

Unrealized Security: The Shortcomings Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process

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Introduction

In the post Intifada era, Palestinians continually struggle with the elusive prospect of future government, Islamic revivalism, entrenched and increasing Israeli settlements and militarism, and the hollow promises of an on going peace process.[1] The very nature and subsequent stagnation of the peace process resulted in the political polarization of Palestinians into two camps: Islamist and secularist. In addition, Palestinians now find themselves in an uncertain political condition, whereby, on the one hand future prospects of democratic governance still remain, albeit vaguely, while on the other hand, security remains threatened by an intransigent Israeli occupation through “redeployment” and by a PLO leadership vacillating between democratic rule and an authoritarian nightmare.[2] In this essay will assess the political dangers involved in the status quo, zero sum construction of security on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In addition, I will examine whether the notion of exclusive statehood is even conceivable given the present circumstances of mutual interdependence between the two camps and the uncertain future of Palestinian self-determination. In addition, I will analyze the threats to peace and stability from two sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including the Israeli occupation and general foreign policy toward the Occupied Territories and a Palestinian administration torn between elected government and a leadership concerned with maintaining political power throughout an uncertain peace process.[3] I will frame the case of the current security dilemma between by drawing upon the works devised by Barry Buzan et. al. By reframing Palestinian and Israeli demands for security into a context of

conflict resolution with an emphasis on universal security, instead of prevention, we may begin to examine how genuine security continues to elude the efforts of the current peace process and rethink alternatives.[4]

Currently, Palestinians find themselves in a highly complex and precarious situation and the focus of the global community as they struggle with statelessness, political turmoil, economic decay, national identity, and social upheaval. Only years earlier, Palestinians of the Occupied Territories coalesced to form a common struggle in order to “shake off” the Israeli occupation through the Intifada, which lasted from 1987 until the Oslo peace accords of 1993.[5] At the first Oslo negotiations, Israel recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the administrative body of Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank and in return, the PLO officially recognized Israel’s “right to exist.” Moreover, under provisions of the initial peace accords, Israeli forces partially withdrew from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho and into “security zones” around Palestinian territories. Subsequently, the PLO as “Chief Authority” gained limited administrative authority over Jericho and Gaza in May 1994.[6] During the January 1996 elections, Palestinians elected eighty-eight members to the Majlis (legislature) and Yassir Arafat as Ra’es (leader) of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Currently, the Majlis and Ra’es form a collective leadership and represent Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza. One year before the Palestinian elections, the PA and Israeli government reached a second Oslo agreement, whereby Israel forfeited to the PA most administrative duties of all West Bank towns.

Incomplete Promises

While PLO and Israeli officials met to hammer out the second agreement in 1995, the first agreement intrinsically possessed so many ambiguities that full realization was nearly impossible. Thus, Israel and the PLO recognized one another, but the form of recognition was closer to an armistice and Palestinian capitulation than a formula for peace. The status quo power relationship replicated at Oslo allowed Palestinians the right to beg from Israelis a mere redeployment from lands illegally occupied by the Israel during the 1967 war. In tangible terms, the PA received a simple role as administrator of the West Bank and Gaza while real power remains in the hands of Israel. Consequently, the PLO, for example, oversees sanitation, civil policing, health, education, and postal services while Israel maintains sovereignty, troop deployment, water resources, and

control over substantial portions of the West Bank and Gaza under through schemes of super highways and entrenched Jewish settlements.[7] Israeli redeployment was never completed, while a final withdrawal seems unlikely until final status negotiations. The hanging specter of final status negotiations allowed and legitimized many breaches by Israel, first because of the intentional ambiguities of the Oslo accords and second because of the asymmetrical power relationship between two supposed partners. In reality, however, the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians is not a partnership, but instead a relationship similar to the one between slave and master. Hence, if the peace process is compared to a game of poker, Israel possesses nearly all of the political and territorial cards while Palestinians must continually fold.

Moreover, the current relationship between Israelis and Palestinians within the context of the peace process also includes many warning signs for future conflict.[8] Technologically, Israel possesses one of the most advanced societies in the world, while most Palestinians serve only as low skilled labor in the Israeli economy or in a shattered Palestinian economy as a result of years of occupation and general stagnation. Buzan's definition of economic security depends on economic mobility and wellbeing not based on a particular nationality but instead on equality for all economic participants.[9] Leatherman's definition of economic security adheres to the model laid out by Buzan and adds a center-periphery relationship.[10] Applying both Buzan's and Leatherman's definition of economic security yields a very grim and dangerous scenario for both Palestinians and Israelis. The Israeli economy remains, and will remain for the foreseeable future, at the center of regional economic growth. In comparison, Palestinians will remain subservient to the unfettered needs of the powerful Israeli economy. Benefits and entitlements accrued to Israelis will not be matched by Palestinians in the current framework since all peace protocols require severance territorially, but not economically. Even if Palestinians attempt to sever from Israel's economy, the benefits will pale in comparison to the economic catastrophe wrought about by the severance of inexorably bound economies. The current approach to peace does not account for the ingrained Palestinian servitude or Israeli economic hegemony, in the West Bank and Gaza and throughout the region.

Such a condition between Israelis and Palestinians would likely produce a ripe scenario for escalated conflict. This would occur because of rising expectations from the peace process for

increased economic security. When those expectations are not met, or in reality are reversed because of ill-fated policies by both the PA and the Israeli government, there exists a perceived need to gain, forcefully, the promised entitlements. At that point, the status quo mechanisms for negotiating such entitlements, mainly the PA, prove ineffective and many turn to alternative methods to realize the incentives guaranteed by the peace process. Transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict requires the satisfaction of socio-economic and political aspirations of both sides. An absence of the basic requirements to peace produces the chaos predicted by Buzan's model of security.^[11] Thus, Palestinian and Israeli demands for an expanded vision of security often conflict specifically because of the narrow approach espoused by "hawks" and polemics on both sides. In the short term, promises of final status negotiations may serve to tame the prospects for conflict. If, however, the peace process remains on the same familiar tract whereby Palestinians negotiate away their aspirations for security, positive perceptions of the peace process will diminish to be replaced by preparations for resuming an armed struggle as before the peace process. One only has to look at the Intifada to recognize the magnitude of dissatisfaction among the Palestinian masses. In current terms, the incentives to peace have been monopolized by one communal group at the expense of another.

Thus, the agreements signed in 1995, known as Oslo II, added to the politico-geographical fragmentation of the West Bank and Gaza along principle Palestinian cities, peripheral Palestinian villages, Israeli settlements, Israeli government land, and Israeli military areas.^[12] In addition, the agreements made no mention of the 1948 and 1967 refugees, many of which remain in squalid camps around the region. As was the case with Oslo I, what the Oslo II agreement did grant to the Arafat led PA is more administrative control over the Palestinian people and not over any substantial Palestinian territory. The secret diplomacy that brought about such a deal for the Palestinians is reminiscent of nineteenth century negotiations between autocratic monarchs and foreign ministers. By not consulting with any Palestinian outside of a very small and elite circle in the PLO, Arafat effectively placed himself at the center of a controversy that threatens to destroy the political unity of Palestinians for the first time since 1948.^[13] Such political fragmentation would tear the peace process apart and may lead to violent chaos in Arab-Israeli relations. Domestically, by undertaking the agreement without any public debate or approval of any democratic Palestinian institution, Arafat commenced on a path that has led to numerous

catastrophes, including the consolidation of all political power in the hands of one leader serving as a perceived Israeli puppet. This grim perspective also raises the possibility of a Palestinian civil war resulting in Israeli intervention and the deaths of thousands of Palestinians and Israelis.

