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A RADICAL APPROACH TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: TOWARD PEACE WITHOUT NEGOTIATIONS

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1. Prologue

Following the extraordinary Israeli military victory in June 1967, the Arab Summit meeting in Khartoum in late August categorically rejected negotiating, recognizing or making peace, with Israel. The infamous “Three No’s of Khartoum” represented Arab militancy and obstructionism, while Israel continued to voice her diplomatic refrain in favor of direct negotiations as the mechanism for resolving the impasse with the Arab world. While Israel was proposing and the Arabs were opposing, each side was confident it understood where its national interests lay. Might it not be the case, however, that each side adopted a policy that was in fact incompatible with its interests? Direct negotiations can be the effective political venue for Arab gains, but for Israel a prescription for territorial loss and a large gamut of disabilities and ailments.

In this essay, we shall confront and challenge the conventional opinion regarding the importance and utility of Arab-Israeli negotiations. We put aside “politically correct” notions of conflict-resolution, and raise the banner of truth according to the record of history and as the foundation for a realistic policy proposal.

2. Preface

Israelis, both the Left and others, while knowing little of the history of nations and less of the fickleness and fragility of international political commitments, have an abiding single goal

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and obsession: to withdraw from territories and sign a piece of paper known in their world of textual legalism as a “peace agreement”. This untamed zeal disregards the profound Islamic contempt for Jews, the irrefutable Arab opposition to a Jewish state, and the savage Palestinian atavistic campaign of terror directed against Zionism and Israel for 100 years. In consideration of which, the Israeli passion for peace appears pathetic, perhaps pathological, and excessively hazardous. Peace could traumatize Israel; unleash instability and vulnerability on a grand scale, with the ink on the agreement with the Arabs dissolving into blood. It is therefore worth pondering that a status quo situation, without peace and withdrawal, is a moment of historical grace for the state of Israel and their besieged and battered people.

While negotiations are considered the effective vehicle for resolving conflicts and inaugurating peaceful relations among states, the Israeli case suggests otherwise. Negotiations with the Arabs have proven to be a source of anxiety and tension, whose results have been burdensome and worrisome. Perhaps, therefore, the path to peace does not pass through the conduit of negotiations but rather by avoiding them. This radical thesis is buttressed, as we shall show, by the record of Arab-Israeli diplomatic history.

PART ONE

3. Introduction: Competing Views on the Value of Negotiations and Agreements

Barring the elimination of one side, conflict and war between states will eventually produce a readiness for efforts at peacemaking by conducting negotiations between the rival parties. In order to induce trust and good faith in an otherwise conflictual relationship, the negotiation process aspires to a give-and-take compromising ambiance designed to overcome the stated incompatible positions dividing the sides. By talking and negotiating, tension will be reduced and the path to accommodation opened, leading then to understandings and agreements.

Examples abound in international relations from the recent decades concerning this subject. To build mutual confidence, the United States and the Soviet Union arrived at the Hot Line Agreement in 1963 to assure direct communication between the two superpowers. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 was designed, though failed in regards to India, Pakistan, and Israel, to prevent the expansion of the elite nuclear club, thereby reducing the danger of a nuclear conflagration in the world. In 1972, the US and USSR signed the bilateral SALT strategic accord, though later the Soviet Union admitted its guilt in failing to observe time limits for dismantling ICBM launchers of older-types.¹ In 1975, the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe was launched to reduce mutual uncertainty and create a security regime between Eastern and Western Europe; the Stockholm Agreements of 1986 continued the effort toward accommodation among the countries of Europe. Changing the thinking of enemies or rivals is the objective of such accords. It was not, however, apparent that the negotiating mechanism itself was the key factor, perhaps just the framework, to these developments. The central and operative strategic factor was the superpower balance and containment over European affairs.

Pursuing the diplomatic enterprise of conflict-resolution has evoked a variety of specific formulae. Charles Osgood introduced the notion of Graduated Reciprocation In Tension Reduction (GRIT), while the more current terminology regarding Confidence Building Measures (CBMS), such as addressing issues of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and disarmament, was a similar prescription toward creating a political atmosphere of calm and security. These ideas consider conflict as due to a lack of dialogue and contact between rival

sides. The fundamental obstacle to peace does not lie with radical ideologies or a disruption in the balance-of-power, but rather with the lack of a constructive learning process to bind the enemies into a community of trust. Therefore, according to this mode of thinking, the wall of distrust can be cracked by initiating meetings, launching gestures of goodwill, and thereby reshaping the interests and goals of the respective sides.²

A different outlook on negotiations considers the process marred by deception and the outcome threatened by violation. In fact, the negotiation encounter itself constitutes a forum for political warfare. Of special mention is the lack of trust deemed to characterize diplomacy. As it is, so the remark goes, the job of the ambassador to a foreign country is to lie, so it is the task of the prince to seek power and defeat adversaries like a fox, as Machiavelli advised in the 16th century. The 17th century French statesman Richelieu proposed and practiced politics according to the dictum that, “the state is above everything. The state is the value that permits all means.” This position was and is called *raison d'état*.³ No moral scruples were to stand in the way of pursuing and assuring the national interest; that interest, we may suggest, was the primary moral value.

The place of cunning in politics was for Machiavelli a general proposition ruthlessly applicable in the context of diplomacy. In *The Prince*, he wrote that a “prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reason which made him bind himself no longer exists.” To follow a virtuous path of honesty will bring ruin upon a prince and his state, while employing vices will bring security to the realm. There is in this view a clear sense of the precariousness of agreements with the likelihood that, from the very start of the negotiating mechanism, a dissembling party feigned his commitment for some advantage. The prince should preach peace and good faith but be an enemy to both.⁴

Countries would be wiser not to base their national security on treaties than to blindly rely on the word of an adversary. Norman Angell, the well-known pacifist in the period of World War I, pointed out examples of European states setting aside signed agreements with impunity. He nonetheless believed that peace should be pursued, not so much among the politicians, but by teaching the children the value of commerce and money, and the fruitlessness of aggression and war which disrupt the economic well-being of the average citizens.⁵

American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, serving under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, was endowed with a profound sense of history while he engaged in conducting global diplomacy. In 1975, he invested great time, effort, and skill in trying to bridge Israeli-Egyptian differences in order to reach a second Sinai Disengagement Agreement. He waxed impatient with Israel's demand that Egypt commit itself to non-belligerency in return for a partial withdrawal. And then mused: “What penalty has there ever been for revoking a peace agreement or for disregarding a proclamation of non-belligerency...?”⁶ Undeterred, Kissinger continued his diplomatic endeavors between the parties, perhaps with a mixture of cynicism and pragmatism.

