed low aspirants. Furthermore, negotia-tors who made the first compromise ended up the losers in the final

outcome.[25] In the light of such findings, it follows that the strategic conces-
sions initiated by the late President Anwar Sadat through the Camp David
regime, and in whose footsteps a number of other Arab leaders have fol-
lowed, can only lead to disastrous consequences for the Arab world. The
pattern of concessions that inevitably results when one party virtually de-
clares itself desperate to opt out of confrontation while the other remains
determined can never be just, for several reasons.

First, concessions are fair only as long as the negotiators have no need to
revise their original expectations about the overall shape of the ultimate
agreement or about their strategic goals of entitlement.[26] Leaving aside the
downgrading of Palestinian expectations that preceded Oslo, the Oslo ac-
cords allowed the Palestinian negotiator to anticipate a Palestinian state cov-
ering most of the West Bank and Gaza at the end of the process. Since then,
the PA appears to have been reduced by the negotiating pattern it has fol-
lowed to nothing more than an auxiliary Israeli security structure. Indeed,
the entire Arab world has undergone an extraordinary scaling back of goals.
As Mubarak's chief political adviser Osama Baz remarked, the conflict be-
tween the Arabs and Israel is now over boundaries and no longer over
Israel's existence.[27] (In contrast, former Israeli chief of staff Raphael Eitan
declared the conflict to be "civilizational.")

Second, negotiation requires that parties be governed by the same rules,
with neither side having the right to alter them unilaterally. Given that nego-
tiation is a matter of finding the proper formula as a referent principle and
then implementing detail,[28] if one party can change the negotiating formula
at will and the other is constrained by it—that is, if the parties cease to have
equal stalemating power—then no mechanism of joint decision making ex-
ists and the talks no longer constitute negotiations. It is thus that Israel has
unilaterally altered the formula from land for peace, as was agreed at the
October 1991 Madrid conference, to peace for peace or security for peace.
This change, which fundamentally reorders the process in Israel's image, be-
gan under the Labor government, albeit less overtly;[29] to personalize the is-
sue by presenting it as a Netanyahu initiative, as many Arabs tend to do,
rather than as a matter of Israeli strategy is to blur the deeper factors, al-
lowing the optionless Arab leaders to buy time by deluding themselves that a
return of Labor will set things right.

Finally, while any concessions made by the Israeli side can only come
from gains acquired at the expense of the Arab side, reciprocal concessions
by the Arabs must inevitably come out of their own capital. A framework of
mutual concessions, while in appearance procedurally fair, hides a substan-
tive injustice inflicted on one negotiating party. Whatever justifications are
cited for this state of affairs—the balance of power, the situation on the
ground, the fact that Israel won the land militarily—the negotiating exercise
is essentially reduced to the victor's imposing its will on the vanquished. This
situation invites terms of surrender rather than the conciliation that comes
from conflict resolution.

The Palestinian leader thus committed a serious strategic mistake by sign-
ing interim agreements that deferred to a later stage such fundamental issues
as Jerusalem, refugees, and Jewish colonies—in other words, by signing
agreements emphasizing the process of interaction rather than the content of
the negotiating positions.[30] Such a blunder was a reflection of the Arab/Pal-
estinian negotiators' inability to rank priorities of national interests and goals,
as well as their confusion of means and ends. Within the framework of a
confidence-building process (as opposed to one based on content), priority
goes to current and ad hoc problems of whatever magnitude at the expense
of long-term strategic considerations, in essence resulting in a policy that
gives equal weight to all issues. Indeed, this process-orientated framework
actually leads to a confusion of priorities, and if priorities are confused, no
long-term national interest strategy can be focused upon, nor decisions
about the channeling of resources made. Process becomes an end in itself
rather than the means it is supposed to be.

This loss of strategic balance is what made it possible for Israel to "screw"
the Palestinians at Oslo II, to use Labor leader Shimon Peres's frank expres-
sion.[31] Indeed, whatever Western conflict management framework is uti-
lized, the Arabs will lose every time they agree to be placed in an external
rule structure. As Carl Schmitt observed, if a people permits another party to
determine on its behalf the distinction of friend and enemy, "then it is no
longer a politically free people and is absorbed into another political
system."[32]

In ending the intifada and signing the Oslo accords, Arafat gave up two of
his most important trump cards without receiving anything of substance in
return. His error further absolved the Arab and other states of any embarrass-
ment that might have prevented them from normalizing relations with Israel,
effectively bolstering its regional and international status and ending its iso-
lation. In so doing, the PLO squandered the very limited leverage it had and
placed itself in its enemy's grip, or at best in that of its American ally (in
much the same fashion, though under far worse conditions, as Egypt had
done earlier). Nothing in the PA's negotiating pattern would seem to allow
for the realization of its rights and demands for statehood, even as parallel
expectations on the broader Arab front continue to decrease in light of the
adversary's initiative dynamics.