Beyond Oslo

Developments within Israel turned the 1993 and 1995 agreements into a one sided structure that excludes any benefits to Palestinians who remain in more dire conditions than ever before.^[14] Thus, while Israelis gained wider international recognition, higher living and production levels (as a result of expanded international trade, for example), and increased security, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories only gained quasi-autonomy, since the West Bank and Gaza remain under Israeli control through checkpoints, military presence on the outskirts of all Palestinian cities and ultimate Israeli sovereignty.^[15] All the while, Israel remains the Levant's only nuclear weapons power and disposes of high technology arms through sales on the global market.^[16] Aside from the realist preoccupation with the likelihood of a nuclear "first strike" and lack of deterrence surrounding this inequality of weapons among Arabs and Israelis, such a disparity also serves to demonstrate the powerful negotiating position of the Israelis. Moreover, Israeli intransigence before and during the Intifada sent a signal to Palestinians that any dealings with Israel must not underestimate the relative power arrangement.^[17]

Military superiority, while not the final determinant of the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis, is a very important centerpiece of Israeli negotiating policy. Israeli leaders, for example, consistently threaten that if Arafat declares a state by September 13, 2000, Israel will annex, by force, large portions of the West Bank and Gaza in order to further strengthen Israel's position of negotiating vis-à-vis the militarily inferior Palestinians. Under such threats to use force, the PA and Palestinians in general would think twice about declaring a state because of the outweighing costs of forced annexations and loss of human life. In addition, by using military threats, Israel forces Palestinians back to the "peace" table in order to further legitimize a status quo of domination and oppression. Even if such threats at military annexations seem idle, they do provide Israel with a relative edge through coercive diplomacy, which is not available to Palestinians.^[18] Israeli threats at military action also secure a foothold in peace negotiations where an option, unavailable to Palestinians, still exists if the Israeli version of the peace process is

not implemented or upheld by the PA. Palestinians do not possess the reciprocal luxury of fending off Israeli military action, however. Instead, they only possess the role of subservience, whereby all Israeli demands must be fulfilled by the PA or else Palestinians would have to shoulder the burden of a derailed peace process in the form of renewed and intensified occupation, loss of territory and human life.

One should not underestimate the political power of many Israelis opposed to occupation and organized into groups such as Haleh Hakibbush, Dai Lakibbush, Or Adom, and Hafarperet. While such groups abhor the occupation of Palestinian lands, those groups and others like them may prove ineffective in the face of a perceived general Palestinian threat constructed by the Israeli political elite. Even if Arafat does not, once again,[\[19\]](#) declare a state, the tone of future negotiations, just as is the case in current negotiations, will be shaped by the dominant power structure. The growing Palestinian frustration over Israeli stubbornness and the PLO's impotence remains only checked by short term Israeli concessions such as the permission granted to Palestinian that allows them to fly the Palestinian flag on top of Palestinian buildings, in public squares and residential dwellings. Palestinian and Israeli hopes in the peace process continue to diminish as leaders threaten one another and tensions continue to brew on the ground because of such occurrences as the demolition of homes, closure policies, and an increasingly authoritarian PA led by Yassir Arafat. Under the current state of affairs, many Palestinians continue to question whether the meager incentives to peace—even remotely—outweigh the costs of all of the negative conditions attached to the peace process.[\[20\]](#)

In addition, Palestinian acquiescence in the peace process after the Arafat-Rabin handshake remains very fragile and transient. Public perception of numerous Palestinian submissions to Israeli stubbornness renders the likelihood of a long lasting peace untenable.[\[21\]](#) Israel's former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, not only stalled the provisions of the peace accords, but he also mitigated trust between Palestinians and Israelis and set an inescapable precedence for his successor Ehud Barak. Hence, "The Palestinian public's trust in the Oslo peace accords vanished months ago, once Israel's new prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, had made clear how he chose to interpret them."[\[22\]](#) Since the Oslo accords, Palestinians continually suffer due to Israeli policies of military closure and encirclement of civilian areas. Students from Gaza for example,

cannot attend their universities in the West Bank. Residents of Rammallah can only leave the city through imperious Israeli checkpoints, while Palestinians living only a few yards from and working in municipalities across the “Green Line” requiring Israeli work permits are, if arrested without a permit, fined the excessive amount of two months’ salary. Hence, for Palestinians, “going to work or attending school are high-risk activities.”^[23] Not only do the closure policies destroy the Palestinian sense of economic security, as outlined by Buzan, et. al., but they also impair the perception of realistic gains in the peace process.^[24]

Security as Zero Sum

Closure practices as part of a general occupational policy have taken a toll on the Palestinian populous. Indeed, despair runs rampant throughout Palestinian cities and villages, which sometimes turn into fertile breeding grounds for militarism.^[25] Israel may in the short-term enjoy the benefits of Oslo, but it will unfortunately, in the long-term, exchange those benefits for increased antagonism and hostility from weary Palestinians if negative conditions are not checked.^[26] As the promises of the peace accords disappear in ill-fated political maneuvers, Palestinians find themselves in an increasingly grotesque society.^[27] To exacerbate societal problems, the past decade has witnessed a proliferation of religious fanaticism in general and of “Islamic fundamentalism” in particular. What Israeli and Palestinian policy makers need to take into account is the correlation between increased Palestinian liberation and decreased fundamentalist sentiment. Unfortunately, subsequent Israeli governments after Rabin’s assassination have not only reversed former policies, they have also undermined the limited autonomy that Palestinians gained under the Oslo accords. Netanyahu’s shortsighted policies of closures and increased settlements, which continue under the Ehud Barak regime, not only serve to circumvent the Oslo peace accords, they also accelerate militarism among Palestinians.

This pivotal atmosphere of moderation and militarism indicates that the situation is ripe for conflict, if the appropriate escalating elements play a role. According to Leatherman, et. al., traditional as well as new models of early warning rely on measuring the relative power disparities between contending groups.^[28] As all of those concerned understand, the power relationship

between Palestinians and Israelis astronomically favors the latter. Add to this the general disparity of the means to security between Israelis and Palestinians, as outlined above and as will be discussed later in this essay. The problems produced by such a disparity in the power equation transcend military means and are evident in all areas of Palestinian-Israeli dialogue and conflict.

[29] The very complex security dilemma among Palestinians and Israelis transforms the issue of land, Jerusalem, settlements, etc. from mere sticking points in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a collective expression of constructed mistrust and hostility by both sides. Thus, for example, Israeli settlements present a territorial threat to security (Palestinian land usurped by Israeli settlers) as well as an ideological (a Zionist state versus a state of its people), socio-economic (economic class and domination based on nationality), political (established Israeli institutions versus incipient Palestinian institutions), and environmental (water rights) security problems for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.

The Israeli-Palestinian struggle insofar as it is a struggle over resources, narratives and ideologies appears to be a classical test case for the Protracted Social Conflict perspective devised by Azar. According to Azar, “the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation” makes the task of capturing an opportunity at peace much more difficult than the traditional form of conflict involving different states.[30] While the precondition of recognition has been met, albeit vaguely and dubiously, by Israelis and Palestinians throughout the peace process, equal and fair access to political institutions and economic participation has hardly even been close to realization by the Palestinian side. Thus, the conflict will continue amidst talks of peace so long as one side, the weaker one, continues to have its efforts at economic and political security frustrated by the other.[31] Communal conflict often is mirrored throughout the means possessed by each antagonist and may involve outward hostilities or more latent forms of fighting against perceived or real injustices. Militarism among Palestinians is another form of attempting to achieve the security often denied to them under occupation. For Israelis, militarism is a way of maintaining the perceived status quo Zionist nature of Israel, as a nation-state composed exclusively of Jews, which of course flies in the face of Palestinian aspirations for political and economic entitlements similar to those that Jews possess.

What Azar's Protracted Social Conflict theory does not account for, however, is that a majority of Palestinians do not share the same state apparatus as Israelis. Azar's model may explain how Israeli Arabs' security needs conflict with the needs of Israeli Jews and how to resolve such a security dilemma.^[32] The model, however, does not adequately explain how to deal with Palestinians that are legally outside of Israeli state jurisdiction and only live under military occupation, with a different set of rules applying for Palestinians living under occupation as opposed to Palestinians living under the Israeli state as citizens. Moreover, Azar's focus on communal identity as the centerpiece to understanding conflict resolution does not explain how economic conditions and territorial possessions shape identity. In other words, while identity shapes the perception of territory and economic predisposition, both shape identity. For example, Palestinian demands for economic security, a universal aspiration, are often articulated within an exclusive vision of identity. Israeli whims for military security are grounded in the exclusive protection for Jews. Communal identity often shapes the very flavor of the type of security sought. According to Azar "a new type of conflict...distinct from traditional disputes over territory, economic resources, or East-West rivalry...revolves around questions of communal identity."^[33] Here Azar separates conflict over territorial and economic disputes into a different type of conflict from what he claims is the underlying motive: preservation of identity. Such a dichotomy, however, does not adequately explain the complex nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hence, Israeli claims to water rights in Palestinian territories are informed by an identity motive (providing water to Israelis), as well as a politico-economic-environmental goal (acquiring a valuable resource).

Unlike his dichotomy between identity and other factors, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict gives legitimacy to Azar's conflation of international and domestic affairs under one "social environment."^[34] Such a boundary, as international and national, has never existed between Israelis and Palestinians. Both histories and narratives are intertwined since the beginning of the contemporary conflict in 1948.^[35] It is not important to separate where the international and national boundaries begin and end in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There is, however, use in separating where the largest share benefits is allocated by the Israeli state. Naturally, because Israel is the state of Jewish people all over the world and not the state of its citizens, the state apparatus is swallowed up by a dominant arrangement of what Azar has dubbed communal groups. Jewish

Israelis themselves suffer at the hands of the state, arguably in many cases, more than some Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. There is, for example, the well-known division between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. Sephardic Jews remain a social underclass in comparison to the more privileged Ashkenazi.[36] In this case, Azar is correct in assuming that communal identity defines the nature of oppression.