4. Principles of Islam and Insights from Middle Eastern History

The first foundation of Islam is the *Qur'an*, considered by the Muslim believing community as the holy word of Allah, offering dogma and direction for the conduct of all aspects of life. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, serves as the inimitable human personality of perfection whose words and actions constitute a binding model for emulation. As the transmitter and messenger of Islam, Muhammad teaches his followers that “the party of Allah will triumph”

over the enemies designated as the infidels – Jews and Christians – whose friendship the Muslim believers should not seek.⁷

The *Qur`an* conveys a view of deep hostility toward Jews, who received a revelatory text but betrayed it, breaking their covenant with God, implacable in their enmity to the Muslim believers (*al-Mu`minin*). Noteworthy is the fact that the term “believers” is reserved generically solely for the Muslims inasmuch all other ostensible people of faith possess but an aspect of belief, whose fullness and completeness descended only with the appearance of Islam. It becomes incumbent upon the Muslims to make war against those “to whom the Scriptures were given [but] believe neither in God nor the Last Day...who do not embrace the true faith [Islam]”.⁸ Jews, obligated to pay tribute and suffer humiliation under Muslim rule, are targeted by Muhammad and his militant followers in an endless struggle until Islam triumphs over them.

Inasmuch as a state of war between Islam and Jews is a fixed political situation, no permanent treaty can be negotiated unless employed as a ploy to gain the Muslims advantages until the final assault is launched. Securing the objective of *Dar Al-Islam* (The Territory of Islam) as a total global Muslim religious triumph denies from the start the legitimacy of a Jewish state denigrated as a religious affront to the primacy of Islam in Palestine.

The massacre of the Jewish Arabian tribe, *al-Qurayza*, in 627 was at the same time an act of treachery on the part of Muhammad more than it was an act of war.⁹ The same judgment applies to the fate of the Treaty of *al-Hudaibiya* from 628 between the Muslims and the pagan Meccans. Two years later, Muhammad executed his staged strategy and turned his diplomacy into conquest. The treaty had been exploited by Muhammad in a deceptive fashion for the purpose of attaching nomadic tribes to the expanding Muslim community, this at the expense of his Meccan rivals.¹⁰ The subsequent seizure of Mecca in 630 was a military take-over mediated by a truce agreement that camouflaged, so it would seem, Muhammad’s conquering intent that buoyed the wave of the expanding Islamic religion.

The use of deception is manifested no less in the *Qur`an*’s depiction of God. Muhammad’s enemies schemed against him, but Allah schemed even better in order to save his prophetic messenger. Indeed, declares the *Qur`an*, “God is most profound in his machinations.”¹¹ This crafty characteristic attributed to the Divine becomes a sacred model for the Muslims to follow in their political machinations.

The idea of feigning behavior (*tahalluq*) or posing a false identity to avoid danger (*taqiyya*) constitutes part of the cultural arsenal for Muslim cunning in problematic situations. European travelers to the East would encounter Muslim dissimulation in their daily experiences. One fascinating and humorous example was related by A.W. Kinglake in the mid-19th century during his crossing of the Sinai desert. He misplaced his trust in a band of Bedouin with whom he entered into an agreement for safe passage, only to eventually be apprised of their devious tactics. While unlocking the cultural code of the Muslim East, Kinglake was informed of a local proverb that admonished you “to treat your friend as though he were one day to become your enemy, and your enemy as though he were one day to become your friend.”¹² Isabel Burton, wife of the daring and insightful English traveler Richard Burton of the 1850s, supported Kinglake’s dictum: “In the East it is safer to treat everyone as if he might someday be your enemy.”¹³ This mental convolution hardly ranks as a formula to generate trust among people.

The place of deception in Muslim diplomacy assumed a central place in Ottoman Turkish reforms inaugurated to mollify Europeans through the 19th century. Known as the *Tanzimat* reform period from 1839-1876, Turkish policy in need of British support in facing the

northern Russian threat was especially designed to convey the impression that Muslim rule would no longer discriminate against Christian inhabitants of the Turkish Empire. But in fact, Christians in Mount Lebanon and Armenians across their historic homeland were subjected to violence and massacre despite promises of good government and religious equality. The *Tanzimat*, though possessing an air of political earnestness and intellectual conviction, misled Europeans who discovered that the word of the Muslims was empty of content.¹⁴

The Turks violated both the *Dhimma* of Islamic lore that guarantees security to docile non-Muslims and the *Tanzimat* that offered equality and liberty in the Ottoman Empire. In 1856, popular Muslim fanaticism erupted against Christians in the towns of Nablus and Gaza; in the 1860s, Christian testimony was not accepted evidence in courts in Bulgaria and Bosnia. The *dhimmis* continued to live in fear and without government protection while the rhetoric of reform was diplomacy as deception and not policy.¹⁵

5. Zionism and the Arabs

The Jewish pioneers in *Eretz-Israel* (the Land of Israel), or Palestine, in the early 20th century acquired a familiarity with the Arabs in the country, their manners and customs, and often their hostility to the Zionist enterprise. Seeking ways to elicit Arab accommodation did not blind most Jews to the extreme difficulty of achieving this objective. Moshe Smilansky from Rehovot expressed in, 1914, a widespread view of the Arab: "If he senses you have power, he'll capitulate and keep his hatred of you in his heart. And if he senses your weakness, he'll rule you." No authentic or permanent understanding would logically be possible while the Arab keeps his hatred of the Jew in his heart. Yet, Smilansky refused oddly enough to draw this conclusion, believing instead that a bridge of trust between Jews and Arabs in the land could be built.¹⁶

Zionism enters into Jewish history after a 2,000-year hiatus of powerlessness and statelessness, with Jews distant from participating in politics and diplomacy. This experience of political deprivation does not deny the vast experience of life that Jews acquired over the centuries, but it is nonetheless critical to appreciate that, lacking not only armies and diplomats, the Jews lacked a sense of political self-affirmation against enemies and adversaries. Their collective marginalization in history impeded a confident realism in dealing with the Arabs of Palestine, but without denying their ability to cultivate one in time.

The Arabs – or Muslims – were in contrast used to exercising power, ruling over others, and spreading their armies of conquest far and wide. For them, politics was a natural game, roughing up Jews a favorite pastime, and deriding others' claims a veritable writ from Heaven.

The question of negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs was calculated in terms of the Jewish-Arab power equation. Zionists shied away from pursuing dialogue when they were or appeared to be in a weak position. One Jerusalem journalist commented in the 1920s that, "Whenever they [the Arabs] see our peace-overtures, the Arabs think that they are the stronger ones."¹⁷ Skilled in maintaining good relations with Bedouin sheikhs, by means of gifts and amicability, could be more beneficial for the Jews than trying to negotiate a political peace with the Arab majority population in Palestine.

Ben-Gurion, who headed the Zionist movement in *Eretz-Israel* during the critical pre-State of Israel period, conducted talks with Arab personalities, as in the 1930s, to explore the possibility of a formal accommodation between the two sides. The Zionists were adamant in demanding nothing less than a future Jewish majority in the country, which certainly made

Arab assent exceedingly unlikely. In 1936, Ben-Gurion pointed out to his colleagues that Zionism cannot rely on the Balfour Declaration, which was being challenged by Arabs and the English,

the Versailles Treaty which was being torn into bits, the Covenant of the League of Nations, signed by 34 states, has been rendered valueless [with Japanese aggression against Manchuria] and, the Assyrians and the Armenians have been deceived [denied statehood, autonomy, or security], and the Locarno Pact [of 1925] has been nullified [by German remilitarization of the Rhineland] – a pact guaranteed by England, Italy, and France, three powerful states. Italy [in Ethiopia] has violated the law in the face of the entire world.¹⁸

Treaties and agreements proved worthless pieces of paper in world affairs, prodding Ben-Gurion to stress that building the Jewish national home must advance regardless of any understandings, if achieved, written or oral, with the British or the Arabs.

