



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

A COMPARISON OF POLITICAL LANDSCAPES: FROM  
THE OSLO ACCORDS TO THE ‘DEAL OF THE  
CENTURY’

by  
FARAH YOUSEF SALEH

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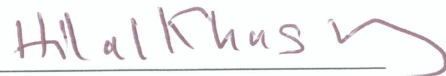
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Farah Yousef Saleh for Master of Arts  
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Title: A Comparison of Political Landscapes: From the Oslo Accords to the ‘Deal of the Century’

This dissertation aims to make a link between a historical point in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to a more contemporary point. By making the link between the failure of Oslo Accords, and what will be the failure of the ‘deal of the century’, patterns are made, and lessons for the future can be speculated. Before delving into the main question of the research, the study gave a brief historical overview of how the conflict has reached the stage it has today, through examining five critical junctures which have reshaped the dispute one way or another. This is all in the aim of assessing what the future of a ‘Palestinian state’ looks like, and where the conflict is being geared.

To make the comparison, the research provided literature on peace negotiations theory, and pinpointed three stages of a peace process: pre-negotiations, around-the-table negotiations, and post-negotiations. In the second phase of the process, eight different components were presented to examine the extent of success or failure that the process produces. This framework was applied to all stages of the Oslo Accords, and this case study proves to be an utter failure at all stages, as this research demonstrates. After discussing how the Oslo Accords failed the way it has, the study addresses the second part of the comparison. Yet, before doing so, a major constituent to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in general, and to this comparison in specific was addressed; the American-Israeli alliance, and the uninterrupted American support to Israel over the years. This alliance is eventually what led to the second part of the comparison which is where this research examines the Trump administration, and his ‘deal of the century’ through using the same components applied to the Oslo Accords.

The research is conducted through a historical analysis discourse in order to identify the patterns of failure, which act as an obstacle to any peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The research ends by asserting that leaders of the Oslo Accords, and leaders of today’s world are only interested in the ‘process’ and not in its ‘outcome’. That is, leaders are interested in pro-longing any peace talks between the two conflicting sides simply to act as a temporary comforting pill, knowing that the general public will not question the outcome produced, but will judge according to the ‘good will’ of initiating a peace negotiation process.

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## CHAPTER I

### A ROADMAP TO THE DEAL OF THE CENTURY

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is at stake so long as Donald Trump is the president of the United States of America. It is also difficult to determine the future for Palestinians and Israelis as peace becomes a far-fetched reality. In such pro-longed struggles, the conflict goes through many phases which experience the rise of political parties, the fall of others, and certain critical junctures that not only impact the two conflicting sides, but the whole region in of itself. Peter Coleman states: “when destructive conflicts persist for long periods of time and resist every attempt to resolve them constructively, they can appear to take on a life of their own. We label them as intractable conflicts”.<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has taken a life of its own, becoming the longest ongoing conflict in the Arab world. When the conflict is over an indivisible resource, territory in this case, the conflict becomes over every other aspect in life. It becomes over history, religion, identity, sovereignty, and culture. This research will compare two political landscapes in the course of the conflict: the political landscape of the Oslo Accords and the political landscape of the Trump administration. Whereas Palestinians suffered from the implications of the former, this generation of

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1. Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch, and Eric Colton. Marcus, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014), p. 533.

Palestinians will witness their destiny fall apart as the latter gears the conflict to its own interests.

The objective of this thesis is to examine two realities in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, two realities with a twenty-six-year difference, which will allow the reader to understand what has developed over the years in order to understand what is the possible future for Palestinians and Israelis alike. The main research question is as follows: Taking into consideration the Oslo Accords of 1993, and Trump's "deal of the century", what does the Palestinian future look like? This research claims that so long as the foreign patrons of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in particular the United States, are interested in the "process", and not in the "outcome", the Palestinian future does not look bright. Talking about a "peace process" or a "peace deal" is only a method used by these foreign patrons to keep all conflicting sides quiet, yet, the aim is not to end the fight. Thereby, this research claims that one can talk about a deal, but it will not work due to external national interests.

#### **A. The Road to the 'Deal of the Century'**

This section analyzes various occurrences in the history of the conflict that shaped its political landscape. These are, the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser and pan-Arabism, the first *intifada*, the Oslo Accords, the second *intifada*, and Hamas' victory in the 2006 elections. The objective of this chapter is not to produce a timeline of events, nor does it aim to demonstrate the history of the conflict, it is to shed light on these phases in the conflict for various reasons which will be discussed below. The various points in the history of the

conflict will allow the reader to understand how Israeli politics builds immense amounts of pressure, both on Palestinians and on outside interventions to yield to Israeli demands. These important phases are essentially a roadmap to where we have reached today in the conflict. More importantly, this demonstrates a short roadmap to the “deal of the century”, which will be explained throughout this research.

### ***1. 1950s onto late 60s - Gamal Abdel Nasser and the Palestinian Cause***

Unlike any other Arab leader in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Abdel Nasser was seen as the light at the end of the tunnel for Palestinians and for all Arabs in general. Known for his attempts to unite and rule the Arabs, Nasser’s pan-Arab policies forced him to face dilemmas during his rule. In his first few years, Nasser did not express any desire to crush Israel in his speeches. Yet, as argued by Michael Sharnoff, “attaining pan-Arab leadership required promoting Arab unity and championing the Palestinian cause – pan-Arabism’s most cherished goal. How conceivably could this goal be achieved without fighting Israel?”<sup>2</sup> In order for Nasser to reach his bigger ambitions, he had to fight the common enemy, Israel. It was difficult for Nasser to confront Israel at the time, and so, in his early years, he avoided waging a war against the newly established entity. Still, indirectly, Nasser allowed Palestinian *Fedayeen* to attack Israelis from the Gaza Strip, belonging to Egypt at the time.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Michael Sharnoff, *Nasser's Peace: Egypt's Response to the 1967 War with Israel* (New York: CRC Press, 2018), p. 10.

3. *Ibid.*, 11.

Nasser's language and rhetoric slowly became sharper and more hateful towards Israel as time progressed. In one of his speeches made to an American audience, Nasser asserted:

I am not solely fighting against Israel itself. My task is to deliver the Arab world from destruction through Israel's intrigue, which has its roots abroad. Our hatred is very strong. There is no sense in talking about peace with Israel. There is not even the smallest place for negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

Almost all recalled statements made by Nasser were using this same rhetoric, all of which state no peace with Israel. Nasser had declared numerous times that what happened in 1948 was an "error"; and error that needed to be solved by conquering pre-1948 Palestine and expelling Israelis back to where they came from.<sup>5</sup>

In the early 60s, Nasser was smart enough to make use of his Palestinian proxies in fighting the Israelis, while keeping the Egyptian army away from the picture. This kept Egyptians on the safe side, while at the same time, enhancing the Palestinian rhetoric by involving the Palestinian fighters directly in his fight against Israel.<sup>6</sup> This came in the form of initiating the creation of a Palestinian entity under Egyptian control (which came to be known as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)). Sharnoff notes: "Nasser's

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4. "Tasrih al-Ra'is Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir ila Sahifat 'New York Post' al-Amrikiya Hawla Haqiqat al-Asliha al-Chekiyya" October 14, 1995, GANDA, Accessed February 25 2019, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=407&lang=ar> (Arabic).

5. Sharnoff 16.

6. Ibid., 15.

sponsorship of the PLO sought to balance his commitments to the Palestinians without directly initiating conflict with Israel".<sup>7</sup> While Nasser previously proposed solving the conflict away from the possibility of war and violence, at this point he was convinced that force is the only way to attain liberation. Nasser began to openly talk about war and his war capabilities. In fact, although Nasser had always been sponsoring the PLO, in 1965, he agreed to further sponsor the PLO's military wing in specific to enhance Palestinian military capabilities. In 1966, Nasser indirectly addressed the whole Arab world to aid him with manpower to fight Israel. He asserted:

The only way to retaliate lies in our manpower. We must build an Arab army of two, three or four million Arabs. America cannot give Israel two or three million people. We here in Egypt are 30 million and the Arab nation has 100 million. We can if we want to and if we are determined to liberate Palestine, recruit two, three or four million and enter liberation battle heedless of the number of casualties. This, O brother, is the way to liberate Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

The military leader was soon wounded up and was not able to circumvent the battleground for long. Much pressure was put on Nasser to take further action in the conflict, but most of this pressure was a result of his own actions of paying the Palestinian cause lip-service for the past decade. The conflict between the Arabs (mainly Egypt and Syria) and Israel quickly escalated in 1967 as Nasser had been deploying vast amounts of troops in Sinai.<sup>9</sup> In retaliation

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7. Ibid., 17.

8. Khitab al-Ra'is Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir min Istad al-Iskandariyya fi Mu'tamar Al-Ittihad al-Ishirakiyya Ihtifalan bil-idd ar-Rabi'a 'Ashara lil-Thawra", July 26, 1996, GANDA. Accessed February 25, 2019, <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=1176&lang=ar> (Arabic).

9. Sharnoff, 21.

to this deployment, among other factors, Israel launched pre-emptive attacks on Egypt on June 5<sup>th</sup> 1967, marking the beginning of the 1967 Six Day War.

The 1967 war marked a new phase in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It changed the political landscape of the conflict, as well as redrew the map of the region. The war was a huge failure for the Arabs, and more importantly, for Nasser who was badly defeated by Israel. Other than the imbalance in human cost of the war (approx. 20,000 Arabs and around 800 Israelis were killed), the 1967 Six Day War resulted in Israel capturing Sinai and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan.<sup>10</sup> To Palestinians who believed that Nasser will liberate them from the Israeli occupation, this defeat was a slap in the face, and hopes were completely lost. Not only was hope for Palestinians dying out, but the whole idea of pan-Arabism was slowly fading away.

## 2. *1987 First Intifada*

Due to a feeling of political isolation in the late 70s and early 80s, Palestinians resorted to the streets. The *first intifada*, which erupted in 1987, was a series of rebellions against the Israeli occupation. Numbers of killings and incidents dramatically increased as time progressed. It was calculated between 1968 to 1975, a number of 350 incidents per year, in other words one violent incident per day.<sup>11</sup> Towards the end of the 70s and into the early

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10. Sharnoff 27.

11. Gregory Harms and Todd M. Ferry, *The Palestine-Israel Conflict: A Basic Introduction* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p. 142.

80s, the number of incidents went up to 3,000 per year, and in the early stages of the *intifada*, a number of 42,355 violent incidents were calculated.<sup>12</sup> The exponential rise in this number reflects a new reality of violence for Palestinians. This was the situation as Palestinians felt furious with the Israeli occupation, and with the isolation of its Arab neighbors who at the time showed willingness to talk with the Israeli enemy.

The *first intifada* did not only lead to huge numbers of casualties, but it was also a time that empowered certain new political actors to rise to power. This meant that there were new competitors on the political scene, who were fighting for the same cause, to put an end the Israeli occupation, but through different means. Harms and Ferry note,

Groups that splintered off the Brotherhood adopted militant philosophies during the Intifada. One group was Islamic Jihad, which formed in Gaza over the course of the first half of the 1980s and remained a smaller movement. From the Brotherhood also emerged, in January 1988, a new group called Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement). Unlike the UNLU-PLO connection, which desired a secular state in the West Bank and Gaza brought about by civil resistance, the Muslim Organizations desired an Islamic state in all of former Palestine, to be achieved by armed and violent means.<sup>13</sup>

This is very important in understanding how perspectives within the Palestinian nation shifted. At this point in the conflict, these different Palestinian perspectives meant that there are now factions within the Palestinian resistance and who have different views on what could be a Palestinian state. They were no longer unified under one agenda. Therefore, this

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12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 145.



phase in the conflict refers to a point where Palestinians have shifted focus from fighting the initial enemy, to struggling against one another. This came to the benefit of Israel, and Israel knew precisely how to take advantage of such a clash.

### ***3. 1993-1995 Oslo Accords***

The **1993-1995** Oslo Accords, known as the first and only peace negotiation process that took place between the PLO and Israel was a turning point in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict history. This is a process that will be further elaborated on in the following chapters, as it is a main pillar of this research study, but in this section, only a brief description of the Accords will be given. The Oslo Accords of **1993**, known as Oslo I, were a series of secretive talks between the PLO and Israel with the mediation of the Norwegian government.<sup>14</sup> The precise fundamentals of the talks remained unknown until the peace treaty was signed and formally announced after eight months from their starting point, on August 20<sup>th</sup> 1993. Of course, the peace talks had a background. It was not the first time that the conflicting sides had met to talk. This background had begun in 1991 at the Madrid Conference. Yet, the level of secrecy of the agreement was what caused the shock. Harms and Ferry argue: “even the US which knew about [the talks], was not familiar with the substance of the meetings”.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to recognize that the Oslo Accords were not a solution to the conflict, nor were they the final agenda. The Accords were an “interim agreement” that were to be

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14. Ibid., 153.