ARAB OPTIONS

The perennial legitimacy crisis and personalized rule of the Arab regimes
inevitably affect their negotiating performance and conflict management
competence. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, a key figure in the negotiations that led
to the Camp David accords, wrote in his memoirs that the Egyptian delega-
tion not only did not know how to prepare for the coming negotiations, but
did not even know the general strategy upon which to base its moves. "It
dallied my hopes that inspiration would come to us when we arrived at

Camp David," he wrote in a perhaps unwitting but devastating indictment of the Egyptian negotiating pattern.[33] Given that Sadat was at a loss as to what step to take after his visit to Jerusalem, he "put himself completely into American hands," willing "to take Carter's word that a given step was necessary" and unable, unlike the U.S. president, "to separate business from friendship."[34] The result was a diplomatic framework that included not only traditional negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration, but also the presumably more advanced methods of conflict resolution that emphasized not the content of the negotiating positions but the process of interaction—confidence building, education for mutual understanding, and the pursuit of superordinate goals, including economic incentives.[35] The two overlapping approaches compromised core issues, leading Sadat to sacrifice Arab strategic entitlements in favor of short-term Egyptian territorial and financial gains.

The tragedy is that the PA seems to be following the same pattern of concessions, but without the assets and leverage that Egypt possessed. For Egypt, as the most powerful Arab country, could offer the Israeli side the strategic concession of dropping out of the conflict equation and in return could be rewarded with territorial gains (even if at the cost of a loss of sovereignty and self-respect and diminished regional status). The Camp David accords, in other words, constituted the high point of the peace strategy that could only be followed by the reversal of opposites: the more peace is pursued, the fewer the returns, until a point is reached where there are only negative results, which is what we are witnessing today. This essentially constitutes the dynamics of the peace dialectics.

Given the current situation, the Arab negotiators have three main options. First, they can accept whatever is being "offered" or imposed, seeking the best conditions under the circumstances. Second, they can stall for time, hoping for a change in circumstance that will permit reversion to the land-for-peace formula. Finally, they can transform the negotiating rules by introducing their own formula and redefining the conflict in terms of its broader religious and strategic horizons, while working actively toward the construction of new regional and systemic alliances.

In the short run, it is the first option that appears the most likely to be adopted. Mubarak's remark to Netanyahu that war is "an old (fashioned) matter . . . and will not solve any cause"[36] boils down to a peace-for-peace formula. Even when the Arab League raised the threat of economic boycott following Israel's decision to build a new colony on Jabal Abu Ghunaym (Har Homa) in occupied East Jerusalem, it was as a "recommendation" rather than a commitment. Both Egypt and Jordan declined associated calls for the Arabs to freeze their normalization of relations with Israel on the grounds that they were tied to peace agreements that prevented them from doing so.

Whatever their actual policies, the Arab states continue to call for a return to land for peace. This formula involves conditionality, for implicit in the land-for-peace configuration is a presumed veto: if no land is returned, there will be no peace. But to what extent can the Arabs credibly call for obser-

vance of the formula? The June 1996 Arab summit in Cairo announced peace as a "strategic choice." Such a declaration de facto renders land a residual component. If neither war nor economic and diplomatic sanctions are options, then the Madrid formula (with its inherent veto or conditionality) is in essence dissolved. The summit thus effectively reduced the formula to peace for peace, in line with Mubarak's remark. But nations that attempt to present themselves as unfailingly peaceful can hope to obtain little by way of suasion from any forces they may have.[37] Nor can the veto capability come from Islamist bombings: sporadic violence is not the same thing as war capability and can be dealt with at the local security level rather than within the broader context of the "peace process."

In sum, lacking control over their concessional behavior, the Arab decision makers have contributed to the elimination of the second option altogether even while continuing to demand its implementation. This being the case, they can only act within the confines of an American-Israeli security framework, tilting the balances heavily in favor of the first option. Netanyahu's intransigence and disregard for the signed agreements do not merely reflect his commitment to his electoral promises, his common sense negotiation calculations, and his firm grasp of the evolving situation; they are also consistent with Israeli strategy and beliefs, albeit without Labor's finesse and fig-leaf offers. And if the Arab negotiators themselves are willing to undermine their entitlements, then it is hardly surprising that their opponent on his own does not revert to the less favorable linkage of land for peace.