Meanwhile, the attempt at negotiations with the Arabs of Palestine, conducted in the mid-to-late 1930s, left Ben-Gurion suspicious that the Arab interlocutors were “neither frank nor authorized”. The Arab spokesmen seemed to be acting deceitfully, backing away from their initial proposals. In 1947, the Palestinian Arabs rejected the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, as they had earlier rejected the Peel Commission Partition Plan in 1937. Rejecting compromise, the Arabs chose war and suffered abysmal defeat.

PART TWO

The path of negotiations can fail because the positions put forward by the rival sides are incompatible, with no bridge of compromise to close the gap. In addition, negotiations fail when the two parties are culturally at odds, with no shared trust, and agreements remain empty pieces of paper. Thereby, both reasons of substance and texture can prevent reconciliation. This is the case with the Arab-Israeli conflict, and while the failure of negotiations typically highlights the conflicting positions of the two sides, we shall pay special attention to the problematics and complexities of negotiations as a medium for building a relationship of peace between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East.

6. The 1949 Armistice Agreements

The period of the Arab assault on the Jewish community (*ha-yishuv*) in late 1947 and the State of Israel in May 1948 ended, following some truces, with the signing of four armistice agreements in 1949. Once Israel secured her national survival on the battlefield, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria committed themselves to “the transition to a permanent peace in Palestine”. In Article Three, paragraph 3, the parties undertook the obligation to prevent any “warlike act or act of hostility” emanating from their territory against the co-signing state.¹⁹ Through the years 1951-1956, however, thousands of acts of hostile infiltration and murderous attacks took place from Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian territories. The Gaza Strip (of Egypt), Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank” of Jordan), and the Golan Heights (of Syria) were staging grounds for terrorism against Israeli civilian populations, respectively: in the northern Negev, the interior plain and the area of Jerusalem, and the Jordan Valley. The Mixed Armistice Commissions heard the complaints, recorded the incidents, but the Arab war against Israel continued relentlessly. Lebanon, unlike the distinctly Arab states, attempted to prevent terrorist infiltration into Israel and aspired to a quiet border.

The Israeli-Jordanian armistice agreement carried a special proviso in Article Eight calling for the “resumption of the normal functioning of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus...with free access to the Holy Places...and use of the cemetery on the Mount of

Olives.” But the Jordanian regime and King Hussein violated these provisions, condemning the Hebrew University and the Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus to stagnation and a moribund condition; Israeli access to the Western Wall was denied while synagogues in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem were destroyed; and the ancient Mount of Olives Jewish burial ground was desecrated and closed off. The Jordanians used Jewish grave stones for paths and latrines. Jordanian legionnaires shot and sniped at Jews in the Israeli part of the city; and one of their particularly wanton attacks occurred in September 1956 with the murder of participants attending the international archeological seminar at the Ramat Rachel kibbutz at the southern end of Jerusalem.²⁰

For her part, Syria routinely violated the armistice by firing on Israeli farmers in the Jordan Valley and at fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee (the *Kinneret*), while permitting Fatah terrorist infiltrations from her territory. According to one scholarly authority, Syria as the ideological beating heart of the Arab world made it clear in the 1950s, that “she would not acquiesce in the existence of the State of Israel and would endeavor to bring about its annihilation.”²¹

Egypt initially did little to stop *fedayeen* Palestinian terrorism from the Gaza Strip penetrating Israeli territory. Later, Egypt encouraged, trained, and armed these irregular guerrillas, while at the same time violating international law by preventing Israel’s use of the Suez Canal. Thereafter, Egypt further exacerbated the situation by closing Israeli shipping lanes through the Straits of Tiran to the port of Eilat.

In response to Arab provocation, threats, and attacks, Israel took decisive military action. She went to war against Egypt in 1956, then later preempted in 1967. She carried out punitive measures against Jordan, and in June 1967 responded to Jordanian aggression by capturing Judea, Samaria and East Jerusalem. In that same June 1967 war, Israelis fought their way up to the Golan Heights and, once and for all, brought to an end Syrian bellicosity that covered the period that had begun in 1948.

There is, however, a view according to which Israel was the guilty party for armistice violations and the absence of peace until 1967. Some historians contend that in the early years following Israel’s founding, King Abdallah of Jordan wanted an agreement with Israel, so too Syrian dictator Husni Zaim, no less Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt.²² The Arab desire for peace was met by Israeli intransigence after 1948, according to the revisionist historian Avi Shlaim.²³ Benny Morris, for his part, concluded that Israel missed chances for peace.²⁴

What bears clarification are the specific Arab conditions for peace with Israel. Syria demanded that Israel agree to draw a line down the Sea of Galilee, thereby ceding half of it, when Israel’s water needs were beyond the question of sovereignty and security, a compelling national interest. Jordan wanted a port on Israel’s Mediterranean coast, possibly Haifa, and part of the northern Negev desert. Egypt demanded that Israel concede the southern Negev in order to provide a direct link from the Sinai to Jordan and the Arab East. These points elucidate what will emerge in 1967 thereafter as a political pattern in Arab policy demands: peace in exchange for territorial withdrawal. Before 1967, Israel rebuffed such transparent and slippery Arab diplomacy. After 1967, however, Israel was more than once tempted to enter into this fragile framework of “territories for peace”.

The Arab violations of the armistice agreements in letter and spirit demonstrated bad will for any future and serious peace negotiations. The Arab economic boycott of Israel, pan-Arab ideological warfare, and a complete diplomatic blockade of Israel, were part of the Arab campaign – always military in the making – against the isolated Jewish state. Moreover, the Arab demands in connection with the possibility of peace with Israel were, before 1967,

demonstrative of a plan to diminish Israel's territory and sabotage her limited water resources, without any guarantee that there was an authentic commitment to recognize Israel's national legitimacy as a Jewish state. In conclusion, the armistice produced war and not peace, along with distrust and animosity on a high scale. Negotiations were aborted at the source and the conflict remained unresolved.

7. The Agreements in the 1970s

(a) The August 7, 1970 Suez Canal Ceasefire Agreement between Israel and Egypt

The aftermath of the June 1967 Six Day War was especially marked by Egypt launching a war of attrition against Israeli forces in Sinai and along the east bank of the Suez Canal. Rejecting UN Security Resolution 242, which had prompted the formula of "territories for peace", President Nasser chose war over negotiations as a statement of political resolve in place of diplomatic accommodation. Nonetheless, unable to force any Israeli territorial withdrawal, and impotent to impose this task upon the United States, Nasser agreed to American efforts to bring about a military ceasefire. According to the agreement, both Israel and Egypt would distance their armed forces 50 kilometers east and west of the canal, respectively, thus freezing the location of their missile batteries.

Immediately upon the signing of the agreement, Israel reported to the United States that Egypt had violated it by deploying its missiles closer to the Suez Canal line. Though initially skeptical of this charge, US intelligence sources confirmed the Egyptian violations on August 14, just a week after the agreement was signed. On August 19, the US State Department further acknowledged the violations.²⁵ Introducing Soviet SAM missiles in the Suez Canal zone was not only an infraction of the "stand-still" agreement, but a provocation and preparation for a future war initiative to be undertaken by Egypt.