15. Ibid.

used as a basis for negotiations. Two phases of Oslo I need to be recognized. The first was the mutual recognition that took place, where the PLO recognized the existence of Israel, and where Israel recognized the PLO as the official representative of the Palestinian people. The second is the Declaration of Principles (DOP). The DOP were essentially a lay out of responsibilities given to each side, the compromises each side needs to reach, and where both sides will stand post the negotiations. Some of these responsibilities include Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, the establishment of an internal Palestinian security system by establishing a Palestinian police force, and having elections for what was called a “Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority”.<sup>16</sup> Yet, the DOP came to be known as a vague piece of document, that did not outline actual issues which were the core of the conflict. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim summarizes this ambiguity by noting:

The shape of the permanent settlement is not specified in the DOP but is left to negotiations between the two parties during the second stage. The DOP is completely silent on vital issues such as the right of return of the 1948 refugees, the borders of the Palestinian entity, the future of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, and the status of Jerusalem. The reason for this silence is not hard to understand: if these issues had been addressed, there would have been no accord.<sup>17</sup>

It is clear that the vagueness of the document was done for political interests. The main purpose of the imprecision in language is to manipulate the interpretation of the document whenever it is necessary to do so; something that Israelis have resorted to ever since the Oslo Accords were announced.

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16. Ibid., 154.

17. Avi Shlaim, "The Oslo Accord," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 3 (1994), p. 34.

This was only the first part of the Accords. The second, more important phase was Oslo II, which took place in Taba, Egypt, on September 24<sup>th</sup> 1995. Oslo II can be summarized in two points, first, it was the signing of the DOP discussed in Oslo I. Second, was the producing of a 300+ page document that created “zones of control” for both Palestinians and Israelis; Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C.<sup>18</sup> Below is a map of how these zones were divided, and the type of control allocated to each of the conflicting sides.

**Oslo II Map**  
**Outlining Areas A, B, and C**



18. Harms and Ferry, p. 155.

Without going into further detail on what these zones precisely meant, what is important here is that this was a crucial phase in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict because it created an imprint. This imprint was the image of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shaking hands as a symbol of achievement, with Bill Clinton in the background as the architect of this ‘process’, while both the Palestinian and Israeli nations remain unaware of the actions taking place at the time. This was a picture that was engraved in the minds of all peoples for generations to come. As described by Harms and Ferry: ‘the image of the Rabin-Arafat handshake, with Clinton as overseer would become an icon of the twentieth century’.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4. 2000 Second Intifada**

With huge numbers of Palestinian fighters opposing the Oslo Accords, especially amongst fighters belonging to Islamist organizations, next to erupt was the *second intifada*, starting in September 2000 and lasting for almost five years. Whereas the *first intifada* remained somewhat under control, the second intifada lacked any kind of “peaceful rebellion”. These rebellions were much more severe, violent and costly than the first. At this point in the conflict, those who fought in the *first intifada* had now bigger and more advanced military equipment, most of which were carried out by Hamas. Plus, resentment levels towards the Israeli occupation and Arab isolation were much higher than they were in the 80s. Thus, one could imagine how warfare shifted from the first to the *second intifada*. Scholars describe this shift by saying,

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19. Ibid., 153.

What started with the implements of the First Intifada – stones, bottles, and burning tires – very quickly escalated into the exchange of automatic-weapon first between the IDF and Palestinians...Palestinians employed the use of roadside bombs in addition to the traditional materials. The IDF deployed tanks and combat helicopters in Palestinian towns and villages, imposing dusk-to-dawn and 24-hour curfews.<sup>20</sup>

Not only did Palestinian advance their warfare equipment, so did the Israelis, yet, on a much more technologically advanced level. With better military equipment, and with no progression in the ‘implementation phase’ of the Oslo Accords, the *second intifada* had extremely high severe consequences, more so on Palestinians than on Israelis. Khalil Shikaki argues,

For the Palestinian economy, the intifada had nothing but devastating consequences, increasing the level of poverty in Palestinian society to more than 50%. The intifada also engendered greater fragmentation within the ruling party, Fatah, the largest faction in the Palestinian national movement.<sup>21</sup>

The results of the *second intifada* were not calculated by its fighters nor by its leaders. From this moment forth, resentment did not only exist on a Palestinian-Israeli level, but tensions within Palestinian factions intensified greatly.

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20. Ibid., 171.

21. Khalil Shikaki, "With Hamas in Power: Impact of Palestinian Domestic Developments on Options for the Peace Process," 2007, accessed March 05, 2019., p 4.

The *second intifada* was also a phase where brutality and vicious killings became normalized. It became regular to see dead bodies left uncovered across various Palestinian streets. It became normal to see women and children being violently dragged by Israeli soldiers and beaten by police dogs. Harms and Ferry argue: “televised images of senseless brutality became imprinted icons that would characterize this chapter in the conflict’s history”.<sup>22</sup>

One might ask why a *third intifada* did not occur, although all of the motives, causes, and organizations of the first and second *intifada* remain on the ground. In fact, situations have even worsened since then, and therefore, a *third intifada* would have made perfect sense. The answer to this question relies mainly on the Arab abandonment of the Palestinian cause. To Arab governments, the Palestinian cause has become a secondary issue, not one of priority. Thus, Palestinian fighters and Palestinian political organizations have been facing financial obstacles as there are no longer Arab patrons interested in sponsoring another *intifada*. Another contributing factor is the imbalance in human cost. As noted earlier, in every war fought between Palestinians and Israelis, Palestinians have suffered greatly from the amount of human losses. The amount of Palestinian lives lost in comparison to the amount of Israeli lives lost is incomparable. Furthermore, taking into consideration the increased advancement in Israeli military technology, a *third intifada* will have devastating effects on Palestinian lives.

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22. Harms and Ferry, p. 171.

## ***5. 2006 Palestinian Legislative Elections***

After ten years since the first Palestinian legislative elections in 1996, the call for elections in 2006 was a sense of hope for many. Yet, what many did not expect, especially from the Israeli side, was the rise of Hamas as a victorious elected government. Therefore, what happened on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006? On this date, Hamas had won 76 of the 132 parliamentary seats, whilst its main competitor Fatah won 43 seats.<sup>23</sup> This gave “the party at war with Israel the right to form the next cabinet under the Palestinian Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of Fatah”.<sup>24</sup> This had several implications at the time. Most importantly, how will other states, especially the United States, deal with the newly elected government in Gaza considering that it legally cannot, as Hamas was labelled a terrorist organization. Moreover, this meant that any potential for negotiations between the newly elected government in Gaza and Israel were close to impossible, considering that Israel had announced Hamas as the main force behind the attacks against it during the intifada. Michael Herzog, brigadier general in the IDF, describes this victory in shock: “this is a very complicating development for everyone involved: Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abu Mazen..., Fatah, Israel, the United States, and the Quartet [European Union, United States,

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23. Scott Wilson, "Hamas Sweeps Palestinian Elections, Complicating Peace Efforts in Mideast," *The Washington Post*, January 27, 2006,, accessed March 03, 2019, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/26/AR2006012600372.html?noredirect=on>.

24. *Ibid.*

United Nations, and Russia]".<sup>25</sup> Whether Israel or the US accepted this reality or not, Hamas was not going to opt out of government regardless of these external and internal pressures.

It was not a coincidence that the year 2006 witnessed a substantial proliferation in violence coming from both conflicting sides despite a ceasefire agreement that was made in December 2006.<sup>26</sup> International sanctions were put on Hamas, causing more difficulties for Palestinians to survive in the Gaza Strip. However, Shikaki notes: "the policy of isolation and sanctions applied against the Hamas government has not succeeded in breaking Hamas and forcing it to make a strategic shift".<sup>27</sup> This demonstrates that Hamas, with the limited amount of political force it has, will not allow itself to forfeit.

## **B. Summary: A Comparison of Landscapes – from Oslo to Trump**

What chapter one has demonstrated was a roadmap to what we are witnessing today when it comes to this ever-lasting conflict. Chapter one explains that the various phases which the conflict has gone through has allowed Israel and the United States to control the conflict to their own national interests very easily. While this chapter looked at all the events leading up to the "deal of the century", chapter two will essentially provide the theory on peace negotiations to understand where the Oslo peace process had failed.

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25. Esther Pan, "Implications of the Palestinian Elections," Council on Foreign Relations, January 26, 2006,, accessed March 03, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/implications-palestinian-elections>.

26. Shikaki, p. 3.

27. Ibid., 11.



To summarize “A Roadmap to the Deal of the Century”, the study so far has pinpointed and analyzed five critical junctures in the history of the conflict. These five phases shaped the political landscape of the conflict in different ways, and each made an imprint not only on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but on a regional and international level. First, the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser as the leader of pan-Arabism and the chief fighter for the Palestinian cause throughout the 60s. Second, the 1987 first *intifada* leading to a stage where the Palestinian people became divided amongst the various political factions on the ground. Third, the 1993-1995 Oslo Accords, perceived as the moment Palestine was sold. Fourth, the second *intifada* which marked a brutal, viscous and unforgotten phase in the history of political violence. Fifth, the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections which resulted in an unexpected victory for Hamas.

The study will take a look at a historical phase in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict where one could argue that an attempt for peace was possible, or at least it was in the eyes of its leaders. This phase will be compared with a more recent development in the conflict, and with what has been labelled as the “deal of the century” by the Trump administration, which will concentrate chiefly on this conflict. Being a Palestinian, I have always questioned if there is hope. Yet, the realities on ground compel me to believe otherwise. Zaha Hassan describes this reality in a simplified approach: “regardless of which political party has held the presidency, U.S. engagement on Israeli-Palestinian peace since the Oslo Accords has tended to weaken the Palestinian negotiating position by moving away from the requirements of

international law”.<sup>28</sup> The United States was never the appropriate mediator to this conflict, and will never be. Hassan continues: “as the number of Israeli settlers doubled and tripled in the occupied territories during the peace process, the U.S. response was to accommodate Israel’s domestic political and demographic concerns”.<sup>29</sup> There are far greater interests for the United States in prolonging the conflict than in attempting to end it.

As this research asserts, whether it was the United States, or any other foreign patron involved in the conflict, what matters is the “process”. What matters is speaking of a process, and not in abiding by it. Yossi Alpher, a former IDF intelligence officer and Israeli writer, tells the Middle East Eye: “If the plan is rejected, Trump will say he did his best, he offered the parties the greatest deal ever, and that they must now be left to settle the issues on their own”.<sup>30</sup> This is precisely what this thesis demonstrates. The ultimate purpose is to be portrayed as the hero, irrespective of producing any actual triumphs.

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28. Zaha Hassan, "Trump's Plan for Israel and Palestine: One More Step Away from Peace," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 11, 2018., accessed April 30, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/12/11/trump-s-plan-for-israel-and-palestine-one-more-step-away-from-peace-pub-77905>.

29. Ibid.

30. Jonathon Cook, "What's in Trump's 'deal of the Century'? The Answers Are in Plain Sight," Middle East Eye, June 15, 2018, , accessed March 04, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/whats-trumps-deal-century-answers-are-plain-sight>.

## CHAPTER II

### PEACE NEGOTIATIONS THEORY: WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK?

The objective of this chapter is to provide a framework for analysis when it comes to evaluating the success, or the failure in this case, of peace negotiations. Thus, this chapter provides three different phases of a peace negotiation process that I have simplified, and that are essential to having a successful peace negotiation process. This framework will be used to analyze the 1993-1995 Oslo Accords, and from there, the research will examine how the conflict has transformed since the signing of this interim agreement.

#### **A. Literature Review: Pre-negotiations, Around-the-table negotiations, and Post-negotiations**

Almost all scholars agree that a peace negotiation process comes in three phases: pre-negotiations, around the table negotiations, and post-negotiations.

##### ***1. Pre-Negotiations: Setting the Tone***

Harold H. Saunders demonstrates that the pre-negotiations phase is more important, and more difficult than actual negotiations. From first-hand experience in dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Saunders concludes that this “pre” period has several stages and

conditions which he believes sets the tone for the remainder of the process. A framework must be set in order for the negotiations to run smoothly, and both sides need to acknowledge this framework. Thus, he divides the pre-negotiation phase into three parts:

- a) Defining the problem. In his words, “the definition of the problem begins to determine policy. In negotiation theory, the recognition of a common problem that two sides share an interest in solving is almost a prerequisite to negotiation”.<sup>31</sup> This means that the conflicting sides need to agree on how to define the issue at hand in order for them to have a basis for communication accepted by both sides.
- b) Producing a commitment to a negotiated settlement. This stage is an acknowledgement that the current situation for both sides is worse off than if a solution is to be proposed. More importantly, it is a commitment by both sides to study whether a fair solution is possible or not.<sup>32</sup>
- c) Arranging a Negotiation. Saunders notes that this stage “may be a mini-negotiation about how to negotiate”.<sup>33</sup> He explains that the first part of this stage is to outline the objectives of the negotiation and then the second part involves the little details. Examples of such details are: agreeing on who sits next to who on the table, who plays what role in the negotiations, who is invited to the negotiations and so on.

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31. Harold H. Saunders, "We Need a Larger Theory of Negotiation: The Importance of Pre-negotiating Phases," *Negotiation Journal* 1, no. 3 (1985): , doi:10.1111/j.1571-9979.1985.tb00313.x. p. 255.

32. Ibid., 257.

33. Ibid., 260.

Saunders emphasizes that these three stages often take much longer to undergo than the actual negotiations.