Identity and Displacement

For Palestinians, however, access to the state has been denied based on identity and has included a heavy burden on Palestinians, from economic dismay to the denial of water resources. Because of Israel's interest to exclude or partially disadvantage all members not entitled to the state apparatus and with the stagnating peace process, many Palestinians perceive the military option as the only viable one. Although gripping a tiny minority of Palestinians, militarism today is the result of nearly a century of crisis. Throughout the twentieth century, Palestinians endured the pandemonium of two World Wars, whereby the victors determined their fate and the fate of their land (i.e., Balfour Declaration of 1917). First uprooted in 1948 with the establishment of the Israeli state and again in 1967 during the "Six-Day War" with the expansion of the new state, Palestinians experienced "the oldest and largest" refugee catastrophe of the century, with 2.7 million Palestinian refugees.[37] As outlined above, Palestinians remaining in the Occupied Territories tolerate Israeli practices of political oppression resembling those of South Africa's late Apartheid practices. Because of the hardships of the past century, Palestinian society is now divided among various lines. Thus, according to Moughrabi, "A kind of social Darwinism seems to dominate Palestinian society, where a crude individualism prevails and where only the fit, the clever, and the well-connected survive." [38]

A societal clash of ideals also exists whereby on the one hand, modern "social Darwinism" dominates and on the other, traditional values linger on. A subsequent result of colonization and occupation, Diaspora, and tyranny witnessed by Palestinians throughout the twentieth century is a hastened national identity crisis. Moughrabi adds further, "something horrible happened to them [Palestinians] during the years of Israeli occupation." [39] This "horrible thing" is the fragmentation of Palestinian society along several different lines of gender, religion, place of origin, and refugee status. Social fragmentation coupled with political disorder strain institutions such as

healthcare and other human services to their limits and creates general inequity. This has the potential to create a catastrophe for the PLO, which no longer is able to support Palestinians because of strained resources and decreasing levels of legitimacy, as the peace process produces no tangible long-term benefits to Palestinians. Furthermore, according to Schnitzer, for example, “The healthcare needs of Gaza Strip residents are enormous and are exacerbated by the more than six years of the Intifada, the Israeli occupation and a majority refugee problem.”^[40] The inability of “official” Palestinian institutions to meet popular demands for human services gives rise to alternative means of services, such as black markets and, more ominously, Islamist organizations providing healthcare and education.^[41]

Islamist organizations, the largest of which is Hamas, increasingly provide Palestinians with services no longer available as a result of the administration’s inefficiency and lack of resources. Although not allowed to participate in the PA, Hamas is a very formidable force in Palestinian society advocating a theocratic state of its own to rival the theocratic (i.e., Zionist) nature of the state of Israel. International groups, mainly established and funded by the United Nations, play a major role in providing Palestinians with basic needs. This further demonstrates the PLO’s lack of capability to provide for a common state-based network of services and underscores the need for increased sources of humanitarian aid directly working with individual Palestinians without entitlements from the administrative apparatus of the PLO. The PA’s complicity and Israel’s actions toward undermining the Palestinian population’s security for their own ends results in a situation unbearable to either side. The Palestinians struggle toward the security offered by national homeland and in the process are shutout by Israeli designs for a pure Zionist state. In this context the Israeli-Palestinian conflict provides an important perspective on Buzan’s definition of security, which takes a multifaceted approach to ensuring general human well being. Seen in this light, Buzan’s model describes how Palestinian demands for security go largely unfulfilled by the prevailing order.^[42]

In the Palestinian case, Buzan’s definition of security, or lack of security, directly corresponds to Azar’s model of Protracted Social Conflict.^[43] However, once again the complex communal disposition of the Israeli-Palestinian problem does not exactly validate Azar’s PSC model, while it does allow room for some prediction. Suffice to say that if identity is not the main

focus of communal conflict, then it will include radical elements on both sides of the ideological and national divides. Hence, Hamas, as a party focuses its energies and wins a substantial minority of the popular conscience. Within the Palestinian political system, members of Fateh gain the privileges of the limited Palestinian administration at the expense of non-Fateh members. Members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), for example, have largely been discredited internationally and marginalized domestically. This adds validity to Azar's notion that international and domestic inhabit the same social environment.^[44] In addition, groups such as Hamas, and all other "outsider" groups in the Palestinian political spectrum have been marginalized both internationally and within the Palestinian power arrangement.^[45] Thus, international power and security relations, such as recognition and legitimacy, are mirrored domestically and among the contending parties, including Israel's ruling government and the PA. Such a mirroring in political arrangements affects the social structure as well, a fact consistent with Buzan's comprehensive definition of security.

Common Security

Within the context of social fragmentation and institutional decay, most Palestinians attribute, rightly or wrongly, their predicaments to years of military occupation. In light of the stagnant peace process and in an attempt to unilaterally end occupation, Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat outlined his intentions to declare a Palestinian state "with or without Israeli approval by May 1999."^[46] Although promises to declare a state did not materialize, Arafat is not alone in his quest for statehood and has received the endorsement of the European Union (EU) for the "Palestinian right to self-determination, including statehood."^[47] After the lack of consensus during the Camp David summit, Arafat once again threatens to declare a state by September 13, 2000 if agreement is not reached by that date. The opposition from such a proposition comes from many Israelis and realist scholars that support claims that a Palestinian state would "field a large army, form alliances with regimes sworn to Israel's destruction and serve as a base for increased terrorist activity that would endanger Israel's existence."^[48]

Unfortunately, what realist scholars and Israelis do not realize is that by not recognizing Palestinian rights to a homeland, economic integrity, social well-being, and other general freedoms, Israel undermines its own statist conception of security.^[49] Because Israel possesses no realistic

military option, outside the realm of annexation, it will not maintain suzerainty over Palestinians if a homeland is not recognized. Using Buzan's definition of security, Israel's rejectionism would increase military security by dominating another people at the expense of all other types of security, including economic, societal and political security. Moreover, the longer "a final peace agreement" takes, because of vehemently contested issues such as the final status of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees, borders, and Jewish settlements in the Occupied territories, the more pressure is applied on Arafat to gain some concessions. The most scowling issue of contention seems to be Jerusalem, since the city's eastern quarter holds a Palestinian population of 160,000 and a Jewish population of 170,000.[50] Under Israeli control, the city's Jewish administrators require Palestinians to carry special permits in order to worship at any holy site. Along with the question over the future of Jerusalem is the problem of Palestinian refugees, since most have lived in their refugee shacks and camps since 1948 and 1967. All refugees claim their right to return to their lands under United Nations Human Rights Commission provisions, United Nations Resolutions 194 and 237 and other international documents relating to a person's right to return to his or her country.[51] The Palestinians and the Israelis view the refugee problem at the center of achieving any resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Complicating the problem is the Israeli demand that Palestinian refugees renounce their claim to their homeland on the one hand and the Palestinian prerequisite for repatriation of the refugees on the other hand.[52]

The refugee problem may prove to be as contentious as the issue of Jerusalem. According to one estimate, there are now five million Palestinian refugees throughout host countries in the Middle East, North Africa, North America, and Europe.[53] Currently, Israel supports a solution of settling Palestinian refugees in host countries without compensation. While such a solution might prove convenient for Israelis, it does not resolve that a large portion of Palestinian refugees remain in camps and settling them would place a heavy burden, financial and otherwise, on host countries. Without any compensation to the Palestinians themselves or to host countries, such a settlement program would never be achievable under current Israeli offers in return for settlement. Moreover, such a settlement without compensation concept as proposed by Israel would pose an ontological as well as a public relations disaster for Israelis who continually demand reparations of moneys and lands lost during the Second World War but will not even think of compensating Palestinians for the destruction of their homeland, culture and usurpation of their land since 1948. This would

occur because in the international public's perception, Hitler's notion of Lebensraumpolitik would appear no different than Jewish attempts at establishing a living space in Israel for Jewish survivors of a savage holocaust without compensating the victims ousted to ensure that living space. Much as Israelis expect and have received reparations from Germany and recently from Swiss banks, so too are Palestinians entitled to the same type of reimbursement for their catastrophic losses.