The United States, for her part, had successfully negotiated a ceasefire agreement between the two major regional rival powers. However, Egypt was more successful in breaking the American-mediated accord with impunity. Washington's accommodation with Arab violations would become, like Israel's political reticence, a fixed and disturbing pattern of behavior over the years.

(b) The January 18, 1974 Israeli-Egyptian Disengagement Agreement

Although Egyptian President Anwar Sadat successfully launched a surprise attack against Israeli forces in the Sinai on October 6, 1973, thereby igniting the Yom Kippur War, he was reportedly guided by the objective of reaching thereafter a final peace agreement with Israel. This kind of strategic double-talk is certainly no less cunning than the elliptical notion whereby Sadat had concealed his intention to go to war by having repeatedly declared his intention to do so. Of course, he would have equally been successful in hiding his intention to go to war by saying nothing.

With the war between Egypt and Israel drawing to a finish toward late October 1973, Sadat continued to dazzle and bamboozle his interlocutors. Talking about peace, he made it clear that only the next generation could decide about normalization. He would end belligerency – but call it peace. Sadat was willing to receive "his" Sinai back, without making peace with Israel.²⁶

Then, subjected to Secretary of State Kissinger's proddings and polemics, Israel succumbed to withdraw from the swath of territory it had captured west of the Suez Canal within Egypt proper, and from a strip of territory on the east bank as well. With this, a buffer zone was established for the disengagement of Israeli and Egyptian forces. Note that Israeli withdrawal was euphemized as "disengagement" in this round of negotiations. Any Egyptian undertakings in the context of the agreement were – in the immoral oddities of Arab-Israeli diplomacy – made to the United States. Israel gave up concrete assets for absolutely nothing substantive in return. Kissinger would nevertheless argue to the Israelis that American involvement was to their benefit, yet how much more was it a great boon to Egypt.

(c) The May 17, 1974 Israeli-Syrian Disengagement Agreement

Kissingerian "step-by-step" diplomacy coalesced with the Arabs' refusal to conduct face-to-face direct negotiations with Israel, with the attendant highlighting of America's essential mediating role. Kissinger began his acquaintanceship with Syrian President Hafez al-Asad in December 1973, while pursuing the goal of convening a Geneva Conference designed to transfer the October War into the arena of conflict-resolution. Despite long negotiation sessions with Kissinger, and a certain agreement to the Geneva idea, Asad surprised his American counterpart by clarifying that he yet had no intention to attend the December 21, 1973 conference. Kissinger, never concealing his manifest self-assurance, had the audacity to accuse Asad of "inexperience in negotiation" in 1974.²⁷ But at the same time, Kissinger recognized the Syrian's president's own personal superciliousness, stating that "Asad sought a guarantee of the result before he would begin negotiating."²⁸ This reflects a judgment of Asad's bravado but perhaps also of his compelling and rigorous skill in forcing an agreement that fits his fundamental objectives. So who was the successful negotiator in this titanic diplomatic wrestle: the subtle Kissinger or the wily Asad?

In the course of the talks that continued until May 1974, Asad settled points of disagreement, but then would re-open these points. He bartered hard to get without giving Israel anything in return. In the end, the Israeli-Syrian agreement on the Golan Heights included demilitarized zones, limited forces deployment, and a United Nations monitoring team. Expectedly, Israel was pushed to concede land – what she conquered from Syria in the 1973 War and also a small area around the town of Quneitra, captured earlier in the 1967 War. Prime Minister Golda Meir bemoaned that America had brought Israel to capitulate to Syria – *which had lost both wars*, and yet recovered Quneitra! The agreement was at one and the same time a Kissingerian triumph and an observable political pattern which confirmed an irking fact: US-Arab negotiations were singularly preoccupied from start-to-finish with Israeli territorial concessions.

Subsequent months and years demonstrated that Syria would violate the letter and spirit of the US-mediated accord. Despite the understanding discussed, Syria left Quneitra desolate rather than rebuilding it as a sign of normalization. In December 1974, Israel's Defense Minister Shimon Peres revealed that the Syrians had stationed weapons in a reduced forces zone on the Golan in excess of that permitted under the agreement.²⁹ There were subsequent infractions in the positioning of excess weaponry beyond that authorized by the agreement.

Equally pernicious was the Syrian policy of employing proxy elements, especially *Hizbullah* in southern Lebanon, to pursue a war of terrorism against Israel rather than reach an accommodation with her. In addition, Damascus became the home and sanctuary for a variety of Palestinian terrorist organizations, like *Hamas* and the Islamic *Jihad*, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front, which engaged in a savage campaign of

terrorism within Israel through to the launching of the *Intifadat al-Aqsa* in the year 2000 and thereafter.

Yet, the Syrians overwhelmingly observed the ceasefire and disengagement arrangements with Israel on the Golan Heights. The UNDOF mandate providing for a United Nations monitoring station was renewed every six months. The negotiations from 1974 were an exercise in hardball diplomacy, without direct contacts between Israel and Syria. But the agreement held strong over many years. The fact that it failed to lead to a peace treaty suggests that the strategic components of the situation, rather than any political thawing in the Israeli-Syrian relationship, were the formidable reason for the quiet on the border. The Israeli army was (is) just 60 kilometers from Damascus, and this is a weighty factor of deterrence bearing on Syrian military calculations. Any major eruption of fighting could have disastrous consequences for the Syrian capital city and the survival of the Alawite regime. The laws of warfare are stronger than the ephemeral whims of diplomacy that, in any case, are here today and gone tomorrow.

(d) The September 1, 1975 Sinai II Agreement Between Israel and Egypt

Sadat refused to make a peace treaty with Israel or declare the accord to be a commitment to non-belligerency, that is, an end to the state of war. Prime Minister Rabin, who in the spring of 1975 balked at succumbing to an accord which offered no substantive payoff for Israel, conceded in the fall to withdraw Israeli forces from the oil fields and strategic Mitla and Giddi passes in Sinai in order to conciliate the Americans and achieve an agreement with Egypt.

Meanwhile, Sadat had expressed his view that even a political settlement would not bring a final termination to the overall conflict.³⁰ Indeed, a strong intellectual current within Egypt was proposing peace as the mode of struggle to eliminate Israel in stages. Accepting the Jewish state and normalizing relations with her would impose a Cold War style of confrontation designed to ultimately drown Israel in the encompassing Arab realm in the Middle East. Journalist Muhammad Sid Ahmad's *When the Guns Fall Silent* in 1975 delineated the path of absorbing Israel, but through accommodation and co-existence, as a policy of diplomatic finesse.

The second interim Sinai Accord of 1975 was nonetheless considered by Kissinger as “*de facto* nonbelligerency” based on Egyptian assurances given to President Ford. Sadat, suggested Kissinger, “was tired of war” such that the historic moment mattered more than the text of the agreement itself.³¹ That Egypt had signed a separate agreement further convinced Kissinger that Sadat was committed to peace with Israel.