Another aspect to consider in the pre-negotiations phase is the theory of ripeness. This is a contested component of analysis when it comes to evaluating the success of peace negotiation processes as some scholars agree on its importance, while others believe the theory is missing out crucial aspects. In her book, Martina Klimesova argues that the “concept of ripeness (timing) is an integral part of the conflict resolution field and negotiation theory”.<sup>34</sup> Klimesova defends her argument using Zartman’s theory, who is the founding father of the ripeness theory. She explains that one cannot simply decide to have peace talks with the enemy. There are specific “ripe” moments where it becomes suitable for the conflicting sides to sit on a table for negotiations.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Marieke Kleiboer argues that the moment of ripeness is not a good nor an accurate indicator for deciding the negotiations phase. Kleiboer’s argument is that the theory of ripeness does not designate a chief responsible player for determining this “ripe moment” nor does it indicate what actions to take when such a moment is specified.<sup>36</sup> As noted: “in sum, to identify ripeness is only half of the problem, the other half is to find effective measures to benefit from the situation”.<sup>37</sup>

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34. Martina Klimesova, *Using Carrots to Bring Peace?: Negotiation and Third Party Involvement* (New Jersey ; London ; Singapore ; Beijing ; Shanghai ; Hong Kong ; Taipei ; Chennai ; Tokyo: World Scientific, 2016), p. 22.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Ibid.

## ***2. Around-the-Table Negotiations***

Moving on to the actual around-the-table negotiations, there are numerous components leading to a successful peace negotiation process that are larger than the scope of this paper. This section lists the most important points in my opinion, that are most relevant to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but that could also be applied to any other conflict. In the *Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, authors Andrea Bartoli and Yannis Psimopoulos shed light on crucial components of having a sustainable peace process. The first and foremost key factor is **justice**. They argue:

Peace is the beginning of justice, not the end. Hence, lasting peace cannot be built by ignoring justice. Disrespecting victims and disregarding international norms of human rights are not solid foundations for any lasting peace.<sup>38</sup>

Conflicting sides must acknowledge that they have violated human rights and condemn their actions as the first step in negotiations with those that they have physically and psychologically hurt. Neglecting this action defies the purpose of negotiations. The argument continues:

Such a peace would be a mere pause in a conflict. It would not be a sustainable over time and it would be rightly described as insufficient. In other words, peace at the expense of justice is a mocking peace; it is fundamentally ignorant of the very components that should constitute a sustainable, acceptable, and lasting peace.<sup>39</sup>

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38. Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus, p. 615.

39. Ibid.

The second factor is the **attitude of victory**. The argument here is that if one of the conflicting sides is directing these negotiations with an attitude of victory, negotiations are doomed to fail. It is very difficult for the conflicting sides to accept that they will be on equal terms with the enemy. Nonetheless, to reach at an efficient stance in peace negotiations, both sides need to accept that neither are victorious, and that both will have to reach a compromise.<sup>40</sup>

The third factor is **discontinuity**. The act of discontinuity is a commitment by both sides to not repeating the same violence which had previously occurred pre-negotiations. It is to discontinue the use of abusive measures against the other and to no longer victimize the victim.<sup>41</sup> The authors argue here that discontinuity is emphasized on:

To make sure that no further abuses of human rights are perpetrated, that enmity is used no more to justify violence, and that destructiveness toward the other is not condoned any longer as a societal duty.<sup>42</sup>

The fourth factor is **passiveness and compromise**. In her book, Karen A. Feste states that political negotiation is essentially a series of compromises in the aim of reaching a passive settlement. She argues, this is where “both sides agree to a partial modification of

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40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 616.

their initial objectives, positions, demands or actions”.<sup>43</sup> This is often a very problematic stage in negotiations, especially when the resource fought over is indivisible.

The fifth factor is **trust**. Based on a study done by Daniel Heradstveit in 1981 titled *The Arab-Israeli conflict: Psychological Obstacles to Peace*, one concludes that trust is a necessary factor for peace negotiations. In his study, Heradstveit conducted extensive interviews with over two-hundred leaders from both conflicting sides, Israel and Palestine, as well as leaders from Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. His aim was to see how the two conflicting sides perceive their own self-image and how they perceive the enemy. His study shows that the fear of the other being treacherous, and the mistrust existing between both sides is one of the main obstacles to peace. Thus, at the negotiations table, the conflicting sides need a minimum amount of trust that will push them towards reaching a fair solution.

The sixth factor is **access and transparency**. According to a research study done by Peter Wallensteen and Mikael Eriksson, and which was published by the Department of Political affairs, United Nations, there are eighteen recommendations made for peacemakers. These simplified eighteen points were developed after a close examination of three prolonged wars that have resorted to peace agreements as a solution. To avoid repetition, this paper will shed light on only three of these recommendations. Under access and transparency, the study argues that the role of the civil society in peace negotiations is necessary. This means that what is being negotiated between the conflicting sides needs to be transparent and available

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43. Karen A. Feste, *Plans for Peace Negotiations and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Greenwood Pr., 1991), p. 49.



for the public to be aware of. The authors argue that this: “is a way to demonstrate that an agreement has wide national support, in much the same way that international representation nowadays is a customary part of such procedures”.<sup>44</sup>

The seventh factor is **equal allocation of control**. Here, the same document emphasizes on the role of the mediator. The mediator should not allow one of the conflicting sides to control the negotiations. To have a successful negotiation process, the mediator should be neutral towards both sides, and allocate the same amount of control to both sides. The authors argue: “if only a few individuals dominate the proceedings it makes the process vulnerable to sudden team changes. It also affects implementation, as very few will know what exactly was meant by particular formulations in the final document”.<sup>45</sup> The authors go further and state that more than one mediator/negotiator should be aware of the talks to avoid having an imbalance of support by outside negotiators.

The eighth factor is **legal status of agreement**. This is also a task designated to the mediator, where the mediator needs balance between political compromises and legal adaptations.<sup>46</sup> The authors note: “if constitutional changes are necessary, this may affect implementations and thus, the parties will have to commit to pursue needed measures”.<sup>47</sup>

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44. Peter Wallensteen and Mikael Eriksson, "Negotiating Peace: Lessons from Three Comprehensive Peace Agreements," 2009,, accessed March 20, 2019, p. 27.

45. Ibid., 29.

46. Ibid., 31.

47. Ibid., 32.

### ***3. Post-negotiations: The Implementation Phase***

While some scholars believe that the pre-negotiations phase is more important than the actual negotiations phase, some scholars argue that both phases are incompetent if the post-negotiation phase fails. Post-negotiation phase is the implementation phase. Saunders argues:

The key element in the step-by-step diplomacy of the Kissinger shuttles was the view that one agreement--negotiated and scrupulously implemented--would begin to change the political atmosphere and make possible tomorrow what seemed impossible yesterday.<sup>48</sup>

He demonstrates that in only implementing the negotiation, can another negotiation be initiated, and he uses the 1978 Egypt-Israel peace treaty as an example of this successful implementation. Wallensteen and Eriksson have also indicated the importance of the implementation phase in their eighteen recommendations. However, they add that the mediator also plays a huge role in the implementation phase. Under recommendation seventeen which states “*make implementation attractive through continued international support*”, they note: “the agreement is likely to include provisions that require capacity building. After a war, few parties are likely to have resources for this. Outside assistance is therefore crucial”.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Saunders, p. 261.

49. Wallensteen and Eriksson, p. 39.

As this research has already shown, the three phases of a peace negotiation process complement each other, and cannot produce positive results if any of the phases fail. Each conflicting side has a role to play, while at the same time the mediator has an equal role to play in assuring the commitment of the conflicting sides, while being neutral at all times.

## **B. Methodology**

This study began by examining various points in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which gave the reader a sense of what the political landscape at each of those moments looked like. This section was used to introduce the conflict, and to understand the comparison that will be made with the current political landscape of the conflict. In the literature review, several apparatuses were given to ensure a successful peace process. If any of the Palestinian political parties examined in this study wish to talk with the Israelis, they would have to abide by these “rules”, the same way Israelis have to as well.

These eight components of analysis are:

1. Justice and moral ethics
2. Attitude of victory
3. Discontinuity of the use of violence
4. Passiveness and compromise
5. Mutual trust
6. Access and transparency: the role of civil society
7. Equal allocation of control
8. Legal status of agreement

Using these components, failures of the peace negotiations can be pinpointed at all stages of the process. Simply put, the peace negotiations between PLO-led by Fatah and Israel were doomed to fail for many discernable reasons. The most obvious of these reasons, is that in some of these negotiations, the Palestinians were not even invited to participate. In her article, Sanam Naraghi Anderlini states: “In the Middle East, one approach developed by the United States (US) was to facilitate peace agreements between Israel and its neighbouring countries, independent of the Palestinians”.<sup>50</sup> This demonstrates a component that is essential to this study, and that is the American position in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Thus, after a close examination of how the peace process failed between the PLO- led by Fatah and Israel, a chapter will be dedicated to demonstrating the American position, which is one hundred percent pro-Israeli, and how this has worked in favor of the Israelis on different dimensions.

I have mentioned in the introduction of this study a brief research question that is guiding this paper. Yet, to elaborate further on this question, this paper raises other points including: what is the likelihood for establishing a Palestinian state? Can a successful peace negotiation process, or putting forward a “deal” such as Trump’s “deal of the century” produce fair prospects of a Palestinian state? If successful, how would the new political entity look like, keeping in mind Israeli preconditions? Thus, this paper will look into both the

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50. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, "Peace Negotiations and Agreements," *Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Reconstruction*, accessed March 21, 2019, ResearchGate, p. 16.

Palestinian perspective (the various Palestinian perspectives), and the Israeli perspective on the conflict. It will examine certain international attitudes towards the conflict in order to understand how global politics and global interests directly interfere in the politics of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

To grasp a well-established foundation for this study, this research will use primary and secondary data as historical analysis. Among other methods of research, the thesis will rely on speeches made by the involved political leaders over the years to examine the different positions in the conflict. The thesis will also examine several UN resolutions that have been the backbone of Israeli justifications to their illegal actions, and which have given them the upper hand in the conflict. The aim of this study is to assess what the Palestinian future looks like by examining the reality on the ground. This will give a better understanding of who has higher chances of creating or not creating a Palestinian state for the Palestinian nation.

### **C. Summary**

This chapter demonstrated what is needed to have a successful peace negotiation process. At the end of the day, such a process cannot be conducted out of thin air. There must be proper preparations, commitment from both sides and from the mediator, and more importantly, the process must produce fair results for all parties. Saunders argues: “a peace process is an operational framework for peacemaking. It is not only a diplomatically negotiated process; it is also a political and human process that works simultaneously on

multiple levels. The aim is to transform relationships and attitudes in society.<sup>51</sup> This simplifies what a peace negotiation process does; it changes attitudes towards a conflict and towards the enemy. It is not the ultimate solution to a conflict. Furthermore, one needs to acknowledge that there are three phases to a process, and that all phases need to be fulfilled. The phases begin with what happens before the negotiations, moving on to what happens at the negotiations, and then with what happens after the negotiations take place. The chapter introduced the reader to the eight components that will be used to scrutinize the extent of success to which the Oslo Accords reached, in order to assess the implications of these results in the following chapters.

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51. Saunders, p. 251.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NEGOTIATION FRAME: A MINI-NEGOTIATION PRIOR TO THE NEGOTIATIONS

In chapter two, the research had laid out the theory which this thesis will be based on, and that is the theory of peace negotiations processes. The chapter specified various points and phases that are needed to have a successful peace process, and not one that will simply take place yet produce no positive-sum outcome. Chapter three, titled “the negotiation frame: a mini negotiation prior to the negotiations” will apply the first phase of the theory discussed in chapter two to the Oslo Accords. The objective of chapter three is to analyze how successful or not was the first phase of the Oslo Accords according to three points: defining the problem, producing a commitment to a negotiated settlement, and the arranging of the negotiation. This is the “pre” phase of any peace negotiation process. Aside from these three components, this chapter will shed light on people who were and are against the normalization process, who are also considered as barriers to communication between Palestinians and Israelis. Furthermore, the chapter will address a notion known as the “moment of ripeness”, which is applicable to the pre-phase of a peace process. What this phase will produce is a “negotiation frame”, which will act as the foundational roots which the remained of the process will be merely based on.

## **A. A Contested Definition**

Harold Saunders emphasized greatly on this point as the ultimate first step to initiating a peace process. When conflicting sides agree on one single definition of what the issue at hand is, they become on the right path. Having an agreed definition of the conflict means that both sides at least acknowledge where they have gone wrong, and therefore, can find fair solutions to those issues. Whereas if each conflicting side has a different definition to the issue, both sides would be arguing on different or even on opposite grounds, which defeats the purpose of the process. Taking this into consideration and applying it to the Oslo Accords, till this day there has been no agreement on the definition of this long-lasting conflict. Is it an issue of territory? Is it an issue of who was there first? Is it an issue of whose culture and religion prevails? Is it an issue of safety and security? Explanations by both conflicting sides intensely vary. In fact, when it comes to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, not only is the issue that there can be no single agreement on the definition, the issue has become more complex as the definition by each side takes on a different dimension over time, changing the landscape of the conflict at every stage of each particular definition.