Notwithstanding "final status" issues, such as refugees, Palestinian political ideals differ along various lines. While "Palestinian society is pluralistic, mostly secular, highly politicized, and quite sophisticated," an irreconcilable political rift exists between Islamists and secularists.^[54] The PLO has always identified itself with the secularist sphere of politics and currently controls most seats in the Majlis as well as the Ra'es position under Arafat. The latter however is not without criticism, hence

It appears that the trend toward democracy set in motion by the elections is being curbed by an executive authority determined to arrogate to itself all the powers in the new society.^[55]

Like many Palestinians after the Israeli occupation, Arafat joined a diverse political and secularist "armed struggle" to liberate Palestine.^[56] Problems confronting Arafat range from pressures by Israel to halt "terrorist" activities to international pressure to demonstrate his vigilance for a democratic Palestine. Such goals may contradict one another, since completely halting "terrorist" activities may require the PA to supersede many civil liberties in order to accomplish this perplexing task. Analysts of Arafat's record on human rights and democracy must take into account that first, Arafat presides over an ambiguous Palestinian entity without the luxuries of statehood while secondly, the Palestinian frustration over the stalled peace process only serves to increase nationalism and militarism. The longer peace talks take on a symbolic role without any real benefits for Palestinians, the more frustrated Palestinians become. Because of this frustration, militants justify their existence by pointing to the failures of the PLO. The Arafat government thus becomes the butt of all Palestinian frustrations, while militants only gain popularity. Because of the rising militarism, Arafat can justify his consolidation on power in the name of suppressing violent elements, thus undermining any future Palestinian democracy. While, "only democracy in the West Bank and Gaza can give the region hope for a peaceful future," obstruction of the peace process (as

in the status quo) to gain short-term benefits will only undermine future prospects of Palestinian democracy and thus lasting peace.[\[57\]](#)

The Islamist Prescription

The perceived failures of the PLO to secure the advantages of the peace process, increasing numbers of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, harsh Israeli conditions for continuing the peace process, and Arafat's repression of "militant elements" in Palestinian society accelerates opposition to the dominant actors. The staunchest opposition to the peace process and Israel's right to exist is found among "Islamic fundamentalists." Although non-monolithic, Islamic fundamentalism in its totality is one of the largest growing minority views in the Arab World in general, and in Palestinian society in particular. It is to those movements that one must look to understand the cosmopolitan makeup of revivalism and its embodiment by Islamist parties. Islamic Revivalism is not phenomenally spontaneous; rather, it develops through a gradual process of failure and oppression. Take Hamas, for example: the group is the product of the defalcation of Palestinian secularists to deliver on "peace benefits" and continues to grow because of continued pressures from Israel and the PA.[\[58\]](#) Pressure from the PLO, in particular, will not silence the Hamas or its appeal, but will increase it, not only because of the PLO's repression, but also because of Palestinian frustration over a shattered economy, and failed promises of the peace process. In addition, according to Said, while Islamist elements control one-third of Palestinian political support, they receive the largest support by many of the losers in the peace process.[\[59\]](#) Hence, if benefits do not generally accrue to a substantial number of Palestinians, Islamist political support will subsume moderate elements in the Palestinian political system.

The "current state of affairs" in the Occupied Territories only strengthens Islamist parties such as Hamas, while the PLO falls further into the Islamist trap every time it fails to deliver on its promises of improvements in living conditions for Palestinians (i.e., removing Israeli check points). Moreover, Israeli pressure on the PLO to suppress Islamist opposition only strengthens the latter and a fundamental lesson is lost on such suppression. The lesson in simple: the more suppressed a social movement, the more popular it is among its propagators and supporters.[\[60\]](#) Subsequently, Islamist groups can only be weakened on their own accord and

anyone who wants to get an idea of how an Islamic party can quite easily be cooped and domesticated is advised to look across the West Bank into Jordan. One of King Hussein's smartest moves was to open out the system enough to let them in; they have since become a sort of dutiful, totally uncharismatic (and finally discredited) opposition, forced to act in effect as part of the establishment.[61]

The PA must follow the Jordanian precedent if it ever hopes to achieve “democratic pacifism” (although Jordan is far from a democratic country) or in other words, placate militaristic groups by allowing them freedoms of expression and participation in a democratic political process. Lack of democracy in the Occupied Territories maintains and strengthens the political appeal of Islamist movements.[62] By co-opting Islamist organizations such as Harakat al Jihad al Islami (Jihad) and Hamas through basic human rights such as freedoms of speech, assembly and political expression the PA can exert its energies elsewhere, for example, on social and economic problems that, if they go unattended, only give Islamists more political issues to rally around.[63]

The increase in the dynamism of Islamist ideologies and organizations in the Occupied Territories is not only the result of suppression, but also the result of a political vacuum in ideologies that most often occurs among oppressed peoples. In a *Journal of Palestine Studies* statement, Eric Rouleau, a French reporter in the Middle East for three decades and an expert on the Palestinian problem, indicates that

Islamic movements develop and become strong when there's a political vacuum of ideologies—whether other political forces have failed or have lost credibility are nonexistent. The major national crisis—political, economic, social, cultural—to which the government and the political class are unable to respond. The Islamists can then claim a solution.[64]

Rouleau correlates Islamic revivalism to the failure of other ideologies, such as Pan-Arabism and nationalism to establish an adequate, viable political system (i.e., the PLO) and adds

the point I wanted to make was that in the debacle that followed the war [of 1967] I saw something I had never seen—all the mosques were suddenly overflowing with people. They put loudspeakers outside the mosques and the sidewalks were jammed for blocks, even the largest couldn't contain the crowds. This was the beginning of what was later called the Islamic revival.[65]

The atmosphere of defeat and social upheaval, as was the case throughout the Arab World after the defeat of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt by Israel in 1967 sparked a wave of Islamic revivalism that continues today in all forms of Arab and Palestinian politics. Within the Occupied Territories, the overall condition of Palestinians has not improved since Oslo because most residents under Israeli occupation live in poverty, lack governmental respect for human rights, and general political suppression. Although no one solution exists to all of those problems, “the successful party” according to Rouleau is the one that provides not only an alternative to dissidents, but also provides its supporters with a sense of leadership.^[66] Moreover, the perception that Islamists do provide an alternative during troubled times, further increases support for marginalized but legitimate groups of opposition. If Israel and the PLO wish to maintain a stable Palestinian population, they must reverse their current policies of repression toward Islamist movements and allow their members full expressive and organizational rights. Otherwise, any measure of violence against Islamists will only further alienate larger numbers of Palestinians who participate in such groups to provide themselves with a sense of hope that is unavailable in the current political stalemate.^[67]

In this volatile political standstill among Israelis and Palestinians, many outsiders may misjudge Islamic groups to be just that, Islamic, with all negative connotations attached. A deeper look at the Islamists’ agendas however yields a contradictory view. According to Musa Budeiri, a professor of philosophy and cultural studies at Birzeit University,

... Hamas is a new movement. Born as it was during the Intifada, it is perhaps more accurate to characterize it as a child of the occupation; its birth and expansion were due to its newfound attachment to the Palestinian national cause.^[68]

Budeiri continues, “it is clear that Hamas has a nationalist rather than an Islamic agenda.”^[69]

When allowed to legally exist without government coercion and repression, Islamists will not only moderate their extreme revivalism, they will also assuage their acrid reproach toward both the Israeli and Palestinian establishments and will only work toward piecemeal solutions to nationalist problems that confront Palestinians. Meanwhile, the more brutally Hamas is dealt with by the PA and Israeli government, the more extreme the group will become in its views and actions. Only with the reversal of the traditional realist “crack-down” policy of Israel, and now of the PA, can Islamic revivalism take on a secondary societal function—as it already has done so in Egypt and

Jordan. In both of these countries, Islamists only go as far as providing the masses with what Said calls the “immediate security” of the Qur’an and Islam.[70] Palestinian culture will always remain part of the Arabo-Islamic tradition and hence Islam will remain a force in Palestinian society and politics.[71] The brand of Islam and the degree of its revivalist nature will depend, to a large part, on the external handling (or suppression) of its propagators. Any future Palestinian governing body, including the PA will remain a part of what Marshall Hodgson refers to as Islamicate culture and “any attempts at severing the tie are doomed to failure.”[72]