Egypt agreed to re-open the Suez Canal, rebuild canal cities, and accept US sensor verification stations in Sinai. But, as in 1970, Egypt infringed on the military annex regarding military units permitted in the limited force zones.³²

Israel was able to extract from the United States certain commitments regarding weapons sales, non-acceptance of the PLO, and a guarantee of oil supplies. The diplomatic trajectory led to Washington, rather than Cairo, while the territorial pullback from part of Sinai brought no requisite Egyptian concession to Israel at all.

(e) The 1978-79 Camp David Accords Between Israel and Egypt

Anwar Sadat, introspective and inscrutable, was a master of surprises. In August 1977, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance visited Egypt and heard from Sadat that Washington needs to

play an active diplomatic role in the conflict. Sadat then astounded Vance and pulled out a draft peace treaty (with Israel). He then went on to say that he and Vance had agreed to form working groups before reconvening the Geneva Conference. According to William Quandt, “Vance was still not sure what Sadat had in mind.” While Vance was impressed with Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, “Sadat was harder to read.”³³

The visit of Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem that same year, on November 19, 1977, was a stunning political performance. Sadat the actor was in his theatrical element. The Israelis were entranced by the Egyptian president, and hungered for political acceptance by the major Arab state. In his Knesset speech in Arabic the next day, Sadat articulated his mantra of peace, but clarified firmly: “Our land does not yield itself to bargaining; it is not even open to argument.” He then delineated the parameters of the “peace with justice” he was putting on the table: “Complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied after 1967 is a logical and undisputed fact. Nobody should plead for that.” In order to avoid misunderstanding or self-delusion on the part of the Israelis, Sadat made it crystal-clear that his peace formula included a Palestinian state and the right of refugee return.³⁴ This peace prescription, distinct from the drama of the moment, was a political *diktat* that preempted meaningful negotiations and demanded Israel’s capitulation.

After Sadat’s Jerusalem visit, Begin visited him at Ismailiya in December. The Israeli delegation was given a cold reception, a foreboding of the cold peace to come. Yet the Israeli Prime Minister said to the Egyptian president: “Not only will we make peace – we will become friends.” Begin’s dreaminess was matched by Ezer Weizman’s foolishness. The Israeli Defense Minister ignored Sadat’s dogmatic Knesset speech, saying that Sadat was “not interested in a Palestinian state...”³⁵ Admittedly, the Egyptian was enigmatic and dizzied his Israeli counterparts by altering his thoughts. Weizman, mystified by Sadat, grudgingly admitted that Sadat vindicated those who accused him of being changeable, renegeing on undertakings. Sadat, a sophisticated political chameleon, was too wily a diplomatic master for the Israelis.

Later, during the intense Camp David Summit in September 1978, Sadat demanded all the territories and Palestinian refugee return, without mentioning diplomatic relations with Israel. This hinted that even when relations with Israel would be forced upon Sadat, he would empty them of any content or warmth. Thus, even if he submitted to the rival’s point, Sadat would not surrender to the other’s vision of peace. The Egyptian President, moreover, would say different things to different people during the marathon talks at Camp David. William Quandt, who participated in President Carter’s delegation, did not balk from saying that Sadat was “something of an actor”. Posturing and lying went hand-in-hand: Sadat was to renege on sending an ambassador to Israel a month after the first interim withdrawal from Sinai.

Although a formal exchange of ambassadors did take place, Egypt withdrew her ambassador from Israel from 1982 until 1985. In the period of the Palestinian *al-Aqsa Intifada* beginning in 2000, no Egyptian ambassador was present in Israel. The first Israeli ambassador to Egypt, Eliyahu Ben-Elissar, and his wife suffered from social ostracism in Cairo, and subsequent Israeli ambassadors were isolated and fearful for their physical safety. Egyptian political and professional circles opposed anything resembling normalization with Israel, in commerce and contacts, while vilifying the Jewish state. Egypt continued to amass modern American armaments, and prepare its army for war, though no enemy threat existed at all. Assuming its regional power status while contending with Israel as a hegemonic competitor was the Egyptian strategic ambition. In these circumstances, then, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed on March 26, 1979 was no more than a non-belligerence truce being tested daily. What you negotiate in the Arab Middle East and even agree upon is not what you get in the end.

Face-to-face negotiations, a traditional Israeli demand, assure neither mutual confidence between the sides nor the fulfillment of a signed agreement. Without honesty, negotiations become a masquerade for political deceit. Some analysts, nonetheless, considered that Egypt had engaged in a process of building trust with Israel leading to abandoning the existential conflict with her.³⁶ Judging, however, that Israel's right to exist is still rejected, a quasi-peace is then just a temporary arrangement. Indeed, the distinguished *al-Azhar* Islamic authorities in Cairo issued a religious decision in May 1979, acknowledging that if "the good of Muslims requires accommodation and truce with the enemies", then a Muslim ruler can do so. The *al-Hudaibiya* Pact of 628 was mentioned as a precedent for Sadat signing an agreement with Israel. The Muslims, therefore, can use diplomacy to serve Arab interests and advance Islam's supremacy, as in recovering lands from Israel, without agreeing to normal relations with Israel.³⁷ Facing this kind of adversary, Israel's thirst for peace then becomes an emotional trap for political defeat. Psychological manipulation is a more effective Arab weapon than are their military arms on the battlefield.

8. Arab Interlude: Broken Agreements and Promises Among Brothers

Political deception toward non-Muslims is only part of the sweeping role of guile guiding Arab behavior that consumes goodwill among Arabs themselves as well. Pan-Arab unity schemes have abounded, but Arab scheming laid them to rest.

The Egyptian-Syrian merger within the United Arab Republic survived just three years, from 1958 until 1961. Subsequent unity talks in 1963 among Egypt, Syria, and Iraq led to a signed agreement, but failed to materialize. In December 1969, the Tripoli Charter binding Egypt, Libya, and Sudan came to zero. The 1970 Federation of Arab Republics, with Syria joining the Tripoli Charter states, met an identical fate. In late October 1978, Syria and Iraq signed the Charter of Joint National Action in pursuance of unity; nothing happened. In September 1980, Syria and Libya agreed on a merger; nothing happened. In February 1985, Jordan and the Palestinians agreed on a federation framework; again, nothing happened. We can only explain this pattern of rhetoric and gestures as political ritual to make an impression, in the name of sacred Arab unity, but without any commitment at all to carry out such a project. Making an impression is far more significant than keeping one's word. Here is politics as a theater of masks and roles of no inherent value.³⁸

The Arab record of false pretenses and broken agreements seems endless. In the 1970s, the PLO in Lebanon became the primary cause of warfare, as the Christian population struggled to maintain its communal integrity and political power. One commentator considered Yasser Arafat a pathological liar who had signed 72 ceasefires in a span of 18 months during 1975-76, and then broke each one of them.³⁹ Another report maintained that from 1975 until 1982, Arafat violated 786 ceasefire agreements with the Lebanese. This was Arafat's testing-ground for future negotiations with the Israelis.

Shall we not presume that, if lying in Arabic is current, then lying in English will be rampant? And, if deceiving a Muslim is the rule, then cheating a non-Muslim will be the law? Arab-Israeli negotiations thereby appear superfluous and even counter-productive in the effort to resolve the complex struggle between two sides, bound by no common language or culture, religion or ideology; rather they are separated by a chasm of hostility that make of direct negotiations a facade for confrontation, but not an arena of reconciliation.