THE THIRD OPTION

In what amounts to a vicious circle, capitulationism only fuels bitterness, resentment, and, ultimately, the mobilization of the forces of indigenous resistance. This can be expected, even if in the long run, to bring forth option three.

The Palestinian core of the Arab-Israeli conflict obscured the underlying religious and strategic foundations of conflicting wills. As long as the focus was on the presumed confrontation between two nationalisms, Jewish and Palestinian, over the same piece of land, these more inherent contradictions remained in the background. But with the gradual collapse of nationalistic justifications and with the issue of Jerusalem coming to the fore, the Arab-Israeli conflict is being reduced to its religiostrategic underpinnings—a linkage emerging from the fact that "a nation's interest derives from its identity."[38]

Since Jerusalem is a religious cause, the clash over it cannot be secularized—that is, it cannot become a solely political issue. To the extent that religion is entitlement categorical, the city cannot be the object of compromise. This being the case, "peace" outcomes and legalities will remain marginal, applicable in the domain of politics as long as the coercive framework that produced them continues in place. In the realm of religion, however, such

constraints may not function as a long-term viable deterrent and indeed are more likely to promote conflict insofar as they frustrate the pursuit of entitlements, identity, and basic values.[39]

In the Arab/Islamic world, Islamist groups are driven mainly by the justice motive, which is value-oriented (entitlement-benefits), while actors committed to the "peace process" tend to be more utility-oriented (cost-benefits). This poses an acute problem for the application of Western conflict resolution mechanisms in an Islamic context. First, militant Islamist groups and Muslims in general continue, as a matter of faith and values, to reject the enemy irrespective of what takes place at the political level. Second, the contending parties to the conflict do not see anything in common with one another, nor is there desire to coexist.[40] Third, while the Palestinian issue is being transformed through the peace strategy, it is also being countertransformed into a core religious principle—a substantive change that could foreshadow a future Islamic-Jewish conflict. Whatever the outcome of the "peace process" in the political domain, it is unlikely to resolve the broader confrontation that is now slowly but ominously taking shape.

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External mechanisms seeking artificially to construct common goals or interests between the adversaries do not apply in the case of Jerusalem and would be seen as yet another attempt to impose alien structures. This is especially true when conventional Western conflict resolution principles hold that "peacemaking" is not possible until conflicts have "ripened," that is, until costs have escalated to the point where parties are prepared to settle.[41] War may be condemned, but "sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police, and measures to assure peace remain."[42] The harvest in the Arab/Islamic world is there to see: Egypt prostrate and ineffectual; Syria isolated and pressured; Jordan, an American-Israeli vassal; Palestinians cantonized; Iraq destroyed; Libya and Sudan embargoed; the Arabian peninsula virtually occupied; Algeria in the grip of a bloodbath; Iran and militant Islamist groups to be contained or crushed. On the other side is a robust Jewish state with a nuclear capability and militarily far more powerful than all its potential adversaries combined.

It has been said that the second Gulf War was an issue-transforming event that caused the Arabs to recognize "not only that they could not fight Israel but that many of them had no *interest* in doing so."[43] While the majority of the Arab people—as distinct from their largely delegitimized rulers—may not share this conclusion, it is one that perception-altering mechanisms seek to induce.[44] Within such a reconstruction of the regional order, Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument can be perceived not simply as an intellectual exercise to be supported or refuted at the analytical level, but as the theoretical cover for a policy in the actual process of implementation. This policy attempts to create the ripe environmental conditions for the es-

tablishment of "peace" while reconstructing the Muslim world and crushing grass-roots Islamist groups. However, to the extent that Islam is an active value that determines the subjective (and where possible the objective) nature of the conflict, it constitutes an organizational countermechanism that will continue to block the alteration of the conflict structure. In Arab and Muslim eyes, and despite American-Israeli efforts to convince them otherwise, this conflict is a zero-sum game, for if American-Israeli "peace" is to constitute the region's new interest, this will require the transformation of the region's identity.

The fact that Islam ontologically is entitlement-driven (focusing on content) while the "peace process" epistemologically is cost-articulated (focusing on process) sets them on incommensurable planes of interaction. Harmonizing thought systems, however, requires that they be positioned within the same logical framework.[45] To harmonize the "thought logic" of the Arab/Muslim world with that of the "peace" strategy requires that counterthoughts be peripheralized and if necessary crushed. What is at stake consequently is no longer the politico-national problem of usurpation of land but rather the very extraction of a nation's religio-national and historical heritage. An Arab negotiator whose thought is reconstructed within the framework of his adversary's is essentially reduced to a supplicant rather than a counterpart. His will and perceptions of reality continue to be managed and altered by the opponent, with any settlement likely to hinge on contingent power relations. Herein lies the essence of the so-called "civilizational clash" and its camouflaged link to the "peace process."