Saunders explains three various ways in which the conflict has been defined; the first being before 1948, then after the establishment of Israel and then in the late 60s to 70s. He argues that before the 1948, also called the year of the *Nakba*, the issue was one of religious roots, where Palestinian Arabs began to view the rising number of Jewish immigrants to



Palestine as a threat to their existence.<sup>52</sup> There were also historical roots to the definition of this stage, where both Palestinian Arabs and Jews immigrating to Palestine both claimed being there first, and therefore have the right to self-determination.<sup>53</sup> Hence, at this stage the struggle was between Jews and Palestinian Arabs (as they were labeled at the time). The definition evolved and after the establishment of the state of Israel, the issue became a conflict between states.<sup>54</sup> In other words, it was no longer an issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine, it became an issue with the state of Israel on one hand, and not Palestine, but the Arabs as a whole on the other hand. A new born enemy existed in the region and in the midst of Arab states who found a new rising threat to their sovereignty. Whereas ‘Palestinian-Arab’ existed in the equation previously, taking out ‘Palestinian’ in this stage meant that the Palestinian people were merely viewed as refugees, not as main players in the conflict.<sup>55</sup> Again, this altered the way in which the conflict was defined. The third definition that Saunders sheds light on was during the 1960s, especially after the 1967 war and into the 70s. At this point, the Palestinian voice was louder than ever and they were able to relocate themselves on the political ground, reiterating their claim to self-determination and their national identity.<sup>56</sup> It was only in 1974 when the Arab states acknowledged that the PLO could be an official representative of the Palestinian people, and that the Palestinian people no longer needed an Arab representative to speak on their behalf.<sup>57</sup> In 1978, at Camp David, the Egyptian, Israeli and American governments affirmed that the conflict at hand cannot be

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52. Ibid., 255.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

solved without cracking the problem of the Palestinians, thus, bring back the Palestinian people to the equation.<sup>58</sup> As this demonstrates, the shifting definition of the conflict leads firstly to confusion as to who is directly or indirectly involved, and secondly, more importantly, leads to deviating away from solving the bigger question.

For Palestinians, not agreeing on a single definition has had larger implications on them than on Israelis. As Israelis gained more power by taking advantage from this contestation over the definition of the conflict, the Palestinian fight was weakened over time. Saunders notes: “for mainstream Palestinians today, the problem seems to have become how to gain recognition of their right as a people to exercise self-determination”.<sup>59</sup> Palestinians had to regularly adjust their cause according to the extent to which their struggle worsened. Whereas previously the Palestinian fight was over regaining back the land they had lost to the Israeli occupation, today it has become a fight over gaining recognition from the international system; a recognition that they are a people who have the right to exist, and a people who have the right to govern themselves. It can be seen how failing at this phase of the peace negotiation process can have devastating implications, and can end up forcing the conflicting sides in a downward spiral leading to worse and worse circumstances.

The issue does not only stand here, even between Israel and its backbone, the United States, defining the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a point of disagreement. For the United States, the conflict can be described as one between two peoples, who need to find a

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58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

way to co-exist.<sup>60</sup> Also for the United States, all Arab states need to reach peace with Israel and act upon this peace. For Israel, the conflict is an existential one, whether that was state against state or people against people, the underlying fight is to exist with full control over the land. There is no doubt that this difference in opinion between Israel and the United States has not stopped their bond from getting stronger. In all cases, whether the United States agrees with Israel's stance or not over this particular point, American support for building a Greater Israel remains dominant and a main priority in American foreign policy. The American position will be discussed in further detail in chapter six. What this section has shown is that, clearly the conflicting sides went to Oslo without an agreed definition to the conflict, confirming that the very first step in a successful peace process was a failure.

### **B. A Promise to Commit**

After defining the conflict comes a stage where the conflicting sides agree to committing to the full process and to implement its fair outcomes as if they are signing a moral contract. To do this, both sides need to believe that the results of a negotiation process will bring benefits to both sides and that fair outcomes will be produced. Simply put by Saunders, "in the Israeli-Palestinian case, neither party has believed that the passage of time without negotiation would irretrievably hurt its cause".<sup>61</sup> In other words, none of the conflicting sides understood that postponing the peace process would harm their struggle as compromises become ever harder to reach. This is because as time progressed, resentment

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60. Ibid., 256.

61. Ibid., 257.

towards each other grew further, and this was not acknowledged by any of the political players. However, the 'postponing' of the process was a political act; each side aimed to gain something before losing it at the negotiations table.

Prior to the Oslo Accords, both Palestinians and Israelis believed they could take advantage of postponing peace talks to enhance their national objectives. On one hand, Israel wanted to acquire more territory, and on the other hand, Palestinians believed they could advance their military capabilities using this time, forcing Israel to compromise further at the negotiations table. Taking into consideration that one component of this phase is that both sides must believe the current situation is worse off than if a peace negotiation process were to be conducted, this stage fails when it comes to the Oslo Accords. Both sides placed minor national objectives over reaching peace and attempting to solve the conflict through negotiations.

Agreeing that the current situation is worse off is one thing, and agreeing to a possible fair solution is another thing. The 'promise to a commitment' phase is also a commitment from both sides that whatever agreement to be produced, must be a fair one for both sides. Here, each of the different factions within the Palestinian and Israeli representations had something to say, adding further strain to the situation. Saunders observes two factions within the Israeli representation at Oslo, and two factions within the Palestinian representation. He argues that Israelis were divided between those who believed control over all the territory to the west of the Jordan river must be a main priority, and those who believed that security and

protecting Jewish integrity was what mattered.<sup>62</sup> On the contrary, disagreements within the Palestinian representation were between those who believed that they should not accept the partition of historical Palestine under any circumstance, whereas others believed that accepting the existence of Israel was inevitable and a Palestinian state must exist within land it withdraws from.<sup>63</sup> Karen Feste also argues that the positions in which both representations took heightened points of conflict and differences rather than found similarities or points of agreement. She notes,

The “proposals are [examples] of positional negotiation, for they combine individual policy points advocated by the government of Israel or the Palestinian Arabs, but they do not bring together differences in the creative-agreement bargaining strategy of principled negotiation”.<sup>64</sup>

The opposing voices at the pre- and at the around-the-table negotiations phase of the process meant that no effective results were being produced. Instead what was happening was that each side aimed to promote their own outlook on what could be the solution to the conflict.

Another aspect associated with this phase of the pre-negotiations is that at this stage both sides need to have a minimum amount of trust towards their ‘enemy’. Here, leaders of both sides need to make their personal predictions on how the ‘other’ will react to the negotiation process and how committed this ‘other’ is. One thing that leaders fear is belittling their positions by agreeing to communicate with the enemy, whilst the enemy bails out of the

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62. Ibid., 258.

63. Ibid.

64. Feste, p. 68.

process and does not agree to a negotiated settlement, thus, making the side who agreed be perceived as the inferior power.<sup>65</sup> This is a game of egos, which unfortunately, all leaders suffer from especially when it comes to Palestinians and Israelis. Saunders warns that “neither Palestinians nor Israelis believe the other would settle for any but extreme solutions.”<sup>66</sup> This mistrust caused the conflicting sides to be suspicious towards one another, acting as an obstacle to the peace process when in reality both sides were ready to talk to each other. An opposite case study to compare in this situation would be the Camp David Accords. Due to the presence of this so called ‘trust’ between Sadat and Israel, Camp David was able to take place successfully. Saunders argues that in the case of Camp David, it was only until Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem that this suspicion was taken out of the picture, and when Israel believed a peace settlement between Egypt and Israel was possible.<sup>67</sup>

### **C. The Minutiae of Arrangement**

The last stage of the pre-negotiations phase, and which finally sets the framework to the process is arranging the small logistical details of the around-the-table negotiations. It is easy for one to underestimate this phase, yet, to many leaders, the details that go into the making of this platform are as relevant as the negotiations itself. These details include the number of sessions that will take place, will the delegations have to commit to one session where all matters will be discussed, or are there multiple sessions to reaching a settlement?

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65. Saunders, p. 259.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

They include the seating arrangement at the negotiations table, in other words, which leader sits next to which leader. These are labeled under ‘physical arrangements’. Saunders argues that these are not any kind of physical arrangements, but are ones that have political implications.<sup>68</sup> For this reason, much thought goes into the making of this stage. Other details include who is invited to the process, are other delegations, besides from the conflicting sides invited to facilitate talks?

This was a highly contested during the time the Oslo Accords were taking place. By inviting the PLO to the negotiations table, that meant that Israel recognized it as a political entity, it meant that it recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and thus, acknowledging its existence. The opposite applied; for the PLO to agree to go to the negotiations table with Israel meant that it recognized the existence of the State of Israel. In this case, the Oslo Accords succeeded in this phase, where both conflicting sides acknowledged each other’s existence. Yet, Israel only agreed to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, stripping it away from most political characteristics that would have not been the same if the PLO was represented as the official self-governing entity of the Palestinians.

#### **D. The Moment of Ripeness**

In chapter two, I mentioned that there has been a disagreement on the importance of this aspect, however, one must consider it. The moment of ripeness in a conflict can be very

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68. Ibid., 260.

unpredictable, but some scholars argue that when it has been reached, and when both sides believe that the moment is ripe, there is a higher possibility for a successful process. In the words of Karen Feste, who holds a strong position for the importance of “ripeness”, she states “negotiation occurs when a conflict is ripe for resolution, that is, there is a threat of conflict escalation, alternative policy tracks exist, and a changing power balance between the parties is occurring”.<sup>69</sup> There is no clear evidence than any of these factors were present at the time which the conflicting sides decided they should go to the negotiations table.

In terms of having a threat of conflict escalation, this was and will always be the case with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, having an ‘alternative policy track’ was certainly not the case at Oslo, there were no new and plausible agendas on the table. The changing in power balance was also definitely not the case in the pre-phase of the Oslo Accords, if anything that power balance in favor of Israel was becoming more solidified as time progressed. Unmistakably, the moment of ripeness did not exist for the Palestinians and the Israelis according to these measurements.

#### **E. A Refusal to Accept Reality**

There is no doubt that for many years prior to the Oslo Accords, and even after the process took place, large numbers of people on both conflicting sides utterly refused to communicate with the enemy. These people exist till this day. They are people who are

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69. Feste, p. 152.



against normalization. In this section, when I talk about normalization, I mean “the process of building open and reciprocal relations with Israel in all fields, including the political, economic, social, cultural, educational, legal, and security fields”.<sup>70</sup> Yet, this refusal is stronger amongst Palestinians more so than Israelis, mainly because for Israelis, normalization is gaining Arab recognition of Israel without reciprocity, whereas Palestinians have much to lose. In his article *Attitudes of Palestinians toward Normalization with Israel*, Mahmoud Mi’ari states that this refusal comes mainly from Arab intellectuals and academics, whereas Palestinian intellectuals in specific generally do not oppose normalization.

The greater percentage of Palestinians who are against normalization are Palestinian citizens and Palestinian freedom fighters. It is important to note that for the opposing Arab intellectuals, this refusal is conditional. Mi’ari notes: “almost all associations of intellectuals in Arab countries reject any normalization with Israel as long as Israel occupies Arab land and does not recognize the Palestinian peoples’ right to self-determination”.<sup>71</sup> However, a minority of prominent Palestinian intellectuals have made their fight against normalization louder over time. One of them is Rawia Shawwa who is a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council.<sup>72</sup> She asserts that agreeing to a normalization process without having a concrete resolution to the conflict implies that peace exists between Palestinians and Israelis, when reality proves otherwise. Shawwa states that “normalization can only take place

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70. Walid Salem, "Ishkaliat muwajahat attatbie'a," Kan'an Magazine, Volume 56, September 1994, p. 15

71. Mahmoud Mi'Ari. "Attitudes of Palestinians toward Normalization with Israel." *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 3 (1999): <http://www.jstor.org/stable/424697>. p. 342.

72. Ibid., 343.

between two equal partners in peace, and not between an occupying force and an occupied people".<sup>73</sup> This is a common idea amongst Palestinians; the fact that they remain inferior towards this occupying power, their rights remain unaddressed, therefore, refusing the idea of normalization and negotiation.

A Palestinian political organization that has taken a strong stance against normalization has been the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). However, in the 1970s, several PFLP members declared that they are only willing to normalize relations with Jewish anti-Zionist groups within Israel.<sup>74</sup> Two decades later, other PFLP members along with Arab nationalists in Palestine refused to accept any type of normalization on any level, and formed a 'Committee Against Normalization' in 1994.<sup>75</sup> It was no coincidence that such a committee would be formed at the same time the Oslo Accords were taking place. Yet, the committee lacked support and sponsorship, and collapsed six months later.<sup>76</sup> This has not stopped other Arab governments from cooperating with Israel and normalizing relations with the latter. Whereas this was previously a taboo, most Arab governments today have peace deals with Israel. In all of these cases, normalization with Israel occurred at the expense of Palestinians. We would have not reached a phase today where the "deal of the century" would have been possible if it was not for the Arab approval of the existence of Israel.

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73. Ibid.