9. The 1993 Oslo Accord Between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization

The Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991 launched a negotiating track between Israel and Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, and Lebanese, respectively. These direct talks failed, however, to produce agreements among the parties. But while they were conducted, Israelis and Palestinians began to hold secret meetings which over time, through 1992-93, were transformed from semi-official contacts into official negotiations. Under the good offices of Norway, the two sides produced the Oslo Accords, called a *Declaration of Principles [DoP] on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, that was signed on September 13, 1993, in Washington.

In order to rescue the PLO from financial and political annihilation following the 1991 Gulf War, Farouk Kaddoumi, heading the PLO Political Department, considered the peace process a “compulsory track”.⁴⁰ Indeed, Arafat and Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) were themselves behind the secret Oslo talks that were camouflaged by the Madrid negotiating framework. Thus, both the matrix and motive for Oslo were fraudulent.

The DoP served ostensibly as a compromise interim settlement until final status negotiations would determine the ultimate political fate of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip territories, and the Palestinian population therein. The government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had decided “to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict...and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security”. The Accords called for Israeli withdrawal, initially from Gaza and Jericho, thereafter from other areas under Israeli control. A Palestinian Authority would govern the Palestinian territories, supplemented by a “strong police force”, on the path to later resolving outstanding issues touching Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and Jewish settlements. Disputes between the two sides would, Article XV clarified, be resolved “by negotiations”. For some, the Oslo Agreement constituted “the historic reconciliation”.⁴¹

The September 1993 Declaration of Principles led to the May 1994 Cairo Accord, for implementing an initial Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, and then to Oslo II in September 1995 for further withdrawals from Palestinian towns and rural village areas in Judea and Samaria. Although obliged to prevent terrorism and hostilities, avoid anti-Israeli propaganda and anti-Semitic vilifications, limit its police force and collect illegal weapons, the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat did absolutely nothing of the kind. *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* were not disarmed: rather they engaged in urban terrorism in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, with Arafat’s own *Fatah* and *Tanzim* forces adding to the sweep of Palestinian violence against Jews and Israel. Confident in Israel’s capitulation and the PLO’s victory, Arafat declared in November 1995 that “the struggle will continue until all of Palestine is liberated” – Haifa and Hadera included.⁴²

During the 1990s, Israel both failed to ensure the full implementation of the Accords, or to cancel and bring to an end the process of Israeli concessions altogether. From the initial Oslo Agreement of 1993 through to the Wye River Memorandum of 1998, the PLO derisively mocked Israel, violated the agreements and ignored its commitments, while pursuing the path of terrorism. Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister under Yitzhak Rabin and after his assassination in 1995, Prime Minister, sang of the New Middle East that would be dominated “by banks not tanks, ballots not bullets”. But the Palestinians with Arafat at the lead sang a different song, about “*Jihad, Jihad, Jihad*” – as in the PLO Chairman’s harangue at the Dehaishe refugee camp near Bethlehem in 1996.

For Arafat, negotiations were a model of strategic deception based on Muslim models. On a few occasions he would mention Mohammad the prophet of Islam having accepted the *al-Hudaibiya* treaty with the Meccans in the seventh century, and Salah a-Din accepting an agreement with Richard the Lionhearted in the twelfth century, only to then renew the holy war against the infidels. There was, therefore, nothing inherently honest or binding about agreements made by 20th century Muslims with the Jews of Israel.

The Palestinian political war of attrition, with talks, understandings, and agreements abounding, paralleled the Palestinian war of terrorism. During the period of September 1993 through September 2000, 256 Israelis, civilians and soldiers, had been killed by Palestinian terrorists.⁴³ With the new *intifada* (which began in October 2000), Palestinian warfare produced about 800 more Israeli victims by June 2003. Suicide bombings, a fanatic Islamic mode of warfare against Jews, struck across Israel, blowing up innocent civilians on buses and in restaurants, in Tel Aviv, Netanya, Kfar Saba, Nahariya, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. The Jewish residents of Judea and Samaria were ambushed on the roads and attacked in their homes – in Itamar, Adura, and Elon Moreh. The Palestinian media routinely described Jews as liars, cheaters, and treacherous, in a way that this collective character assassination of the Jewish people could make Palestinian lying and cheating acts of self-defense and precaution in the face of a wily foe. Kindergarten teachers taught Palestinian children to despise Jews and take up the violent struggle at an early age. To become a *shahid* (Muslim martyr) in fighting the Israelis, in the process of trying to recover Palestine from the Zionists, was a matter of historical justice and a religious obligation.⁴⁴

The negotiated settlement between Israel and the PLO from 1993 became a political dead letter, though this truth seemed not to penetrate the thick mental layers of Israeli self-delusion. Prime Minister Rabin had stated after a terrorist bombing of a bus in Tel-Aviv in 1995 that Israel had no choice but to continue conducting relations with Yasser Arafat. Uri Savir, a major negotiator of the Oslo process, referred in 1996 to Israel's "Palestinian partner in peace, [with whom] we feel we can work together..."⁴⁵ The Israeli Left in particular was anxious not to cut the political umbilical cord binding it with the killers of Jews.

In March of 1996, the *Middle East Digest* reported that Arafat had told Arab diplomats at a meeting in Stockholm, that the "PLO plans to eliminate Israel" by stages. This was vintage Palestinian Grand Strategy, bleeding Israel to death, wearing down its resolve, whittling away at its fortitude, dividing its public and political elites, sabotaging its international ties, and frightening its people to flee from the cauldron of violence to the safe havens of Western countries. In demanding Palestinian refugee return as an unalterable demand, the PLO would be sure to flood Israel with vengeful returnees ("who will smash Tel Aviv with axes, guns, hands, fingernails, and teeth" in the jubilant warrior spirit described by Palestinian author Nasir ad-Din an-Nashashibi in 1962). Oslo meant nothing more than war in the thin guise of peace and accommodation. For behind the deceitful texts and empty words of Oslo stood Palestinian steadfastness (*sumud*), to remain in Palestine and sacrifice "lives, sons, blood, property, and homes", in the words of Shaikh Ibrahim Mudayris at the Ijlin Mosque in Gaza on April 28, 2003; and to wait 100 years to return to Jaffa and Jerusalem as Farouk Kaddoumi had said back in 1975, because the ultimate goal was never peace with the Jews but victory over Israel to the end.

But Israeli utopianism remained irrepressible through the 1990s. The October 1994 Peace Accord signed between Israel and Jordan was evoked by King Hussein's promise of "a warm peace", unlike the cold peace with Egypt.⁴⁶ The prominent professional associations, the Islamic movements, and the Palestinians within Jordan, however, assured that the peace with

Israel would be no more than a non-war agreement at best. Normalization was taboo even though it was promised by the King himself.

With Syria, negotiations persisted through the decade but, following Asad's obstinacy in rejecting Israel's plea for open borders, embassies, and normalization, no agreement was reached.⁴⁷ Prime Minister Ehud Barak was clearly pining for peace with Syria, but even his excessive generosity in negotiations during 1999-2000 could not adequately satisfy Hafez al-Asad's appetite to gain a foothold on the Sea of Galilee.