In focusing on the new Islamic enemy, the United States has targeted what it calls "terrorist" groups, aiming, with the collaboration of client regimes and with varying degrees of success, to neutralize and marginalize them. Any Islamist oppositional group is thus depicted as a "disturber of peace . . . [and] designated to be an outlaw of humanity."[46] While it may be feasible to crush such groups through the overwhelming power of the state and/or external assistance, this does not solve the problem as long as the environmental conditions leading to their emergence remain in place and regenerate. Nor does their suppression necessarily lead to the containment of Islamic dynamism, since the vitality of Islam is not constrained by, or dependent upon, their existence. Finally, even though many of those groups could be (or have been) marginalized, they nevertheless have succeeded in scoring a major strategic victory by mainstreaming Islam in public life and society at large. Islamic symbols penetrate the society and the political discourse of the Muslim world more than ever, and, in a dialectical fashion, the retreat of political Islam has been accomplished by the advancement of Islam as a social condition.[47] Neutralizing these subtle undercurrents would require not only crushing the militants, but in effect snuffing out the value system on which their motivations are based. In other words, the system would have to be attacked in its basic values and not merely its political agenda.

CONCLUSION

Defining Islam as the new enemy after the collapse of communism constitutes a strategic decision foreshadowing the American-Israeli project of redrawing the political map of the Arab world. The expectation among many Muslims that this project will target not only marginalized Islamist groups or Muslim regimes but, more broadly, mainstream Islam has slowly introduced a subtle messianic streak into their conflict perceptions and contributed to raising forebodings of upcoming apocalyptic events.

As these interest-identity adverse linkages become increasingly transparent, and as contiguous Arab countries, especially Egypt, gradually recognize once more that Israel is not a threat only to the Palestinians, the conflict will continue to change in proportion to the intensity of those feelings. That Islam is being politicized is not, therefore, simply a matter of a religious doctrine that does not allow for the separation of religion and politics, but more fundamentally a matter of justice and strategic considerations as well. In its call to arms, Islam is not about violence and extremism; rather, it is about the legitimate and unequivocal right to self-defense. Threats to security, identity, and religious values cannot be contained by suppression or by mere settlement arrangements. By the same token, the "peace" being offered is not about negotiations and cooperation but about the destruction of values. The "peace process" is saying that motives at the very core of human needs will have to be neutralized.

Western conflict resolution mechanisms do not seem well-equipped to cope with these unique characteristics of present and future Arab-Israeli antagonisms. Available theoretical constructs have externalized religious beliefs as determining components, reducing them to culturally alterable variables. Religious convictions, however, and especially Muslim views of the Jewish/Zionist adversary, remain fixed conflict parameters. Conflict theory's reaction has been to reject such factors as a source of cognitive dissonance and to dismiss religion as a matter of unwelcome complexity that falls largely outside its ken. Meanwhile, these conflict theories have failed to address crucial questions as to whether "the weak have the right to make a different set of rules for themselves."[48] More importantly, they have failed to cope with the Israeli-Palestinian showdown as one facet of a multidimensional conflict in which religion is a parameter, not a variable. The fear that the Arab/Muslim world will go "Islamist" reflects the fear that Western settlement mechanisms do not and cannot meet the basic human needs of the region's people.

NOTES

1. John Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1990), p. 3.

2. "President Hosni Mubarak: The Inevitability of Peace (21 January 1989)," in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, 5th ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), pp. 546–47.

3. Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 241.

4. Howard Raiffa, *The Art and Science of Negotiation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 215.

5. Raimo Väyrynen, ed., *New Directions in Conflict Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp. 4–5.

6. Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (New York: Verso, 1995), p. 237.

7. Michael Field, *Inside the Arab World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 384.

8. Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Strategies and Israel's Response* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 103.

9. Interview, *Newsweek*, 23 June 1997, p. 39.

10. Melvin J. Lerner, "The Justice Motive in Human Relations," in Melvin J. Lerner and Sally C. Lerner, eds., *The Justice Motive in Social Behavior: Adapting to Times of Scarcity and Change* (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), pp. 12–13.

11. David A. Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 20.

12. John W. Burton, *Global Conflict* (London: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1984), p. 13.

13. Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), p. 93.

14. Ibid.

15. Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War*, pp. 20–21.