74. Walid Salem, "The Anti-Normalization Discourse in the Context of Israeli-Palestinian Peace-Building," PIJ, 2005, , accessed April 13, 2019, <http://pij.org/articles/334>.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

## **F. Summary: A Failure in the Pre-Negotiations Phase**

What chapter three demonstrated was precisely an analysis of the Oslo Accords using the first phase of the peace negotiations theory, the pre-negotiations phase. This phase is composed of three stages that need to succeed before moving into the actual around-the-table negotiations. Firstly, is defining the conflict, where both conflicting sides need to agree on what the issue comes down to. Secondly, is producing a commitment to a negotiation settlement, that is, both sides need to recognize that their situation without a peace process is worse off, and where both sides need to trust that the ‘other’ will actually commit till the very end. Third, is arranging the small details of how things will play out at the negotiations.

In the case of Oslo, the conflicting sides were not able to clearly agree on a single definition to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In fact, the definition evolved over time and took a different twist depending on the evolving interests of the involved parties. Also in the case of Oslo, the conflicting sides did not recognize that a peace process was a must, they believed other objectives could be gained before going to negotiations, thus, postponing what was actually needed. Lastly, the only partial success of the pre-phase was at the ‘arranging the negotiations stage’, where details such as who was going to be invited to the negotiations were addressed. I call this partial success because the conflicting sides were forced to recognize the existence of each other in order for them to sit at the negotiations table. Yet, in reality, this was only a success for Israel, who still had the upper hand considering it only recognized the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people, not as a governing body,

while the PLO recognized the State of Israel. Before getting to the last section of the chapter, a brief elaboration on the ‘moment of ripeness’ was provided, showing that once again, according to the factors that make a moment “ripe” for negotiations, that moment did not exist before the conflicting sides went to the Oslo Accords.

The last part of this chapter addressed an obstacle to the peace process that happens to be specific to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. That is, people who were against the normalization process. Whereas Arabs used to openly fight against normalization, almost all Arab governments today have peace deals with the ‘other’, Israel. However, there are still prominent Palestinian leaders and intellectuals who refuse to accept the existence of Israel so long as it is an occupying force.

The objective of chapter three was to demonstrate the level of success or failure of this specific phase in the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis. This minimal amount of success set the tone for the remainder of the process, which will be examined in the next chapter. Chapter four will analyze Oslo by applying the second phase in the peace negotiations process, the around-the-table negotiations, which is made up of eight different components.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE FACE TO FACE CONFRONTATION: ARRIVING AT THE NEGOTIATIONS TABLE

Chapter three discussed the first phase of the negotiation process, which I have labeled as the “negotiation frame”. The chapter was concluded by asserting that this phase was a failure for both sides, and in return, was a failure to the bigger process. Feste argues: “the negotiation frame is held together by obstacles to peace rather than by positive factors that would encourage resolution development”.<sup>77</sup> Without foresight, the conflicting sides set a negative and an unsuccessful negotiation frame, which allowed for this negativity to be pulled through till the very end of the process. Thus, with this negative negotiation frame, chapter four will analyze the next phase in the negotiation process, where bigger compromises and more commitment has to be made than in the earlier phase. The Oslo process will be analyzed through eight components which, in a regular peace process between two conflicting sides, are needed to have a successful negotiation phase, that is the phase where the two sides actually meet around the table to discuss the issues at hand in order to propose a fair solution. Furthermore, under the “*Deepening in Palestinian despair; the rise of Hamas*” section, this chapter will shed light on this newly determined Islamist political organization, that arose from the disappointment of the Palestinian people as a consequence of what was concluded at the Oslo Accords.

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77. Feste, p. 61.

There are numerous components leading to a successful peace negotiation process that are larger than the scope of this paper. It is essential to acknowledge here that the components used in this thesis were shortlisted by myself, despite the fact that many more factors exist and have been studied by scholars of peace negotiation theory. The components were picked specifically due to their relevance to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in general, and to the Oslo Accords in particular.

## **A. The Eight Components**

### ***1. Justice and Moral Ethics***

In the *Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, authors Andrea Bartoli and Yannis Psimopoulos elucidate what makes a successful peace process. One of the components most emphasized on is justice. Serving justice at the negotiations table means that both sides acknowledge that they have conducted wrongdoings against humanity. Parties should embrace their moral ethics and show the ‘other’ that they understand what they have done against their enemy is unacceptable. In another study published by the UN, it was argued that even the mediator has a role to play in serving justice. The study asserts that the role of the mediator here is to warn the parties of their violent history towards each other, and that they can no longer resort to these methods.<sup>78</sup>

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78. Wallensteen and Eriksson, p. 40.

What does this imply? It implies that at the negotiations table, Israelis will have to recognize their countless human rights violations, as well as their continued building of illegal settlements, whereas Palestinians will have to acknowledge attacks they have conducted against Israeli civilians. By doing so, each side will understand how they have been dealing with its enemy in the most inhumane and brutal methods, thus, allowing the conflicting sides to move past this violent history. This serves justice in the eyes of Bartoli and Psimopoulos.

In a thorough study on the failures of Oslo, author Manuel Hassassian demonstrates how justice was not served at the negotiations table. The exponential rise in the building of illegal Israeli settlements was well observed during the years of 1993 to 1995 in which the process was taking place, despite the fact that all sides knew this would defeat the purpose of the process and act as an obstacle to any future peace.<sup>79</sup> Accordingly, not only did Israelis not recognize its violations to human rights, it continued to enforce a domestic policy considered essentially one of the main reasons Palestinians were at the peace process. Palestinians were pushing forward a proposal that would not allow Israel to build more settlements, and that it withdraws from certain areas that belonged to the Palestinian Authority but which were not absent from Israeli settlements. Whereas the “justice” factor might not have mattered to Israelis as much as it did to Palestinians, scholars argue that it was still going to act as a hindrance to a fair agreement. Hassassian notes: “in order for any

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79. Manuel Hassassian, "Why Did Oslo Fail? Lessons for the Future," in *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Oslo and the Lessons of Failure: Perspectives, Predicaments, and Prospects*, vol. 3 (UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), p. 118.

future peace agreement to succeed in the Middle East, security for Israelis and justice for Palestinians must be seen as two faces of the same coin”.<sup>80</sup> Israeli ignorance to serving justice at the negotiations table resulted in mere inefficiency.

Another contributing factor to the absence of justice at the negotiations table comes down to the imbalance of power between the conflicting sides. Hassassian argues that Palestinians were treated as an inferior party, as one with no voice.<sup>81</sup> For this reason, Israelis expected Palestinians to settle down for less than what they had expected to come out of the process. Here we see a strong link between the *justice* component and the next component to be examined, *attitude of victory*. In the words of Hassassian, “if [Palestinians] had been treated on an equal footing, that would have ensured justice and security”.<sup>82</sup> I have now explained the failure of one out of eight components of the around-the-table negotiations phase.

## ***2. Attitude of Victory***

The *attitude of victory* component explains that conflicting sides must not enter a peace process with a superior mindset. Parties must acknowledge that even if one side has more military, political or economic capabilities in reality, at the negotiations table, it must act equal to the other. As argued: “in some situations it can become problematic that a few

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80. Ibid., 119.

81. Ibid.

82. Ibid.



leading negotiators dominate the deliberations”.<sup>83</sup> Again, the mediator can control such mistakes. Fred J. Khouri adds to this argument by emphasizing that so long as this imbalance of power exists at the negotiations table, “there will never be any negotiations because there will always be the weaker party –no matter who it is- who will object”.<sup>84</sup> With this in mind, we need to examine the level of power in the hands of each of the conflicting sides at Oslo.

At the Oslo Accords, there were never two equal grounds; the scenario was always a superior Israel with strong American support, and an inferior Palestinian representation with fragile Arab support. The scenario today is pretty much still the same, yet the only difference is what existed from fragile Arab support at the time no longer exists. Khouri warns,

Direct negotiations between parties where a big disparity of power exists between them, as in the case of the Arabs and Israel, and where the stronger party’s main objective in the negotiations is to obtain treaty terms most favorable to her, would be the worst way to try to resolve the Arab-Israeli problem.<sup>85</sup>

Clearly, the Palestinians and Israelis took the wrong decision to initiate a peace process at that moment. Palestinians should have not allowed themselves to enter such a process while being treated as a weak party. At the same time, had the process taken place at any other time, the superior against inferior relationship was still going to be present. This goes back

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83. Wallensteen and Eriksson, p. 29.

84. Fred J. Khouri. “Major Obstacles to Peace: Ignorance, Myths and Misconceptions.” *American-Arab Affairs*, no. 16 (Spring 1986), p. 38.

85. Ibid. 39.

to the power that Israel secured from the 1967 Arab defeat against it, and how it had advanced its military capabilities since then.

In a major study on the psychological obstacles to peace, specific to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Daniel Heradstveit focuses on perceptions, attitudes and trust. In it, Heradstveit conducted interviews with hundreds of leaders coming from the Arab world, including Palestinians, and also leaders coming from Israel. He notes that some of the participants believe that the peace process is a question of moderation.<sup>86</sup> This moderation must occur on both sides. Karen Feste argues that using Heradstveit's conclusion on the importance of moderation, attitudes change. In her words, "once an attitude change in this direction came about, a solution would follow; conflict resolution is a process of changing attitudes".<sup>87</sup> Therefore, perceptions of the other and the attitude towards the other is of great importance in attempting to resolve a conflict. When attitudes become more lenient, compromises become easier to reach and enemies begin to accept each other. This was certainly not the case with the Palestinians and Israelis. This was the second failure out of eight within this phase of the process.

### ***3. Discontinuity of Violence***

Discontinuity in this context is putting an end to any violence taking place between the conflicting sides. That includes violent attacks against civilians and against fighters.

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86. Daniel Heradstveit. *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Psychological Obstacles to Peace*. Oslo, Norway: (Universitetsforlaget: 1981), p. 67.

87. Feste, p. 118.

Regardless of who the violence is used against, what is important is that violence is ceased so that negotiations could take place. When the use of violence stops, leaders and participants feel more secure enabling them to sit at the negotiations table with the enemy.

I have already mentioned under *Component 1: Justice and Moral Ethics* that during the peace process Israel was violating human rights by building more illegal settlements on Palestinian land. Yet, in this section, more emphasis is placed on violent attacks, suicide bombings, and continuous shootings against innocent civilians. Feste notes, “in the Arab-Israeli dispute, violent means have been used by each side to pursue an outcome of conquest time and again”.<sup>88</sup> Evidence shows that violence was not ceased during the process, instead, it was used as a method to pressure the other. Thus, what was being done was “the use of violence to attain peaceful ends”, an equation that does not make logical sense.<sup>89</sup>

During the years of the process and what followed, images of women and children arrested and tortured by Israeli soldiers became more regular by the day. Manuel Hassassian notes that the Israeli army took action to remind Palestinians that regardless of the process, the occupation still exists, and it is here to stay.<sup>90</sup> For Israelis, it was obvious the intentions of going to the peace process were not to change the current political landscape of the time. Their leaders believed they could expand their power by trapping Palestinians into a proposal which would gain Palestinians recognition, but not more than that. Palestinian fighters

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88. Ibid., 49.

89. Ibid., 61.

90. Hassassian, p. 118.

reacted by resorting to violence. Hassassian notes that Israeli civilians felt they were being victimized during the years of the process. They felt that their coffee shops and shopping malls were no longer safe, and that explosives were ready at the hands of Palestinian fighters.<sup>91</sup> This period also marks a time were Palestinians devoted much of their violent attacks to bus explosions against Israelis.<sup>92</sup> Once again, one of the main pillars to a successful peace process fails, indicating the third out of eight failures.

#### ***4. Passiveness and Compromise***

Considered one of the most challenging obstacles in peace processes, *passiveness and compromise* are essentially why the conflicting sides are sitting facing each other in an effort to confront one another. As mentioned in the *Attitudes of Victory* section, political negotiation is a series of compromises, in the aim of reaching a passive settlement. In reaching a passive settlement, mutual interests must be found among the conflicting sides in order to move past the differences. Often the example used to demonstrate such a scenario would be the peace process between Egypt and Israel, the Camp David Accords. At Camp David, Israelis first sought to divide the Sinai where some land would be returned to Egypt, and the remainder would be under Israeli control. However, Egypt completely refused such a settlement, and Israel equally refused to abandon all of the Sinai. In finding common interests, Israel labeled security as its main concern, whereas Egypt labeled sovereignty as its main concern. To

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91. Ibid., 119.

92. Ibid.

satisfy both needs, Sinai would return to Egypt, and Egypt would demilitarize the area that surrounds Israel.<sup>93</sup>

Palestinians and Israelis were not able to find that common ground that Egyptians and Israelis found. The reason behind this difference is because the rules of engagement between the Palestinians and Israelis were different than with the Egyptians. At the end of the day, Sinai was not of any significance to the Israelis, thus, giving it up did not cost Israel much. Whereas on the other hand, to both Palestinians and Israelis, Jerusalem holds much significance on various levels, most importantly, on a holy and religious level. Authors Gregory Harms and Todd Ferry studied these two opposite positions, and concluded that “Israel’s position was ‘autonomy’ for the Palestinians as well as continued settlement construction, whereas Palestinians were looking for statehood”.<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the two positions do not overlap under any circumstance, and what distinguished this situation from the Egyptian-Israeli peace process is that these positions remained firm till the very end. This impediment was one out of many, yet it may be the most important point of difference because had both sides accepted to slightly bargain their positions, a door could have opened to finding common interests. In one of the most studied books about peace negotiations, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, authors Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton and William Ury set a fundamental groundwork for any type of negotiation. They argue and this research fully supports, “the more you try to convince the other side of the impossibility of changing your opening position, the more difficult it becomes to do so. Your

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93. Feste, p. 65.