The *New Middle East* was a political phantom for the imaginings of Shimon Peres, but lit no fire of interest among the Arabs. Many in the Arab world fear Israel can overwhelm the entire region, not just militarily, but commercially and technologically as well. Israel, as the repository of modern Western ideas and political institutions, threatens the cultural integrity of Muslim societies and Arab authoritarian regimes. Thus, the regional economic conferences at Casablanca in 1994 and Amman in 1995 failed to launch substantive ties with Israel, though a few Arab countries like Morocco, Tunisia, and Qatar, opened interests offices – and Mauritania, diplomatic relations – with Israel. Suspecting Israeli hegemonic aspirations and capabilities, the Arabs shy away from the trappings – or trap – of normalization as an unacceptable price to pay for any political settlement with Israel.⁴⁸ Hilal Khashan confirmed in his research that, while some agreement with Israel may be acceptable, normal relations and people-to-people friendliness are not part of the future Arab political prognosis.⁴⁹ Negotiations cannot easily break down cultural barriers and religious hostility deeply embedded in the hearts of Muslims and Arabs in the region. Therefore, all of the articles dealing with normalization in the 1979 Camp David Accord with Egypt, the 1993 Accord with the Palestinians, and the 1994 Treaty with Jordan, have yet left Israel a political leper and pariah state in (most of) the Arab Middle East. Peace is no more than a truce in the long existential struggle spanning millennia between Judaism and Islam, the Jews and the Muslims, Israel and the Arab world.

Learning little and remembering less, Israeli leaders persisted in their search for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians. Regarding the Wye Memorandum of 1998, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that “our Palestinian partners will join us in fighting terrorism.”⁵⁰ Not to be outdone in enthusiasm and self-praise, Prime Minister Barak declared at the signing of the Sharm e-Sheikh Memorandum of 1999: “Today we are paving the way to the end of a century of conflict between us and the Palestinians.”⁵¹ This untainted optimism persisted against the ritual of rhetorical replay of Palestinian commitments still unfulfilled and despite Israeli concessions of territorial withdrawal, prisoner release, and safe passage between Gaza, Judea and Samaria.

Then later, in July 2000, Barak seemed to be forced to the conclusion that something ran aground in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For, after offering Arafat over 90 percent of Judea and Samaria (including the removal of Jewish settlements), East Jerusalem, partial refugee return, and all wrapped into the package of a sovereign state of Palestine – Arafat said “no”. Subsequent efforts to revive the negotiations failed to achieve a breakthrough toward an agreement that would bring, according to Ehud Barak, “an end to the conflict”. Barak, for all of his goodwill, still did not comprehend that a signed peace treaty with the Palestine Liberation Organization would not itself bring “an end to the conflict”, but rather be a stage of the Palestinian “phases strategy” to annihilate Israel completely down the short narrow road of history. Arafat, through his foolish rejectionism at the Clinton-mediated Camp David Summit, helped Israel survive its own illusionary hopes.

The PLO got a police force, not to keep the peace or disarm *Hamas* and Islamic *Jihad* terrorists, but to shoot at Israeli soldiers and civilians and kill as many Jews as possible. The Palestinian Authority received billions of dollars in aid from Europe and America, not to educate children and develop the economy, but to engage in rampant corruption and the militarization of society. Arafat signed agreements with Israel, not to advance toward peace, but to simulate sincerity while conducting warfare. He formally accepted Israel's existence, while the Palestinians' propaganda and educational agencies demonized Jews and vilified Israel as a colonialist enterprise in Palestine.⁵²

But the choir of "true believers" stood their ground despite the revelations of deception. The dream was just too beautiful to be thrown away.

Yair Evron perceived in 1995 a "political and ideological thawing in overall Arab attitudes toward Israel...Israel's political legitimacy has both spread and deepened."⁵³ Avraham Sela considered in 1998 that with the decline of supra-state symbols in the Arab world, there was an "increasing acceptance of Israel by Arab states."⁵⁴ Beyond these two optimistic Israeli assessments, Janice Gross Stein was in 1999 of the opinion that both Arabs and Israelis had learned that the use of force does not pay; therefore, they had adopted negotiations as the mode of communicating and solving their conflict.⁵⁵ William Quandt, writing in 2001, considered that the achievements of the past could be lost "if radical Palestinian sentiment gained ground" – as if that was a *possibility* rather than a *reality* – while he called upon future United States administrations to wield "both carrots and sticks as incentives" to extract concessions from the Palestinians.⁵⁶ Such was the conventional wisdom on Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking by those who still believed that negotiations were an authentic method to resolve a conflict mired in mendacity and stymied by stratagems without end. Meanwhile, Christopher Barder came to the conclusion in 2001, that Oslo created a Palestinian terrorist entity whose significance was that a future Palestinian state would be fatal to Israel's existence.⁵⁷ Here was a sober reckoning with the faulty equation of "territories for peace" because, in truth, the Oslo process churned up the diabolical potion of "land for war".

PART THREE

10. Conclusions

Israel's historic call for direct negotiations was traditionally interpreted through Arab cultural inversion as a Zionist ploy for Arab capitulation. To sit with the Israelis in political discourse was to virtually recognize the Jewish state, which since 1948 the Arabs refused to do. What was for the Israelis a mechanism for dialogue signified for the Arabs submission to the Jewish national movement in the modern Middle East.

But when the Arabs finally agreed to sit down in a negotiating ambiance, as at Camp David in 1978, Madrid in 1991, Oslo in 1993, and Sharm e-Sheikh in 1999, this did not constitute a compelling concession to the legitimate right of a Jewish state's existence. Rather, the question of negotiating had been redefined from being a matter of principle to a matter of pragmatism, in order to extract concrete land resources from Israel. Inasmuch as agreements concluded from such negotiation arenas were violated by the Arabs, this rendered more than doubtful if in fact negotiations were the venue for conflict-resolution at all.

An alternative path to ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, or containing its more major levels and forms of violence, was available for consideration. Israel's Six Day War victory offered borders with strategic depth to buttress a doctrine of deterrence. Alongside the Suez Canal,

astride the Jordan River, and atop the Golan Heights, the Israeli Army would be a permanent threat to Cairo, Amman, and Damascus, respectively; risking war with Israel could wreck havoc on vulnerable Arab countries. Therefore, a strategic environment dominated by an Israeli regional power could induce Arab accommodation which Israeli territorial puniness would never evoke.

It is interesting to note in regard to these thoughts that Israel's quietest border was in fact with Syria: without a peace treaty, without recognition of Israel – and *without Israeli withdrawal from the Golan*. The Syrians preserved the Disengagement Agreement from 1974 without the textual accoutrements of normalization which, in any case we can assume, Syria would never have observed. In this way, Israel paid less but received more by *non-negotiations* with an Arab adversary.

We have hereby uncovered an allusion to the riddle behind Arab-Israeli co-existence with a possibility for a modicum of peace. Israel's requests and overtures for peace do not elicit a like Arab desire. The Muslim culture code is contemptuous of generosity or goodwill offered by a non-Muslim protagonist. A view from the *North China Herald* in 1867, at another place and in another time, conveys the correct categories of inter-cultural communication: "If politeness and ceremony be observed toward the Mohammedans, they imagine they are feared and become arrogant; but in showing severity and rudeness, they are impressed with fear and respect, and they are supple and manageable."⁵⁸ Any Israeli readiness to provide territories to the Arabs – which Israel after all has done with Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinians – induced no Arab readiness to accommodate Israel as a legitimate Jewish state. Arab contempt for Israel persists, and so-called "peace" is cold and precarious.