Islamic fundamentalism, as embodied by Hamas, also has much political capital to profit from uneasy circumstances.[73] Currently Islamists and Marxists (i.e., Hamas and the PFLP or PDFLP) cooperate in order to counter the failed policies of the Fateh led PA.[74] Like all other Palestinian political parties, Islamist parties also operate under Arab models of liberation. What makes Islamists different, is that they actively reject any concept of a secular state. Instead, Islamist parties subscribe to and further a state model based on a greater Islamic nation. In addition, Islamists reject the communist agenda of the Marxist parties currently allied with them. [75] Ideologically, Islamists operate on a practical basis, but like all other Palestinian parties, work to further an exclusive goal of liberation, based on a religious-ethnic identity.[76] Whereas some parties focus on achieving secular democracies, Palestinian Islamists believe that their faith offers the only solution.[77] This goal, however, does not achieve liberation based on universal human characteristics, but rather on the intersection of an Islamic and an Arab identity. In addition, the Islamists’ goal toward liberation isolates a large minority of Palestinian Christians struggling to liberate themselves from the exclusion of Zionism. Hence, the particularistic agenda isolates Palestinians as well as non-Palestinians because of its narrow approach toward liberation. Moreover, it does not, under Marx’s conception of liberation, free human beings from the tyranny of religious based politics, but does the exact opposite, by falsely prescribing an Islamic state as the only way to liberation.[78]

Room for Tolerance in the Context of Disparity

All Palestinian political parties have thus far perpetuated the zero-sum notion of competing ideologies even if some do advocate a democratic secularist state. This is because, regardless of their ideological predisposition, all of the parties’ conceptions of liberation revolve around the

concept of an exclusive identity, whether Arab, Muslim, Palestinian, etc. Hence, if Marx's theoretical assumptions in "On the Jewish Question" are taken into account, Palestinian political agendas do not offer any emancipating solution outside of the politico-nationalist framework. The latter does not only serve to inform politics, but it also shapes scholarship, including works by the most influential authors on the Palestinian condition. Edward Said, for example, wrote on Western conceptions of the "Orient" with the Palestinian agenda in mind.^[79] Throughout his masterpiece, Said describes how Western audiences perceived "Orientals" in general and Arab Palestinians in particular as "inconsequential nomads possessing no real claim on the land and therefore no cultural or national reality."^[80] By criticizing such Western conception, with good intentions notwithstanding, Said affirms that Palestinians do have a national reality that was wrongly muted. What Said omits, however, is that his affirmation of the Palestinian national identity originates from a deeper historical defense of Palestinians against the Zionist onslaught. Consequently, a fuller understanding of oppression does not occur because it only examines the relationship of "Orient" and "Occident" rather than also including universal reasons behind the domination of one cultural grouping over another.

In addition to tolerating Islamist ideals and movement and deconstructing Western and Israeli conceptions of Arabs in general and of Palestinians in particular focusing on a future state must be at the zenith of priorities and since the Palestinian economy is in dubious shambles, attention must be paid to ways of improving current economic conditions while at the same time working toward an economy of a future state. "For a stable, Western-style democratic regime to succeed, a broad and cohesive middle class with the capacity for political mobilization is needed."^[81] According to Forbes, "the only hope for lasting peace is if this region becomes a hot house of prosperity."^[82] Such a neoliberalist sentiment views development and interdependence between Palestinians and Israelis as a prerequisite to any lasting peace. Additionally, Palestinians must build new infrastructures and economic foundations in order to fully and peacefully operate any new entity or state.^[83] If Palestinians are to have a strong economy in the transitional (prior to statehood) period, the policies of closure (severance of cities in the West Bank and Gaza from one another by Israel) and the bureaucratization of working permits must be reversed by the Israeli government. Closures and working permits decrease the likelihood of any economic prosperity—a prerequisite for stability. High unemployment rates in Gaza and the West Bank, for example,

because of Israeli policies can only create instability. Estimates indicate an average unemployment rate among Palestinians of 25 percent. Additionally, the per capita Gross National Product (GNP) of the Palestinian economy is a pitiful \$1,630, a figure even more astounding when compared to Israel's per capita GNP of \$15,900.[84] Those figures demonstrate the grave injustices of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. During the post Oslo era, it would be in Israel's best interest to attempt to help lay the foundations of an economically stable Palestinian state by reversing its policies of severance, closures and permits since "a stable and democratic Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank is an absolute must to guarantee peace and stability in the area." [85] At this time however, Israeli and Palestinian manipulation of the Oslo accords can only create instability between both populations. Additionally, the international community must play its role in peace making and maintenance by committing foreign aid, Non-Governmental Organizations and capital investments to ensure peace in the region.[86]

In light of economic, classist, social, and national considerations that plague the Palestinian-Israeli future, Marx's concept of human emancipation appears even more attractive as an alternative. Zionist conceptions of Israel have historically failed to achieve for Jews an exclusively Jewish state. Likewise, Palestinian nationalism does not promise to culminate in an exclusively Arab Palestinian state.[87] Therefore, alternative models of liberation collectively remain as the only option in providing any ideological or pragmatic ways to human emancipation. As Zionist Jews mourn the failure of their brand of nationalism, scholars and political leaders must conceive of ways to emancipate all parties universally.[88] The peace process, despite its shortcomings, both Palestinians and Jews a chance to reconcile themselves to the notion of a universal human emancipation, not based on political liberation, but founded upon the principle of freedom from all oppression for all human beings. In addition, the failure of the PA to achieve any clear-cut solution for both Palestinians and Israelis demonstrates how underlying the Palestinian question is a universal problem, that should not be relegated to boundaries, state authorities and other particularistic political elements. Israel's initial founding on the ruins of the Palestinian nation represents the age-old archetypes of conquest and the prevailing of a greater power over a lesser one.[89] These are universal archetypes of oppression that demand universal, rather than particularistic, solutions.

The Oppressor's Reconciliation

Even if Palestinians do achieve any semblance of internal political autonomy under the current framework of multifaceted oppression, they will do so in manner dubbed by Richard Falk as “the Westphalian Cosmos-Drama.”^[90] Hence, by seeking emancipation on a political basis, Palestinians only seek “internal self determination” and thus continue the status quo of oppression because of their non-Jewish identity by the Israelis and non-obedience by the “limited autonomy” regime.^[91] Rather than seeking to counter economically elitist policies of subjugation against Palestinians and other people in all of the lands of historical Palestine, the hegemonic model of political liberation breeds further oppression. The current alignment between the PA and Israel to preserve economic and political exploitation of a majority of inhabitants also undermines any efforts at remedying the large disparities discussed above. The further solidification of the PA’s authority over Palestinians also serves to quell all opposition to the current modes of oppression. Particularistic Israeli-Palestinian politics, on the surface, may appear in opposition but often, they act cooperatively by keeping the lower classes preoccupied with their identity and waging a war against the other. Hence is the relationship between the PLO and Israeli government, both of which represent all features in the ideological realm of identity but nothing in terms of a collective impetus that aims at changing the currently oppressive circumstances for the benefit of the masses.

In a brief essay, Milton Fisk writes:

“The aspiration of an oppressed ethnic group should not be simply to turn the tables so that the dominant group becomes oppressed. Steadfastly following the liberationist principle would, though, lead an oppressed group to reject its aspiration to oppress. But by having such an unwarranted aspiration, an oppressed group does not legitimize the dominant group’s oppression of it.”^[92]

Those fears are mirrored by many Israelis opposed to a Palestinian State who point to a possible security threat, caused by a hostile state allowed to exist congruently to the Jewish state, as the main concern.^[93] Those politicians, however, never define security or how to achieve it. Even a narrow definition of security is determined by Israeli policy and an Israel that is conciliatory in its tone will receive conciliation in return from Palestinians in general, Islamic “militants”, and many Arabist groups. Palestinians, if allowed to live under a fair and equitable political system are more responsible and are less violent toward Israelis. For example, on October 6, 1997, “the newly

released spiritual leader [Yassin] of Hamas made a tentative truce offer...saying the group would halt such bombings [i.e., suicide bombings] if Israel stops attacks against our civilians.”[\[94\]](#) Yassin’s example is proof that the most militant of all Palestinian and Islamist individuals can be assimilated into the drive for peace. There are of course wider implications to Yassin’s proposal since it shifts from Hamas’ dedication to “destroy Israel” to the possibility of peaceful coexistence. A further insinuation is that Hamas supporters, once at peace with Israel, would work with the PLO toward common Palestinian goals of an improved economy and a viable political system. Although prima facie, Hamas is sectarian, it can still act as a right wing party in the Majlis of a future Palestinian State and not as a “group of terror” as its critics have dubbed it.