94. Harms and Ferry, p. 151.

ego becomes identified with your position”.<sup>95</sup> Palestinians and Israelis were not ready for such a mindset, and taking today’s reality into consideration, they will never be. Both sides, yet more so on the Israeli end, refuse to the utmost to give the outside world an outlook that it is willing to give in. For that reason, what happened at the negotiations table was “saving face” as Fisher, Patton and Ury describe it. In other words, instead of the negotiations revolving around the issues at stake, it became an issue of who sustains their initial positions longer.

The mainstream thought at Oslo was that any gain for the enemy is a loss for myself. Going back to Hassassian, he argues that at Oslo, Israelis believed they could manipulate the weak Arab support given to the Palestinians and use this to their advantage by forcing a settlement to their favor.<sup>96</sup> In the meantime, Palestinians believed they could exploit this weakness and show Israelis that by going to Oslo, they are not afraid of confronting Israel alone.<sup>97</sup> All of this was done in the aim of imposing settlements favoring one side, and forcing the other to commit to more compromises. Such actions led to a deviation from the initial process, where instead of sitting at the negotiations table to loosen positions and find middle grounds, the conflicting sides were searching for methods around the process to enhance personal and national interests. This marks the fourth failure at Oslo from the around-the-table negotiations phase.

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95. Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton, and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 5

96. Hassassian, p. 118.

97. Ibid.

## 5. *Mutual Trust*

In the same study referred to under *Component 2: Attitudes of Victory* by Heradstveit on the perceptions and attitudes of Arabs and Israelis, Heradstveit concluded that that the fear of the other being treacherous, and the mistrust existing between both sides is one of the main obstacles to peace. This mistrust generally grows over time as both conflicting sides do not witness any progress in implementing a passive settlement. However, peace negotiations theorists insist that the sides must have a minimal amount of trust towards one another in order to break negative perceptions. Trusting the enemy could also be linked to every other component discussed in this section; that is, a conflicting party must trust that the enemy will compromise, that the enemy will discontinue the use of violence, that the enemy will allow an equal allocation of control and so on.

Feste argues that “fears, distorted perceptions, and traditional social hatreds growing from conflicts whose origins lie in expansive demands and in the incompatibility of recognizable objectives have long-term effects”.<sup>98</sup> This applies very much to the situation at Oslo. Whereas a peace process should allow for some comfort to prevail between conflicting sides, the opposite took place in our case study. Hassassian observes, “the situation prevailing during the period between 1993 and 2000, when the Oslo process was in implementation, resulted in deeper mistrust and a sense of frustration”.<sup>99</sup> This demonstrates that the mistrust level deteriorated during the peace process. Mistrust led to frustration and frustration led to

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98. Feste, p. 60.

99. Hassassian, p. 120.

violence, again witnessing another downward spiral that resulted from what was supposed to be a ‘peace negotiations process’. None of the involved parties at Oslo trusted each other which led to miscalculations in terms of who would end up gaining what. For Palestinians, they believe they are paying the price for the miscalculations that their leaders made at Oslo until this very day.

It is important to note here that trust must also exist between the conflicting sides and the mediator who should be controlling the process fairly. Peace negotiation theory implies that a third party, free of any biasness towards a certain party in the conflict, must exist in order to mediate talks and concessions. Although the official mediator of the process were Norwegian politicians and academics, the process was not free of American influence. American mediators were present, the final Oslo Accords were signed at the White House and no one could ever forget the image of the century where Arafat shook hands with Rabin in the presence of Clinton. American support for Israel was never hidden, all parties knew that the Israeli lobby during the Clinton administration –and after- was one of the strongest lobbies in influencing American foreign policy. Hassassian argues, “Palestinians felt that they could not trust the US mediators, especially Dennis Ross”.<sup>100</sup> The Oslo Accords faced yet another obstacle. One could imagine how the course of events were shaped in a situation where mistrust existed between the conflicting sides, and where mistrust existed between a certain party in the process and its mediator. Consequently, mistrust counts as the fifth failure of this phase.

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100. Ibid., 125.



## 6. *Access and Transparency*

Earlier in this chapter, a reference was made to a specific study that was published by the UN. In this section I will explain this study and emphasize further on it. It is a research study done by Peter Wallensteen and Mikael Eriksson, which was published by the Department of Political affairs, United Nations. In it are eighteen different factors that are divided between roles given to the conflicting sides and to the mediator, which are essential for transitional justice –a very important phase in conflict resolution. These eighteen points have been shortlisted by the authors through studying three pre-longed wars, and therefore apply very accurately to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Yet, many of these eighteen points have been demonstrated one way or another through my components which I have explained in this research, therefore, this section will only refer to two out of the eighteen: *access and transparency* and *equal allocation of control*. Under *access and transparency*, the conflicting sides do not have to accomplish as much as they are required in other phases, all they are required to do is involve the general public and involve their civil societies in the process. This does not mean invite the civil society to the negotiations table, but inform it of what is happening.

Wallensteen and Eriksson stress that “it should be known to the outside world who participates in the talks, the schedule of meetings, the issues that are under debate, positions of the parties and other significant matters”.<sup>101</sup> By providing the public with these pieces of

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101. Wallensteen and Eriksson, p. 27.

information, nothing can come off as a shock to them once the negotiations are over. It also demonstrates that process has both national and international support. What distinguished the Oslo Accords from any other peace process was its level of secrecy. Palestinians and Israelis back home had no idea of what had happened at Oslo, and were therefore not ready to accept its terms and conditions. They were simply asked to accept the results of the process which to both sides seemed as if their leaders had sold their fight for freedom. Hassassian states,

Israelis were asked to declare unequivocally that there is no such thing as Greater Israel, and Palestinians were asked to declare unequivocally that there is no such thing as Palestine from the river to the sea.<sup>102</sup>

Palestinians and Israelis at home were not alone. While Americans were always the first to be aware of Israeli actions and decision-making, this time they were not. Harms and Ferry argue that although Americans –and no one other than Americans- were aware that some sort of talks were happening, they were left out of knowing what the substance of the talks revolved around.<sup>103</sup>

For a long period of time prior to the Oslo Accords, leaders on both ends cried their fight for autonomy, self-determination, and sovereignty out loud on all occasions. Thus, for those very same leaders to come back home with such results was a huge disappointment to their followers. This was the implication of not informing the public details of the process throughout the years and before formally signing the Accords. The public backlashed, and

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102. Hassassian, p. 119.

103. Harms and Ferry, p. 153.

leaders paid the price. In fact, some leaders of the process paid the price by losing their lives as a result of extremists who alleged that their land was sold to the enemy. Of those was Prime Minister Rabin, who was assassinated by a Jewish extremist in 1995 in response to the Oslo Accords.<sup>104</sup> Hence, although it might seem minor, yet the role of civil society has a huge impact on a peace process. This is especially the case in pro-longed disputes, where the general public has been raised on the basis of despising the enemy. Even in the smallest of duties, the Oslo Accords fails in the sixth component of this analysis.

### ***7. Equal Allocation of Control***

To distribute control equally between the conflicting sides is a role given solely to the mediator of the peace process. The mediator should allocate control between the conflicting sides equally, by giving each side a chance to defend their positions and a chance to state their desires. Fisher and Ury have also emphasized on this idea. They argue: “someone at the meeting needs to facilitate- to keep the meeting on track, to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, to enforce any ground rules, and to stimulate discussion by asking questions”.<sup>105</sup> This requires the mediator to be an utterly neutral party, making the role of the mediator equally important to that of the conflicting sides in analyzing the success of a peace process. As a matter of fact, authors Wallenstein and Eriksson argue that there should more than one mediator to avoid any discrepancies and to ensure that no single voice is controlling the process.

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104. Hassassian, p. 128.

105. Fisher, Patton, and Ury, p. 61.

Unfortunately, having several mediators and having neutrality amongst these mediators was not the case with the Oslo Accords. Although the Norwegians were considered a neutral third party, their influence was not that effective on the process. On the other hand, the American influence triumphed. Not only were Americans more supportive of Israelis in general, but the PLO was not experienced in communicating with the United States, who as argued by Hassassian, “turned out to be the only power broker in the peace process”.<sup>106</sup> This came at a cost. The PLO did not trust the Americans, nor were they able to communicate their position with them. All this resulted in a biasness in outcome, where Israel received more from what they were asking and Palestinians accepted the littlest of demands. When the mediator failed to equally allocate control between the parties, the process failed in satisfying its seventh component of a successful peace negotiation process.

#### ***8. Legal Status of Agreement***

Giving a piece of document legal status and legal validity is possibly one of the most important aspects in a peace process. In other words, the terms and conditions produced by a peace process do absolutely no good if they are not legally recognized. Forcing the conflicting sides to bind by a legal piece of document means that they will be punished if they do not abide by its rules. Once again, the mediator has another obligation to guarantee at the negotiations table. It is the job of the mediator to produce the legal dimensions in order

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106. Hassassian, p. 117.

to produce the political compromises.<sup>107</sup> The legal status of the agreement is also a description of what type of agreement this is. Is an agreement to co-exist? Is it an agreement that states general principles? Is it an agreement to have future talks? The legal status of the agreement answers this question.

The first argument to make here is that the Declaration of Principles (DOP), which states the outcome of the process, and precisely what each of the conflicting side needs to accept was not a legally binding document.<sup>108</sup> It did not have legal implications on the conflicting sides. Evidence for this lies directly in the fact that the parties did not commit to the DOP and no one has been punished for their ‘unlawful action’.

The second argument to make in this case is that the years during which the process took place, and the first few years after the process witnessed a constant change in Israeli prime ministers. Israel witnessed a leadership under Shamir, Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu, Barak, Sharon, and today Netanyahu once again.<sup>109</sup> As a result, with every turnover in leaderships, policies and ideologies changed. Hassassian notes that “because prime ministers were being changed rapidly and dramatically, the positions Israel carried with it to the negotiations were changing each time with no commitments to previous agreements”.<sup>110</sup> This demonstrates no legal obligations to the initial agreement. We also need to consider that at the Oslo Accords were first led by Track II diplomacy, meaning that unofficial talks took place mainly between

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107. Wallensteen and Eriksson, p. 32.

108. Anderlini, p. 16.

109. Hassassian, p. 120.

110. Ibid.

academics, that is, not state to state. Does this make the process naturally less legally binding? What followed the Oslo Accords upholds this statement, yet, Track II diplomacy has had a huge impact on the history of Palestinian-Israeli relations. However, in this context, the failure in imposing a legal commitment to the Oslo Accords marks the eighth failure of the around-the-table negotiations phase.

## **B. A Deepening in Palestinian Despair; the Rise of Hamas**

The peace process led to several consequences aside from its direct failure. It essentially led to the *second intifada* in 2000 which was briefly explained in chapter one. When the *second intifada* erupted, there were several changes and various narratives within the Palestinian factions. In other words, Palestinians became more fragmented and politicized. The Palestinian Authority (PA) was losing much of its legitimacy, which led Palestinians to seek refuge elsewhere. This refuge was welcomed by Hamas. It is important to note here that Hamas was not the sole political player at this point, Fatah along with other political organizations were still operating as competitors to Hamas on the ground.

### ***1. A Short Background***

Hamas was not founded as a result of the *second intifada*, it existed long before, at the outbreak of the *first intifada*. Hamas was an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder was Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, a Palestinian cleric, political activist who has performed charitable work under the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. In 1987, Yassin

established Hamas, which translates into Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah. It was on the eve of the *first intifada* that the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood decided to establish its own separate organization, which came to be known as Hamas. Hamas was seen by the Palestinians as an organization that ought to take action against the Israeli occupation. At a time when another Islamist group, namely “Islamic Jihad”, was emerging and rising to power, Hamas felt pressured to legitimize itself proving that it is the only Islamist organization that could fight off this occupation. In doing so, Hamas continued what its mother organization advocated prior to its establishment: educating Muslims about Islam. In the words of their leaders, this method was “preparing the generations” as this would provide Muslims with the capabilities of fighting the enemy. In fact, as noted by Zaki Chehab: “Sheikh Yassin’s contribution to the growth of the Islamic movement in Palestine emerged out of his conviction that students must have an Islamic education and understand the meaning of ‘jihad’”.<sup>111</sup> This was a true belief for Yassin and the co-founders of Hamas. Yet, it is evident that Hamas was initially a fight for freedom and liberation more than it was a fight for Islam.

But this is not to undermine the Islamic aspirations of Hamas. It is inspired by Islam and has several Islamic goals. Yet, Hamas is viewed in broader terms; it is not only confined to Islamic values. As noted by Khalid Hroub: Hamas “is a political, cultural, and social grass roots organization that has a separate military wing specializing in armed resistance against

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111. Zaki Chehab. *Inside Hamas: the untold story of militants, martyrs and spies*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 17.

Israeli occupation”.<sup>112</sup> Its intentions and objectives are diversified. This partly explains why Hamas emerged successfully and why it became more powerful as time progressed. In other words, Hamas was able to offer Palestinians with facilities that institutions could not, such as infrastructure and education. This generated more support for the organization as people believed that their members were bringing about change, and, were pulling them out of their socio-economic miseries.