The history of Arab-Israeli negotiations offers Israel no assurance at all that its national interests can be achieved through diplomacy. On the military battlefield, Israel has more than held its own: it has defeated Arab armies since 1948. On the political battlefield, however, Israel has disengaged itself of territory over and over again, but without earning acceptance in the region. Better for Israel to confront the Arabs in war and win, than to negotiate peace, and lose.

The military historian and theorist, Clausewitz, considered war to be the conduct of politics by other means. For the Arabs, diplomacy is clearly the conduct of war by political means. But the Israelis have largely abandoned the arena, unable or unwilling to speak openly and in detail about Arab aggression, mendacity, and terrorism. They have failed to conceptualize a grand rhetorical-political strategy. A subliminal urge to lose seems at times a driving force in Israeli diplomacy.

The belief that direct negotiations serve Israel well is further exposed as erroneous in considering Israelis' awkwardness in the diplomatic arena. We recall Yitzhak Rabin's uncomfortable handshake with Yasser Arafat in Washington in 1993 at the Oslo Agreement signing, and Ehud Barak's absurd jostling with Arafat at Camp David in 2000. Here were graceless body movements symbolic of misconstrued political behavior. Of substantive importance in the diplomatic theater of conflict-resolution was the "ganging-up on Israel" scenario, characteristic of Carter cornering Menachem Begin at Camp David in 1978.

Coming into political contact with the nations of the world has been an opportunity, but a tortuous one, for the Jewish people in modern times. Betrayed by the British, abandoned by the United Nations, and embargoed by the United States, depicts the momentous period – full of grandeur and danger – accompanying Israel's founding in 1947 through to 1949. Since the 1967 war, the international community has sought to deny Israel the territorial fruits from a just war, while promoting the Palestine Liberation Organization as a legitimate national

movement at Israel's expense. The Israelis, adept in war and military-related technologies, are more than somewhat out of their element at the tables of negotiations and in the halls of diplomacy. These are almost always unpleasant occasions, where Israel is snubbed, or bends in sycophancy, yet often straining laboriously to explain its situation and policy. Notorious was Kissinger's sneering attitude toward the Israeli troika of Rabin, Peres, and Allon, in the mid-1970s. He did, after all, sense that negotiations aroused the sensation of a political guillotine being lowered on the confounded Israelis.

Panting for peace is not the correct emotional pose by which Israel can hope to arouse a serious Arab attitude of reconciliation and rapprochement. To avoid talk of peace and negotiations would highlight Israel's political maturity and national honor, by communicating that the core of the Zionist Return is guided not by accommodation with the Arabs but self-fulfillment as Jewish restoration in the ancient homeland.

This is nonetheless not to suggest that Israel refrain from all contact or dialogue with the Arab world. Relations should be promoted at all levels and in every feasible domain, commercial or otherwise, for the purpose of mutual advantage and acquiring familiarity with the various peoples in the region. Self-ostracism born of pique and policy is not a dignified approach, but nor is one that succumbs to Arab political ranting and accusations, deviousness and false pretenses. While Israel should refuse signing any written agreements, Israelis should initiate any possible ties with the other side. Participating in the matrix of life in the Middle East, with a broad humanizing sweep of social openness, will reflect well on Israel's cultural acclimatization and political adaptation to the Oriental terrain of which it is an honorable part.

The Arab world does not want peace with Israel, rather a Middle East without Israel. However, if through peace Israel can be eradicated from the Middle East, then peace becomes an attractive and cunning opportunity. Negotiations become in this case a tried-and-tested method to restrict Israel's size and wither its national will, demoralize its people and divide its political elites.

In conclusion, the path to peace does not travel through negotiating with the Arabs, but in refusing to negotiate with those who tempt Israel into concessions and sign agreements that become empty promises.⁵⁹ While the Arabs are willing to sign accords, they do so while sharpening their swords and amassing weaponry for their next military adventure – if and when it comes. Arab strength is in dissecting the psychology of the enemy and not only in warring against the enemy. Broadcasting threats, planting traps, using political double-talk, while repeating their commitment to peace and negotiations is how the Arabs relentlessly hound their enemy and blame him for the failure of diplomacy. Consider Arafat the master liar, Sadat the expert of stratagems, and Hafez al-Asad the scheming tactician. At every meeting with the Arabs, Israelis believe that a political breakthrough is imminent. Israel's demeaning self-degradation is limitless, never-ending.

Peace initiatives off-or-on the main track of the Oslo process surfaced over the years. We recall the Beilin-Abu Mazen document; the Sari Nusseibeh-Ami Ayalon talks; then in mid-2003, the discussions between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen. Each new peace text or political understanding suggested that a solution was at hand.

It clearly appeared incomprehensible to the Israelis that the Palestinians would be willing to pursue the war for an unlimited period of time. After all, since the *intifada* had erupted in October 2000, thousands of Palestinians had been killed by Israeli forces, thousands were detained by the Israeli army, and the Palestinian economy was in shambles. But a hundred years had passed since the beginning of this Jewish-Arab standoff, and the Palestinians

showed no true sign of contrition or guilt, fatigue or peace-lovingness – even though they were the major losing side. This people is bound by bonds of tribal solidarity, and through its traditional culture considers death, like murder, as the acceptable and necessary price to pay for liberating all of Palestine from the Jews. Facing this reality, Israel should do nothing less than engage in expelling or eliminating the enemy from the country.⁶⁰ Palestinians, ever arrogating the right to interfere in other countries and destabilizing and undermining them from within, were in fact expelled from Jordan in 1970 and Lebanon in 1982. Menaced and murdered by Palestinians who reject the Jewish state's right to exist, Israel could learn a lesson from the experience of her near-neighbors.

When Israel will finally reject negotiations with the Arabs, the Arabs will be denied the acrobatics of diplomacy so vital to them, and employed with such dexterity. Disarmed of their diplomatic machinations, the Arabs will then be exposed as politically unreliable. All of the agreements, understandings, and initiatives will be thrown to the wind. They will then realize they can no longer squeeze concessions from Israel under the impression of making peace. Just as the Arabs were forced to a certain recognition that they have come to a military dead-end with Israel, so too will they be forced to recognize they have come to a political dead-end in confronting Israel. Then a practical mode of peace between Israel and the Arabs will be feasible, but Israel will wisely refrain from putting that arrangement into writing. It would be careless to block the ray of light emerging from behind the shadows of darkness, as a new era of hope arises in the troubled Middle East.

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- ⁵⁸ On the Arab-Muslim culture code, see Mordechai Nisan, *Identity and Civilization: Essays on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Lanham, MD & Oxford: University Press of America, 1999, Chapter 4, pp. 99-123.
- ⁵⁹ The possibility of a Russian ruse using *perestroika*, by feigning fundamental change toward coexistence and cooperation with the United States, comes to mind in considering the Palestinian strategic deception of Israel at Oslo. In both cases, the adversaries are deceived into believing that peace is at hand and that the war is over.
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