Nevertheless, many Israelis distrust the idea of a Palestinian state whether for conservative Zionist (that is realist) or other security reasons. According to *USA Today*, Anat Hafif, a 29-year-old Israeli teacher was quoted as saying “They [the Palestinians] can conduct their own lives. Their own education. Their own religion. But a state that would endanger my own? No!”[\[95\]](#) Hafif says that a Palestinian state will endanger Israel but never says how. Even if we take a realist definition of security, any new Palestinian state would not endanger Israel because, among other reasons, of overwhelming Israeli military superiority, the permanent demilitarization of the Israeli-Palestinian frontiers. In addition, interdependence between the two states, economic and otherwise will bring about a heightened level of security.[\[96\]](#) Also, any future Palestinian state, born out of peace agreements will not present the same security threat as is presented in the status quo by Palestinians suffering under occupation. Fortunately, not all Israelis share Hafif’s line of reasoning, but instead, many would agree with a less extreme line of reasoning. Under purely realist aims to deterrence, Israel will still employ its Defense Forces (IDF), police, and the General Security Service to repel any possibility of attacks by groups of a Palestinian state. Threats to Israeli security can even be further minimized not only because of Palestinian self-determination, increased stability, and interdependence, but also because of an improved Israeli military strategy.

Thus, under the current strategy of occupation, Palestinians living in cities and villages under find themselves surrounded by Israeli military checkpoints. By focusing those checkpoints on a future Israeli frontier and not on the fringes of Palestinian dwellings, Israel increases security to its forces and its borders without frustrating Palestinian aims for a sovereign statehood. Security

of forces is achieved by distancing Israeli soldiers from Palestinian domains while at the same time, when full decolonization occurs, troops can be placed more strategically as potential defenders rather than obvious occupiers. In addition to strategy and safety, complete withdrawal of all Israeli soldiers from Israeli settlements and Palestinian towns will repudiate a costly military expenditure for Israel and will allow budgetary allocations elsewhere. According to Ariga, "...if you ask whether there is any chance for coexistence with the Palestinians, our answer is in the affirmative."^[97] The voices for coexistence out of most Israelis combined with the conciliatory tones of Islamic militant groups such as Hamas are signs that point to a potential (however distant) end to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Confederation or Bust

As a result of the current dominant paradigm of "severance and independence" in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, one alternative has gone largely ignored by Palestinians, Israelis and the rest of the world. This alternative, advocated by Arab and Jewish intellectuals such as Edward Said and Rabbi Moshe Sober respectively, is centered in a peaceful coexistence of Palestinians and Israelis.^[98] For the purpose of this essay, Rabbi Moshe Sober's writings on the solution will be discussed. Sober eloquently outlines a resolution manifest in what he calls the Confederation of Israelis and Palestinians (CIP), which would be a democratic, and a binational state.^[99] Sober's plan is not new and is reminiscent, at least territorially, of the 1947 United Nation's partition plan (United Nations Resolution 181). The only addition to the British mandate territory of 1947 would be the Syrian Golan Heights (currently occupied by Israel).^[100] Politically, CIP would be divided into ten "cantons," where "some of [which] will be predominantly Jewish, some predominantly Arab, and some mixed," with Jerusalem as a separate canton, serving as capital of the new state and containing Christians, Muslims, and Jews. CIP would have a new constitution guaranteeing equal citizenship to all Palestinians and Israelis.^[101] CIP's government would be composed of a unicameral legislature, a supreme court, and a ceremonial executive branch (modeled on the current structure of the Israeli government). The new government, composed of Israelis and Palestinians elected popularly would ban the Zionist Law of Return—the law which calls upon all Jews from across the globe to "return" to Israel—and replace it with a law that welcomes all Palestinians and Jews wishing to return "back" to CIP. In support of

CIP, Sober argues that Israel had always been a binational state and that under his vision, Israel would transform itself into a truly democratic state, guaranteeing democratic rights to all its citizens.^[102] Moreover, the idea of CIP would be supported by most moderate Palestinians who realize that they have no other option, especially since those moderates already deal with Israel as a legitimate state.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of CIP is not a new one, but rather might be “too late” since most Palestinians and Israelis now have the mindset of separation and autonomy. CIP, however, must not be intellectually rejected since it seems as a most logical solution that would alleviate Israeli security concerns of having a separate Palestinian State and would mitigate the abuses of Palestinian human rights. Additionally, the CIP proposition and its implementation may help lighten Palestinian economic hardships and may even harbor nonrevivalist nationalism among Palestinians, so long as the Islamists are not suppressed or thrashed based on political reasons. Although preliminary and untested, Sober’s notion of CIP may increase security in the Middle East since it will take a spike out of the Arab World’s burning conscience over the issue of the Palestinian Diaspora and ease Islamic bitterness toward the control of holy sites by “conquerors.” For centuries, Jews, Muslims and Christians have lived together peacefully in Palestine. It was only after the end of World War I and the dawn of modern nationalism, the subsequent Balfour Declaration, and several wars did Jews and Arabs become unable to live together.^[103] In the notion of CIP may be the correction of historical misfortunes that have divided two peoples of one land long enough. In the meantime, the PA and the Israeli government must devise a method of future cooperation and interdependence, even the unlikely event that the Gaza-West Bank territories gain full autonomy under the PA.

Beyond Parochialism

One of the most important issues that Israelis must come to terms with is the concept of Zionism. According to LeVine

the Palestinian elections signaling the creation of Palestine as a nation has been predominantly met with optimism by Israelis and Arabs alike. However, Jews have also begun to mourn the demise of Zionism as a driving ideology.^[104]

In retrospect, Zionism as an ideology is a century's old concept, initiated by Theodor Herzl at the Jewish Council in Basel, Switzerland. Herzl's original theory, however, did not insist on a Jewish homeland in Palestine but rather was open to anywhere Jews can live in a Jewish state.

Historically, Zionist claims to Palestine—although understandable—are derived not from Herzl but instead from a strictly European colonial ideology. As far as Herzl was concerned, a Jewish homeland could have been in Kenya-Uganda and would have uprooted the indigenous people living in that region instead of uprooting Palestinians. Also, according to Levine

While the Palestinian nation is being born, the Zionist dream might be playing itself out as the increasing materialism within Israeli society moves further and further from the ethos that motivated the Zionist enterprise during its foundational period.[\[105\]](#)

A change in ideology on both sides is a major step to building peace and prosperity in the violent and downtrodden Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In opposition to Zionism are Muslim and Christian claims to Jerusalem and Palestine as being sacred grounds for all Abrahamic religions—not just to one. Choosing between conflicting words of God however is a very difficult task, since if one word is preferred over another, the idea of God is discredited to at least one party. While remaining a major obstacle to peace, the contradictory claims between peoples of the Qur'an, the New Testament, and the Torah can be resolved when individuals know how closely linked they are.

[\[106\]](#) Education of the “other” can help beset the stereotypes that have haunted Arabs and Jews alike and allowed each side to interpret and follow arbitrary commandments that have created hate and mischief in the hearts and minds of most Israeli and Palestinian women and men.

Palestinians now stand face to face with what they perceive as injustice and broken promises by their own leadership and Israel many years after the beginning of the Intifada. They sit and wait with a ravaged economy on the one hand and failed promises of improvement on the other.[\[107\]](#) The “deeply fragmented” Palestinian society is at a crossroads in history; plagued by the problems of 50 years of dispossession, internal displacement, bloodshed, and occupation. The Arab-Israeli conflict will only be resolved by self-determination, whether along the lines of Sober's Israeli-Palestinian Confederation or through complete territorial severance from Israel. The latter does not only mean having separate boundaries and sovereignty, although the two are prerequisites to any subsequent steps, but also the freedom to act as the popular will dictates and not have

another sovereign infringing upon the Palestinian right to liberty. Along with international assistance, Palestinians can resolve their internal political and economic dilemmas as well. Although the current PA is not satisfactory to many critics, it is and will remain the voice of Palestinians for the time being and thus the main implementer of the provisions of all agreements. Rivaling the PA, Islamist groups such as Hamas and Jihad can only be domesticated through a democratic system of government and freedom of expression. International assistance should not only be in the form of loans, grants, or investments, but should also include political assistance such as the monitoring of elections to ensure fair trials of candidates and ideologies. Monitoring can be accomplished through the United Nations and must include a commitment to the Palestinian people of free and fair elections. In addition, Israel must face consequences for its actions—not only by the United Nations alone—but also by the United States. The latter must halt its policy of blindly supporting Israel on all issues and commit itself to the equality of Palestinians. Benefits of supporting Palestinian self-determination will outweigh the costs of increased militarism, despair, institutional decay, antagonism, and Islamic fundamentalism.