In political terms, Hamas has always played on words in the aim of not directly threatening its Arab neighbors nor the West. In 1993, Hamas issued its “Introductory Memorandum”, and in it was stated the movement’s strategies. It stated: “the field of engagement with the enemy is in Palestine”.<sup>113</sup> This explicitly states that Hamas will not target any of its enemies who are located outside of Palestine. According to this statement, states beyond the borders of Palestine should not be threatened by Hamas. In the same document, it was claimed that “confronting and resisting the enemy in Palestine must be continuous until victory and liberation”.<sup>114</sup> There was no use of the term “violence” in any of this. Again, this is another strategy used by the movement’s leaders to have as little enemies or threats made against it as possible. However, a distinction between rhetoric and reality has to be made. Although there is no mention of violence in this statement, Hamas proved that it has no problem with resorting to violence if it is necessary to do so. In fact, it

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112. Khalid Hroub. *Hamas: A beginner's Guide*. (Ann Arbor, Mich: Pluto Press, 2006), p. 19.

113. Ibid., 23.

114. Ibid.



is because of Hamas' violent attacks against Israel that the United States and other governments have labeled it a "terrorist organization".

In terms of organization, Hamas functions the same way a normal government does. As noted, "Hamas generally follows a hierarchal model in which ultimate control resides with the 15-member political bureau (or politburo) and the movement-wide consultative council (known as the shura council) headquartered in Damascus".<sup>115</sup> It is important to note here that since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, Hamas moved its headquarters to Qatar after refusing to back the Assad regime. Hamas has a *shura*, which is similar to any constitution made up of committees to supervise the state's activities. At the same time, it functions as a movement as well; it has its branch offices in several countries. This demonstrates how well-developed the organization has become in the face of confronting Israel.

The question of "what has Hamas done so far" could be split into three parts. First, is on a political level. Second, is on a military level. Third, is on a social and humanitarian level. Politically, Hamas has not done much. By simply looking at Hamas' charter, the organization has not met any of its goals. Its most cited objective states: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinct Palestinian Movement which owes its loyalty to Allah, derives from Islam its way of life and strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine".<sup>116</sup>

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115. Samuel J. Wilkes and Cynthia N. Jackson. *Hamas in the Middle East: A Closer Look*. (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), p. 18.

116. "Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas." Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas.

Hamas underestimated the difficulties of achieving such an aim. However, the Hamas charter has become more irrelevant over time, both for the people, and for the organization itself. As asserted by Tristan Dunning: “After all, dogmatic ideologies don’t lend themselves well to the demands of practical politics. And Hamas is an activist political movement grounded in temporal aims, not one prone to extensive philosophising”.<sup>117</sup>

Aside from the charter, its aim of being recognized as the representative body of Gaza has not been achieved, and this was the case even after its electoral victory in 2006. As noted: the “Palestinian Authority (PA) and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) have kept that role, including on matters regarding Gaza, despite the fact that Hamas has held the territory since 2007”.<sup>118</sup> Hamas for so long has been highly critical of Fatah and the PLO, for its efforts to negotiate with Israel. Yet, certain situations have pressured Hamas into ensuring a Fatah-Hamas coalition. This proves once again, that politically Hamas has failed to achieve its goals, and to sustain its image both to its supporters, and to its non-supporters. However, in my opinion, the fact that Hamas is seeking cooperation with its long-time rival should be viewed in a more optimistic way. The *International Crisis Group* notes that Hamas has long resisted cooperation with the PA, yet, “now that it has renounced governance, a door has been opened, and with it, an opportunity to redesign the peace process and advance the well-being of Gaza’s 1.7 million residents”.<sup>119</sup>

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117. Tristan Dunning. "Why the Hamas Charter Isn't a Key Obstacle to Peace with Israel." *The Conversation*. (2014)

118. Hussein Ibish. "What Does Hamas Do Now?" *The Atlantic*. (2014)

119. “Gaza and Israel: New Obstacles, New Solutions.” *International Crisis Group*. (2014)

Militarily, Hamas has achieved more success than it did politically. Hamas experienced a huge development in its military technology as well as in its military strategy. This implies that its rockets and missiles are able to reach places that could be very damaging to Israel if targeted. In the words of the organization:

EQB [Ezz ed Din al-Qassam Brigades] has worked very hard over the past few years to counter the occupation's terrorist policies. And in many cases, EQB registered surprising victories against fortified military targets and against occupation forces attacking Palestinian neighborhoods.<sup>120</sup>

This has been the common narrative within Gaza; people believe in the strength of Al Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing. In comparison to Israel's military capabilities, Hamas poses no threat to Israel. In other words, Hamas is not able to fight, let alone win a war against Israel. However, Israel has constantly acted with paranoia, especially after its defeat against the Arabs in the 1973 war. Even an attack against three or four Israeli civilians can shake Israel's legitimacy. It is the perception that threatens Israel. As noted by Nathan Brown: "large parts of the Israeli population now feel within Hamas's reach as the range of its rockets creeps higher".<sup>121</sup>

Israel's policies towards Hamas are based on what Hamas could do in the future, and not on what Hamas has done in the past: "Hamas may never come close to vanquishing Israel

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120. "Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades." *Al Qassam*.

121. Nathan J. Brown. "Five Myths About Hamas." *Washington Post*. (2014)

on the battlefield, but changes in its capabilities — tunnels, abductions, missiles and even a drone — continue to make Israelis nervous and force them to react”.<sup>122</sup> Although Hamas has been attacking a number of Israeli civilians and Israeli soldiers, these numbers will not change the political landscape of the conflict. At the same time, such attacks have indirectly hurt the Israeli government. It is crucial to understand that Hamas as an Islamic movement, or as a political party, or even as a governing body is not mainly the reason why it threatens Israel. The threats to Israeli sovereignty are self-made by Israeli politicians. This has served as a benefit for Hamas.

On another note, Hamas has also been popular for its social efforts. Article Twenty-One from the Hamas charter states:

Social solidarity consists of extending help to all the needy, both materially and morally, or assisting in the execution of certain actions. It is incumbent upon the members of the Hamas to look after the interests of the masses the way they would look after their own interests.<sup>123</sup>

A research conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies state that “Hamas’ extensive social and welfare programs have an annual budget between \$50-70 million”.<sup>124</sup> This proves that the charter is not completely irrelevant, at least in social terms. Hamas was able to do so because it has mastered its tunnel operations. Tunnels have been used for

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122. Ibid.

123. "Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas." Palestine Center - The Charter of the Hamas.

124. Lara Pham. "Terrorism and Charity: Defining Hamas | World Policy Institute." *World Policy*. (2014)

smuggling weapons and for providing necessities to Gazans. Such necessities include food, medicine, clothing, fuel, and Hamas has also improved education facilities. This could be one of the main reasons behind Hamas' victory in 2006 over Fatah. The PA and Fatah have historically proven that they are incapable of providing welfare benefits to Gazans, and thus, Hamas has been much more socially successful in Gaza than the PA. This is something that Hamas has adopted from its mother organization, the Muslim Brotherhood.

When it comes to Hamas and its reaction to the Oslo Accords, this marked a very violent phase in the history of Hamas. Known as one of the biggest enemies of the Oslo Accords, Hamas aimed to prevent and disrupt the process through conducting several terrorist attacks. To the re-emerging organization, the Oslo Accords were a selling deal; the selling of historical Palestine to the enemy. A notable reaction to the process was when Hamas initiated the Hebron massacre against Israel in 1995.<sup>125</sup> To break what was left from PLO/ PA legitimacy, Hamas began to emphasize greatly on its Islamic rhetoric and the legal status of the 'holy land'. The new Islamist narrative was different than those of previous narratives, people saw hope in it, allowing for further support. In the past, Hamas had refused any sort of communication with Israel, and has been very critical of Fatah for doing so. Today, the situation is slightly different, where Hamas has been filtering indirect communication methods with the Israelis. However, we cannot ignore the fact that on a larger scale, Israel has completely refused to cooperate with Hamas due to what it believes as its 'violent nature'.

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125. Hassassian, p. 137.

### **C. Summary: A Failure in the Around-the-Table Negotiations Phase and A New Hope for Palestinians**

This chapter gave an intensive analysis of eight different components that are needed in the second phase of negotiations, and concluded that Oslo has failed at all eight levels. These eight factors are: justice and moral ethics, attitudes of victory, discontinuity of violence, passiveness and compromise, mutual trust, access and transparency, equal allocation of control, and finally legal status of agreement. At all eight levels, the Oslo Accords failed to satisfy the needs of each component, whether the component gave a role to the conflicting sides or a role to the mediator of the process. Palestinians were treated as a weak party, Israelis expected Palestinian to compromise further, and Americans were not able to fairly communicate with Palestinians. Furthermore, due to the non-existing civil society role, the general public on both ends backlashed negatively and violently to the process. Most prominently was the violent backlash coming from Hamas. This chapter dedicated a section to explain Hamas as a political organization, and as a governing body. I named this a re-emergence of the organization, because although they existed since 1987, their power was at a peak after the *second intifada* which erupted as a result of the Oslo Accords. The chapter gave a brief summary of the organization's political, military and social actions.

In the next chapter, the research will analyze the third and last phase of the peace negotiation process; the implementation phase. That is, analyzing the Oslo Accords and its

DOP in terms of how it was implemented or how it was further developed. It is important to note that the Oslo Accords were not meant as a final solution to the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, yet it was a process; a process with an implementation phase.

## CHAPTER V

### TAKING THE NEGOTIATIONS TO THE GROUND: THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

So far, this research has analyzed two phases of a peace negotiation process, where the conflicting sides are mainly involved in talking with each other. Divided into two chapters, chapter three and chapter four, the pre-negotiations phase and the around-the-table negotiations phase were proven as an utter failure in the case of the Oslo Accords. The third and last phase of the negotiations process shifts from a series of talks to a course of action. The implementation phase, argued by most scholars is often where most peace processes fail, due to the fact that the conflicting sides eventually or initially abandon the terms and conditions which were negotiated and signed. Chapter five is an analysis of the implementation phase after which the Oslo Accords took place. That is, which of the DOP were implemented, which were not, and what affected the implementation phase.

Going back to Harold Saunders, he emphasizes greatly on the implementation phase not as the point in which conflict resolution has been reached, but as the point where the conflicting sides take the current negotiations to another, more advanced negotiation process. In other words, he asserts that only in implementing the current agreement can the two sides move forward with another agreement, one cannot simply neglect this agreement according to personal interests and start a new one. Therefore, a halt in the implementation phase is a halt to any prospects of a future peace.



## **A. The Declaration of Principles (DOP)**

What the Oslo Accords produced was an agreement which included a list of do's and don'ts that both sides must abide by. This list is called the Declaration of Principles (DOP). We need to distinguish between the first phase of Oslo and the second phase, where each phase produced different results. In the DOP of Oslo I, the outcomes of the negotiations were: that Israel would withdraw from Gaza and the Jericho areas, democratic elections would take place in the West Bank and Gaza, a five-year interim period would be given, and that the status of Jerusalem and the question of refugees would be addressed in the second phase of the negotiations. The interim period is of significance specifically to the Palestinians. The DOP states, "the Interim Agreement shall specify, among other things, the structure of the Council, the number of its members, and the transfer of powers and responsibilities from the Israeli military government and its Civil Administration to the Council".<sup>126</sup> Therefore, this would slightly center away power from the Israelis to the Palestinians. Also agreed on in Oslo I is that while elections would take place in the Palestinian territories, Palestinian public police would ensure that elections would run smoothly, and therefore, more legitimacy must be given to the Palestinian police force.

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126. "Declaration of Principles (Oslo Accords)," Foundation for Middle East Peace, September 13, 1993,, <https://fmep.org/resource/declaration-of-principles-oslo-accords/>.

Oslo II produced the following outcomes: Israel would withdraw from densely populated areas, and security engagements were to take place. Essentially, what the DOP aimed to reach was a settlement based on UN Security Resolution 242 and 338, which have been violated numerous times by Israel. As the next section will demonstrate, none of these were seen in reality. In fact, as argued by Hassassian, after the DOP was settled, and after what was supposed to be the ‘implementation phase’, “Palestinians were worse-off economically, and Israelis were worse off in terms of their domestic security”.<sup>127</sup>

### **B. A Wrong Kind of Implementation: The Scapegoating Alternative**

Before explaining *the scapegoating alternative*, this section will present examples of how implementation failed after leaders of the process took the Oslo Accords back home. In a book written by Ahmed Qurie –known as Abu Ala- a leading member of the Palestinian representation at the Oslo Accords, he explains how things went wrong during and after the process from a first-hand experience. The DOP had claimed that Palestinians are eligible to have a Palestinian police force who would defend and protect its citizens like it would in any other country. Qurie argues that “weapons handed in to the Palestinian police under the initial implementation of the Oslo Accords, no less than 147 had been found later in the hands of would-be suicide bombers”.<sup>128</sup> This demonstrates that there was a clear flaw in the way things were being implemented. These weapons were supposed to end up in the hands of the newly-

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127. Hassassian, p. 119.