16. Ibid., p. 20.

17. Harkabi, *Arab Strategies*, p. 88.

18. In *Report of a Study Group Convened by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, it was proposed that "regional water plans would be an important component of the bilateral and multilateral accords. The opportunity to increase access to water would serve as one of the *inducements* for Israel to negotiate security accords with its neighbors. Projects to be given high priority would include the Unity Dam on the Yarmouk River involving Jordan, Syria and Israel, pipelines for water from the Litani River in Lebanon and from Turkey or Egypt, and a joint Jordan-Israel desalinization plant in Eilat/ Aqaba." The report is in Ann M. Lesch, *Transition to Palestinian Self-Government* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 158. Note the pattern of concessions required of the Arabs in order for Israel to *accept* negotiating security accords with them, Israeli security being paramount. Even before the advent of Netanyahu, "security for peace" rather than "land for peace" was essentially what was being demanded.

19. Howard Goller, *Washington Post*, 12 August 1997.

20. Samar Assad, *Los Angeles Times*, 12 August 1997.

21. Barry Schweid, *Washington Post*, 10 September 1997.

22. Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), pp. 467 and 488.

23. See further Glenn E. Robinson, "The Growing Authoritarianism of the Arafat Regime," *Survival* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 54.

24. Ibid., 45.

25. Chester L. Karrass, *The Negotiating Game* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), pp. 17–19.

26. Otomar J. Bartos, "Simple Model of Negotiation" in I. William Zartman, ed., *The Negotiation Process* (London: Sage Publications, 1978), p. 22.

27. *Kayhan al-Arabi*, 17 March 1998, p. 11.

28. I. William Zartman, "Negotiation as a Joint Decision-Making Process," in Zartman, ed., *The Negotiation Process*, pp. 76–77.

29. According to Benjamin Netanyahu, Yitzhak Rabin, the assassinated Labor party leader and former prime minister, "was very clear that there were no limitations whatsoever on Israeli construction in Jerusalem. Rabin was the one who authorized the building of Har Homa (Jabal Ghoneim settlement)," Interview, *Newsweek*, 23 June 1997, p. 39.

30. Commenting on the result, and perhaps justifying Netanyahu's position and his own call for *redesigning* the Oslo agreements, Kissinger stated that any analogy to the early stages of the peace process was illusory. As he put it "in the earlier negotiation, step-by-step progress relieved tensions and built confidence. On the West Bank, the opposite was the case. Both sides had jumped into the 'peace process' without having clarified workable objectives and expected to wrest that clarity from the process itself. Instead, it has compounded their perplexities. This was no accident. Clearly, Arafat was led to believe by Israeli, American and European interlocutors that the final

destination was at least the '67 borders and recognition of a Palestinian statehood. But that ignored the vast difference in the negotiations between Israel and the PLO compared with those between Israel and the neighboring Arab states." Henry Kissinger, "The Oslo Piecemeal Process," *Washington Post*, 24 August 1997.

31. As quoted by Noam Chomsky, "Eastern Exposure: Misrepresenting the Peace Process," *Village Voice*, 6 February 1996, p. 6.

32. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976), p. 49.

33. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Tariq Misr ila al-Quds* [Egypt's road to Jerusalem], (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Translation and Publication, 1997), p. 137. Author's translation.

34. Raymond Cohen, *Negotiating Across Cultures* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), pp. 55–56. On the Egyptian-U.S. relationship, Cohen writes (p. 56) that rarely "can a patron-client relationship have achieved such pronounced expression."

35. Luc Reychler, "The Art of Conflict Prevention: Theory and Practice," in Werner Bauwens and Luc Reychler, ed., *The Art of Conflict Prevention* (London: Brassey's, 1994), pp. 5–7. See also Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), as a representative of the Harvard Negotiations Project.

36. Interview with Husni Mubarak. *Al-Hawadeth*, 21–27 February 1997, p. 21.

37. Luttwak, *Strategy*, p. 194.

38. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Erosion of American National Interests," *Foreign Affairs* 5, no. 75 (Sept.–Oct. 1997), p. 1.

39. Burton, *Global Conflict*, pp. 137–38.

40. Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Conflict Resolution in an Islamic Context," *Peace and Change* 21, no. 1 (January 1996), pp. 33–34.

41. Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, p. 88.

42. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 79.

43. Field, *Inside the Arab World*, p. 385. Emphasis added.

44. Commenting on several polls in the Arab world related to this matter, Edward Said observed: "In every instance public opinion has in fact expressed no enthusiasm for normalization with Israel. On mass level this suggests that the sense of defeat is not quite as widespread and prostrate as official policy and the logic of capitulationist intellectuals would have us believe." See his *Peace and its Discontents* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 134.

45. Burton, *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention*, p. 89.

46. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 79.

47. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 78.

48. George Orwell, *A Collection of Essays* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), p. 40.