Conclusion

Such human conditions, according to Tickner, not only destroy any impetus behind security, but they also undermine the very nature of peace seeking.^[108] Moreover, the outmoded realist assumption on state security must undergo a serious revision in seeking a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Security should be redefined to include all areas of human suffering and must be treated as a collective and holistic concept in order to stifle the potential for violence. While Palestinian statehood may be the only solution to a century's war between two peoples, it will create other sets of problems to regional security. Aside from the traditional realist threat to security, an economically weak Palestinian state may engender problems too common to other Third World countries. Conversely, Israeli conceptions of sovereignty as a holy construct must be revised in order to decrease the perception of Palestinians as an impediment to the Israeli general will. There simply does not exist a unified Israeli or Palestinian nationality, but instead, both nationalities contain many divergent views running the gamut of the political spectrums. In addition, power in Israeli-Palestinian relations must not exist for the sake of coercion, but rather must take on a mutually beneficial relationship between both Palestinians and Israelis.^[109]

Such a beneficial relationship can only exist if both sides accept the complex nature of security as outlined in this essay by Leatherman et. al., Buzan et. al. and Tickner and avoiding the Protracted Social Conflict as defined by Azar. The intercongruence of both background attributes of the conflict as well as the process of the conflict have the potential to be transformed into a partnership for peace without unfair capitulation by one side or another. Such a scenario would transcend the current power structures inherent within the peace process that serve to privilege one group at the expense of another. If both sides adopted alternative models of security equally, every issue would be considered as important for one side as it is for the other. This type of atmosphere has more of a potential to produce a genuine and viable peace than the solutions offered in the status quo. Such an atmosphere is also long overdue given the possibilities for large-scale escalation for the first time since the beginning of the Oslo negotiations. Capturing the opportunity now would secure, for the first time in contemporary Middle Eastern history, an atmosphere of cooperation rather than the current one of mistrust and violence.

To conclude with Moughrabi's eloquent words:

I believe that, given a chance, the Palestinians can become the only democratic society in the Arab world. To have a passport, never mind a voice, you still need a state, and thus the trappings of statehood—borders, sovereignty—are viewed as central by almost all Palestinians. Statehood means that Israel can no longer confiscate their [Palestinian] land, demolish their houses, and uproot their trees. It means, potentially, that they can choose their identity, both individually and communally.^[110]

Palestinian self-determination can, as mentioned earlier, take shape in two ways: "CIP" or "Palestine," since these two concepts are not mutually exclusive and since Israeli respect and recognition for Palestinian identity is an integral part in Sober's outline of CIP. Unfortunately, because of the Arab-Israeli conflict's attenuated timeframe, the first generation of the Palestinian Exodus may never return to their farms, homes, shops, families or lives in their former homeland. Currently, an end to the conflict does not appear in sight, since Palestinians and Israelis alike live in an entrenched interlude neither between peace agreements that have brought peace nor agreement.

^[111] Observers and students of the Arab-Israeli conflict however must be aware of the prospects for peace and the endurance of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples in the quest for peace. Indeed, most Israelis and Palestinians realize the benefits of peace and historically understand the

consequences of the absence of lasting peace. Palestinians and Israelis must realize that the peace process is only a gradual proceeding requiring the earnest cooperation of both sides. Final resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be consistent with international law and must attempt to correct the injustices suffered by millions of people for over a century. Only through lasting and equitable peaceful conditions, open mindedness and reconciliation among Arabs and Israelis can a “final status” agreement survive the trials of time and former enemies.

NOTES

[1] Said, Edward. *Peace and its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Vintage, 1995), pp. 100-106.

[2] Ibid, pp. 140-146.

[3] For the purpose of this essay, I will use the non-gendered definition of security outlined by J. Ann Tickner’s *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). By using Tickner’s expanded definition of security, I am able to look at instability as it results from factors outside the realist conception of strategic security. Hence, this essay will focus on how poverty, social fragmentation and general oppression also threaten stability among Palestinians and Israelis.

[4] Buzan’s definition of security deviates from the traditional unimodal definition by including a wider range and a network of security variables, including security based on sectors of the military, environment, economy, society, and politics. See Buzan, Barry, Weaver, Ole and de Wilde, Jaap. *Security: a New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), ch. 8. Throughout this essay, I will reference this definition of security, in addition to Anne Tickner’s, and compare them to the defacto definition that both Israelis and Palestinians have subscribed to, and continually apply in the status quo, and since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

[5] For an analysis of the Intifada’s goals and objectives, see Nassar, Jamal and Roger Heacock. *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (New York: Praeger, 1990)

[6] Farsoun, Samih and Zacharia, Christina. *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 259-266.

[7] Said, Edward. *Peace and its discontents*, pp. 3-6.

[8] See Leatherman, Janie, DeMars, William, Gaffney, Patrick, and Vayrynen Raimo. *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (West Hartford, Conn., 1999), pp. 69-70.

[9] See Buzan, Barry, et. al. *Security*, ch. 5.

[10] See Leatherman, et. al. *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 51-70.

[11] Leatherman, et. al. *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, p. 46.

[12] Said, Edward. *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 266-270.

[13] Ibid, p.256.

[14] Moughrabi, Fouad. "A year of discovery" in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5:11 (Winter 1997) p. 5.

[15] Farsoun and Zacharia, pp. 259-270.

[16] See Jane Hunter's *Israeli Foreign Policy: South Africa and Central America* (Boston: South End, 1987), p. 2-4.

[17] By this, I mean that because Palestinians and Israelis do not possess a military option against one another, both must resolve differences through other means, with the realization that at the point other means are exhausted, Israel remains clearly superior to any force that Palestinians can muster. For a discussion of military strategies in the region, see John Mearsheimer's *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 134-164.

[18] See George, Alexander, Hall, David and Simons, William. *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy: Laos, Cuba, Vietnam* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971) for examples of how coercive diplomacy would achieve aims of the dominant party, albeit in an abrupt and disorderly fashion.

[19] Recall that Arafat via the Palestine National Council declared a Palestinian state in 1988.

[20] The difficulty in gauging this level of discomfort is apparent when one considers that no accurate census of Palestinians, in diaspora and in the West Bank and Gaza, exists, while Palestinian elections have been placed on hold during the interim period of negotiations.

[21] See Edward Said's *Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 40-45.

[22] "A new Intifada? Not quite: Palestinians." *The Economist* 5 (Apr. 1997), p. 41. Also, see *Edward Said's Peace and its Discontents*, pp. 7-25 for a discussion on Palestinian misfortunes of the peace process.

[23] Moughrabi, p. 7.

[24] See Buzan, Barry, et. al. *Security*, chs. 5 and 7.

[25] Chomsky, Noam. *The Culture of Terrorism* (Boston: South End Press, 1988).

[26] Parker, Christopher. *Resignation or Revolt? Socio-political Development and the Challenges of Peace in Palestine* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999) pp. vii-xx.

[27] Moughrabi, p. 6. See also Buzan, Barry, et. al. *Security*, ch. 6. According to Buzan, diminishing social ties among members of an antagonist grouping endanger the very foundations on which an acceptable security umbrella is built.

[28] Leatherman, et. al. *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, pp. 27-31.

[29] For this, we need to turn, once again, to the work of Barry Buzan, et. al. outlined in chapters 8 and 9 in *Security*. The problem of an expanded security undermines any meaningful dialogue towards peace. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the much-touted summit by the United States, Israel and the PLO held at Camp David has ended over two weeks later without a definite agreement.

[30] See Edward Azar's "The Analysis and Management of Protracted Social Conflict" in *Volkan* (1991), edited by Montville and Julius, p. 93.

[31] See also Azar, E., Jureidini, P., and McLaurin, R. "Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Practice in the Middle East" in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8 (1978), pp. 41-61.

[32] See Edward Azar's *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1990).

[33] Azar, Edward. "The Analysis and Management of Protracted Social Conflict," p. 91.

[34] Azar, E. and Burton, J. *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf, 1986), p. 33.

[35] See Edward Said's "The One State Solution" in *New York Times* (January 10, 1999), pp. 36-42.

[36] See, among a plethora of studies, Karen Akoka's "Underprivileged Israeli Youth: Changing Perceptions of the Conflict" in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 6 (1999/2000), pp. 37-42. The reason I choose this example is that it is the only recent article that includes the relationship between Israeli and Palestinian youth.

[37] Shapiro, Madelyn D. "The Lack of Implementation of Annex 7 of the Dayton Accords: Another Palestinian Crisis?" *American University International Law Review* (1998), p. 1. The refugee problem is further exacerbated since, not only are refugees and issue of "final status negotiations, but also because the very nature of what is a refugee is in dispute after the Oslo peace accords.

[38] Moughrabi, p. 6.

[39] *Ibid*, p. 10.

[40] Schnitzer, Jay. "Health Services in Gaza under the autonomy plan" in *The Lancet* 25 (June 1994), p. 1614.

[41] Said, Edward. *The Politics of Dispossession Peace and its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Vintage, 1996), pp. 384-411.

[42] See Buzan, Barry, et. al. *Security*, ch. 9.

[43] See Edward Azar's "The Analysis and Management of Protracted Social Conflict," pp. 91-94.

[44] Azar, E. and Burton, J. *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, p. 33.

[45] See Nassar, Jamal. "Elections and Popular Participation," found in *Palestinian Self Government: An Early Assessment* (Washington: The Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, April 1994), p. 8.

[46] Associated Press. "Arafat: Palestinian state by 1999." *USA Today* (November 11, 1997). Although Arafat has yet to declare a state, further stagnation in peace talks further encourages the rhetoric of early statehood that would bring about an armed confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians and would undermine regional security.

[47] "EU Supports Palestinian Statehood" in *Los Angeles Times* (Mach 27, 1999), pp. 17.

[48] Ibid.

[49] See Tickner, pp. 97-126. Also, see Buzan, Barry, et. al. *Security*, ch. 9.

[50] “Living with the occupation: East Jerusalem” in *The Economist* 46 (November 23, 1996).

[51] Shapiro, p. 4.

[52] Other problems include living conditions in refugee camps. See Said’s *Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), pp. 7-8.

[53] See Tamari, Salim (an interview). “The Problem of the Palestinian Refugees Will be Solved When They are Assured the Right to Return” in *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 6 (1999/2000), pp. 61-71.

[54] Moughrabi, p. 9.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Nassar, Jamal. *The Palestine Liberation Organization: From Armed Struggle to the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Praeger, 1991).

[57] Perlmutter, Amos. “Arafat’s police state: the Palestinian future” in *Foreign Affairs* 8 (July-August 1994), p. 12.

[58] Rouleau, Eric (Interview). “Eric Rouleau Talks about the Peace Process and Political Islam” in *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Summer, 1993) p. 46.

[59] Said, Edward. *Politics of Dispossession*, p. 404.

[60] Ibid, pp. 408-410.

[61] Ibid, p. 405.

[62] Rouleau, p. 58.

[63] Sayigh, Yazid. *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 625.

[64] Rouleau, p. 54.

[65] Ibid, p. 36.

[66] Ibid, p. 37.

[67] Ibid, 58.

[68] Budairi, Musa K. “The Nationalist Dimension of Islamic Movements in Palestinian Politics” in *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1995) p. 95.

[69] Ibid, p. 93.

[70] Said, Edward. *Politics of Dispossession*, p. 390. By immediate security, Said refers to the spiritual well being required by humans in the absence of Barry Buzan’s definition of security.

[71] As is Christianity to the Christian Coalition of the United States or the Christian Democrats of Europe, both of which use religion as a political tool. Although quasi-religious political groups may not explicitly use sometimes religion as a tool, it often permeates the political agenda by mobilizing support or justifying action.

[72] Said, Edward. *Politics of Dispossession*, p. 389. Although Said refers to himself in this passage, he also assumes the interaction between culture and institutions, since human beings are the products of this interaction. Hence, Islamicate beliefs, practices and historical accomplishments may never be severed from any Palestinian institution or popular human agency, since all are fundamentally interconnected.

[73] The politics of the Intifada gave birth to Hamas. For a superior examination of the Intifada, see Nassar, Jamal and Roger Heacock. *Intifada: Palestine at the Crossroads* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

[74] Nassar, Jamal. "Elections and Popular Participation," p. 8.

[75] For seminal examinations of Islamic politics and communism, see Haim Gerber's *Islam, Guerrilla War, and Revolution: A Study in Comparative Social History* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), Ayatullah Mutahhari's *Social and Historical Change: An Islamic Perspective* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1986), Mohammad Agwani's *Communism in the Arab East* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1969), Maxime Rodinson's *Marxism and the Muslim World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981) and Khalifa Abdul Hakim's *Islam and Communism* (Lahore: The Institute of Islamic Culture, 1962).

[76] For an investigation of Islamic identities throughout the greater Islamicate world, see Dale Eickelman's *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach* 3rd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), pp. 249-310.

[77] See Edward Said's *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), pp. 384-411.

[78] See Marx, Karl. "On the Jewish Question" edited in Tucker, Robert. *The Marx-Engels Reader* 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), pp. 26-52.

[79] I am, of course, referring to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994). While Said's work provides a much-needed historical insight on the power relationship between East and West, it does so by focusing on a particularistic framework to oppression. Hence, Said explains the ramification of a Eurocentric discourse on all facets of the relationship between East and West. Said comes close to a universal solution through the "decolonization" of mindsets and scholarships, but also posits that oppressive tendencies of Europeans stem from the particularistic and conflicting identities between a weak "Orient" and a strong "Occident." For more insight on relations between East and West, see Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

[80] Said, Edward. *Orientalism*, p. 286.

[81] Perlmutter, p. 8.

[82] Forbes, Steve. "Give peace a chance" in *Forbes* (October 23, 1995) p. 24.

[83] Sicherman, Harvey. "Palestinian Self-Government (Autonomy): Its Past and Its Future" in *The Washington Institute Policy Papers* 27 (1991), pp. 87-98. For other proponents of different neoliberal solutions, see also See Karl Deutsch's *The Analysis of International Relations*

(Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 74-99 and 133-141 for a dissection of the reasons behind cooperation among states in many settings of international relations.

[84] “The Politics of Statehood” in *Newsweek* (December 21, 1998), p. 38.

[85] Pelmutter, p. 8.

[86] NGOs assisting in social and economic development are as much needed as ones ensuring free and fair elections and other political freedoms.

[87] See Edward Said’s “Truth and Reconciliation,” pp. 2-3 in article.

[88] See Mike Levine’s “Birth of a nation, end of a dream?” in *Tikkun* 5 (March-April 1996), p. 27 for a Zionist perspective on Palestinian nationalism and potential statehood.

[89] For an example of revisionist scholarship on Zionism and Israeli history, see Zeev Sternhell’s *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Sternhell’s work is a major contribution to a small, but growing, field of critical revisionism that admits Zionism’s injurious past. Revisionist scholars, however, believe that such injuries were necessary and even justified because of the insidious oppression confronted by Jews before and after the founding of Israel in 1948.

[90] See Falk, Richard. *Predatory Globalization: A Critique* (Malden, MA: Polity Press), p. 24.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[92] Fisk, Milton. “Zionism, Liberalism, and the State,” found in Kapitan’s *Philosophical Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 316.

[93] Chomsky, Noam. “Rejectionism and Accommodation” edited in Peck, James. *The Chomsky Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 371-405. The “security threat” leveled against Palestinians by Israeli leaders often uses a very narrow and realist definition of security.

[94] Associated Press. “ Hamas offers truce to Israel” in *USA Today* (October 7, 1997).

[95] Associated Press. “Israel: Arabs and Jews test common ground” in *USA Today* (February 16, 1997).

[96] See Keohane, Robert and Nye, Joseph. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977)

[97] Ariga. “Coexistence with Palestinians” at www.ariga.com (November, 1997), question 3.

[98] See Edward Said’s “The One State Solution,” pp. 36-42 and Moshe Sober’s *Beyond the Jewish state: Confessions of a Former Zionist* (Toronto: Summerhill Press, 1990). While Said argues for a unified state regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, etc., Sober argues that the binational state should resemble a federation separated by nationality in order to protect the aspirations of both non-Jewish Arabs and Jews.

[99] Sober, 113.

[100] Because of the limitations of this essay, I will not discuss how the plan to maintain the Golan Heights by Sober’s CIP threatens peace with Syria.

[101] Ibid, p. 115.

[102] Ibid, p. 121.

[103] See Deborah Gerner's *One Land, Two Peoples: The Conflict over Palestine* 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) for a history of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle.

[104] Levine, Mike. "Birth of a nation, end of a dream?" in *Tikkun* 5 (March-April 1996), p. 27.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Here, I draw on other examples of universalistic understanding such as Peter Hass' "Epistemic Communities in Knowledge, power and international policy coordination" in *International Organization* 46 (1992). Through such communities, dialogue between various religious adherents and leaders can replace the traditional animosities of the old system.

[107] Aside from the lack of improvement, the PA itself does not currently possess the adequate form to revise obvious problems of development. See Barry Rubin's *The Transformation of Palestinian Politics: from revolution to State Building* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), pp. 45-70. According to Rubin, those problems have often been overlooked because of a lack in predicting the actions of a quasi-governmental regime.

[108] Tickner, J. Ann. *Gender in International Relations*, p. 62-65.

[109] For examples of revisionist visions of power see Jane Jaquette's "Power as Ideology: A Feminist Analysis," edited in Stiehm, Judith. *Women's Views of the Political World of Men* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1984).

[110] Moughrabi, p. 9.

[111] For the latest problems with the Peace process, see a seminal series of essays in Edward Said's *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and Beyond* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000).