128. Ahmed Qurie, *Peace Negotiations in Palestine: From the Second Intifada to the Roadmap* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), p. 104.

established Palestinian police force in order to defend innocent civilians against any harm coming towards their way. The weapons ended up in the hands of extremist Palestinians who willingly bombed themselves in the aim of killing innocent civilians on the other end, defeating the purpose of having a police force.

It is inevitable to mention Israeli illegal settlements again and again when talking about the failure of the Oslo Accords. It is especially in this phase of the process, the implementation phase, where this issue in specific majorly determines the failure of the process. Israel did not make any effort to stop the building of illegal settlements on Palestinian land. This infuriated the Palestinians and convinced them that even taking Israel to the negotiations table will not stop them from continuing this construction plan. Qurei presents the reader with numbers of settlements prior and post the DOP, where there is clear evidence that the number of settlements had doubled in the few years after 1995. He even argues that the old existing settlements were expanded to accommodate all the new Israeli settlers.<sup>129</sup> To Israel, these settlements are to protect Israelis for security reasons; a main priority in Israeli domestic policies. This Israeli consciousness towards ensuring its security does not come out of thin air. The time period post the negotiation process marked a time where Palestinian violence towards Israelis heightened. This mainly came from Palestinians who opposed the Oslo Accords and were ready to do anything in order for it not to go forward. This takes to me what I have labeled as the *scapegoating alternative*.

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129. Ibid., 297.

Scapegoating often refers to a situation where there are one or more conflicting sides that are constantly blaming the other for committing wrongdoings, and therefore, attempting to get away with or cover for one's own wrongdoing. It is when a conflicting side targets another and holds it responsible for any sinful or illegal action. Scapegoating leads to various negative implications, mainly affecting confidence, trust, perceptions, attitudes, and efforts for peace. This is precisely why the Oslo Accords failed in the implementation phase. Qurei argues: "today, each side blames the other for having ignored [commitments], resulting in a crisis in confidence. This problem became even more pressing with the opening of permanent status talk".<sup>130</sup> Palestinians and Israelis resorted to blaming each other for the failure of implementing the DOP when both sides were conducting the exact same thing: not committing to the original agreement. This allowed for each side to go further in running their prohibited actions, knowing that they have placed blame and pressure on the other side.

Scapegoating has led parties involved in the dispute to formulate a very negative perception of the other. Qurei notes that evidence of this could be dated back to the launch of the 1991 Madrid Conference, and deepened after the 1993 Oslo process. He asserts: "each side has accused the other of violating specific undertakings and undermining the spirit of their commitment to resolving their political differences peacefully".<sup>131</sup> This is strictly why none of the DOP were implemented; Palestinians believed Israelis were not committing to implementing the agreement and therefore felt no need to commit themselves, and vice versa. In other words, scapegoating allowed the conflicting sides to lawfully fail in the

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130. Ibid., 296.

131. Ibid., 295.

implementation phase without being accounted for doing so. This failure is mainly a responsibility on behalf of the mediator, who was not able to enforce the agreement on the opposing sides the way it should have as a third party whose job is to ensure the implementation of the agreement. In this dispute, even the unofficial mediator to the process who happened to be the United States also resorted to scapegoating to escape from its responsibilities.

After the Oslo Accords, there were two different realities; an Israeli reality and a Palestinian reality, which did not overlap in any matter. In Palestinian mindsets, “Madrid and Oslo heralded the prospect of a State, and guaranteed an end to the occupation and a resolution of outstanding matters within an agreed time frame”.<sup>132</sup> In Israeli mindsets, “the expansion of settlement activity and the taking of measures to facilitate the convenience and safety of settlers do not prejudice the outcome of permanent status negotiations”.<sup>133</sup> This clearly shows the difference in perspectives, which demonstrates that going to the negotiations meant absolutely nothing in reality considering that both sides were still committed to their initial positions. From first-hand experience, Qurei notes that Israelis were well-aware that they were causing Palestinians trouble on the issue of the settlements, and that Palestinians were not going to accept a solution where the illegal settlements were not addressed. Yet, instead of addressing the issue, Israelis only made an effort to convince the general public at home and the international system that the settlements are only for Israeli security and does not hinder any effort to peace, proving once again, the level of ignorance

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132. Ibid., 297.

133. Ibid.

given to the negotiations process. Moreover, according to the Israeli reality, Palestinians are doomed to fail in any peace process for several reasons. In their perspective, this comes down to the nature of Palestinian policies, which revolve around “institutionalized anti-Israeli, anti-Jewish incitement; the release from detention of terrorists; the failure to control illegal weapons; and the actual conduct of violent operations”.<sup>134</sup> It is foreseeable that a peace process with such opposite mindsets would fail in implementing any policies which requires these two enemies to meet each other halfway.

### **C. Foreign Support versus Neighbor Neglect**

While the title is self-explanatory, this section delves into how American support for Israel, and Arab neglect to the Palestinian question greatly affected the implementation phase of the process. The American position in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will be clarified in chapter six, yet, this section will briefly touch upon how the American support and Arab neglect specially affected the implementation phase of the Oslo Accords. Wallenstein and Eriksson argue that an important task for the “peacemaker”, who is the mediator, is to ‘*make implementation attractive through continued international support*’. In order to go through with the implementation phase, the conflicting parties often need financial sponsorship as well as moral support. This is an obligation on behalf of foreign patrons who have been ever involved in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and an obligation on behalf of the mediator who should ensure that these patrons commit to supporting their proxies within the conflict. In

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134. Ibid., 298.

our case, Israel has have been receiving the support it needs ever since its establishment mainly from the Americans, while the Arab world has been driven away by its own political turmoil and internal conflicts at home, reaching a point where supporting the Palestinian question has become a secondary issue. Whereas an already prevailing imbalance of power existed between the Palestinians and Israelis, the imbalance in international support has deepened this issue further.

This dilemma with the Arabs has not always been that they had their own internal conflicts to worry about, but over the years, Arabs have generally demonstrated interest in talking rather than walking. In other words, they are interested in paying lip service to the Palestinians, or at times they would find that sending relief aid is sufficient enough to fill their role. In the aim of finding another shelter, it was during the Oslo peace process that the Palestinians established a good relationship with the European powers. Europeans were also the ones who made a huge effort in keeping the talks secretive. Thus, in international support, we see a visible European role in the post-Oslo period.<sup>135</sup> Yet this support cannot be equated with that received by the Israelis coming from the United States.

#### **D. A Different Perspective on the Oslo Accords**

Whereas the most widespread and accepted idea is that the Oslo Accords failed in all phases, and especially in the implementation phase, a minority argue that it was the closest

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135. Hassassian, p. 125.

that the conflicting sides have ever been in reaching a peace. In his book, Qurei dedicates a section to explaining a “divergent expectation”, which talks about this minority of people who feel optimistic about the process. He notes that this minority believes “results achieved from this process were unthinkable less than 10 years ago. During the latest round of negotiations, the parties were closer to permanent settlement than even before”.<sup>136</sup> Thus, for these people, actual implementation is not as important as the thought of having Palestinians and Israelis around the same table ready to talk to each other. Nonetheless, on a more realistic level, it is well-accepted that at this point in the dispute, purposeless arrangements are no longer significant, and action on the ground is needed.

#### **E. Summary: A Failure in the Post-Negotiations Phase – the Failure of Oslo**

Chapter five demonstrated the last phase in a peace negotiations process where implementation of the agreement is required. The section shows that there is absolutely no good in negotiation and in signing an agreement if the conflicting sides cannot commit to implementing. The Oslo Accords failed on different levels within this phase, mainly, it failed in building trust between the conflicting sides because negative perceptions prevailed. These negative perceptions arose from the scapegoating alternative which this chapter introduced. The scapegoating alternative is a way for one of the conflicting sides to escape their responsibilities by blaming the other for not committing to the initial agreement and conducting offenses, thus, giving leverage to the former not to commit as well. This is what

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136. Qurei, p. 296.



both Palestinians and Israelis have resorted to, where each side believed that the other was not implementing the DOP, which happens to be a true reality. Israelis doubled the number of illegal settlements after the agreement, while at the same time, Palestinians did not halt the violent attacks against Israeli civilians. Clearly, both sides were not ready to commit to what they had signed for. As argued by Hassassian, “an agreement was followed with an implementation protocol, then another protocol for the implementation of the implementation protocol. The process was simply no longer credible, but the people waited patiently and swallowed their pain”.<sup>137</sup>

Chapter five also addressed another point which affected the implantation phase, and that is the role of international support. This section demonstrates a partial success, only to the benefit of Israel. Israel welcomed much aid from the Americans whereas the Palestinians faced a deficiency in aid from its Arab neighbors, leading to an imbalance in international support which led to a slowing down in the implementation phase. To end the case study of the Oslo Accords, this chapter briefly dedicated a section on showing a different perspective to the process. That is, a minority of people who believe that what actually mattered from the Oslo Accords was that the parties finally recognized each other, and finally sat on the very same table to talk. They believe this was a first and crucial step to reaching peace. Knowing that today, twenty-four years after the process, nothing has been done towards peace, this argument can no longer be supported.

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137. Hassassian, p. 119.

Chapter six moves away from what happened at Oslo, and focuses on the American position towards the conflict in general, giving an indication of what to expect from the Trump administration. This will be used to demonstrate the new political landscape which will have a huge effect on the course of events and actions in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Chapter six is of great importance to this research study, considering that I will take what has been learnt from the Oslo Accords and compare it with the “deal of the century”, which is also supposed to be a peace deal between the Palestinians and the Israelis, with the interference of the Americans as this century’s peacemaker.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN UNQUESTIONED RELATIONSHIP – THE ROLE OF A STRONG AMERICAN-ISRAELI ALLIANCE

In chapter five, the research concluded an analysis made on the case study of the Oslo Accords using peace negotiation theory, more specifically, it analyzed the implementation phase of the process. The chapter demonstrated that what was agreed on in the DOP was not nearly reached even years after the process had taken place. Chapter six will take a different toll, and will analyze the American position in relation with its Middle Eastern proxy and long-time friend, Israel. The following quote provides the reader with a sense of understanding of this relationship. Written by two of the most well-known scholars who are specialized in the politics of Israel and the U.S, John J. Mearsheimer and Stephan M. Walt, they argue:

Between 1972 and 2006, Washington vetoed forty-two UN Security Council resolution that were critical of Israel... There were also numerous resolutions focusing on Israel that never reached a vote in Security Council due to the threat of an American veto.<sup>138</sup>

Clearly, the U.S has placed Israeli interests as one of its main priorities, and this chapter will discuss evidence for this statement. Chapter six will begin by discussing a crucial aspect in understanding why Israel has the biggest support base in the U.S, which comes down to the

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138. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), p. 40.

strength of the Israeli lobby. The chapter will then move towards addressing the American position towards Israel and the Palestinians starting with the Clinton administration of 1993, eventually leading to what we know today as the ‘deal of the century’. Before delving into these topics, the research will shed light on a critical juncture in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in relation to the U.S, that is, the Camp David Accords.

The Camp David Accords had different implications to all the parties involved in the agreement. The most important feature of the Accords is that an agreement was made over a “self-governing” authority which controls the West Bank and Gaza, instead of having Israeli military presence in these respective areas.<sup>139</sup> To reach this stage, a five-year interim would be agreed on, as a period of transition where negotiations between the Israelis, Egyptians and Jordanians were to occur. Who is missing from this plan? The Palestinians.<sup>140</sup> This clearly demonstrates a complete alienation of the Palestinians in what would eventually be their destiny. What scholars have noted as well is that the Camp David Accords were almost a replication of a plan proposed by former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin; the Begin Plan of 1977.<sup>141</sup> It was no coincidence that the Camp David Accords were signed just under a year after the Begin Plan was put on the table. This significantly determines that the Camp David Accords were inevitably going to serve Israeli interests the same way the Begin Plan was going to. Other terms and conditions of the Accords imply the same Israeli pre-conditions. In short, Fayez Sayegh concludes that through the signing of the Accords,

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139. Fayez A. Sayegh, "The Camp David Agreement and the Palestine Problem," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8, no. 2 (1979): , doi:10.1525/jps.1979.8.2.00p01145. p. 4.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

Israel is assured by the procedures provided for in the Camp David Framework that, unless the Palestinians and other Arabs concerned trim their -future demands and adjust them to Israel's wishes, the conditions prevailing during the transitional period will be indefinitely maintained.<sup>142</sup>

This was Camp David; a protection of Israeli rights, interests, and most importantly of Israeli security. To bring all this to the relevance of this chapter, I will question what was America's stance in such an agreement. An important point needs to be made here. The Camp David Accords were mainly between the Israelis, Egyptians and Jordanians, while the Americans played the role of the witness. Yet, agreements and actions were solely between the three parties mentioned, the United States were to play absolutely no role. This was the exact point where the Americans rested their case when it came to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It was at this point that the Americans said this is an issue to be solved between the Palestinians and the Israelis, we no longer need to play a role in mediation. But the Americans have never stopped playing an indirect role in the conflict, in fact, its support for Israel has considerably risen at every change in the U.S administration. This support is not serendipitous; there is a strong Israeli lobby that has for years been affecting American foreign policy substantially.

#### **A. The Israeli Lobby**

The Israeli lobby can be described as an engine that operates twenty-four hours a day and seven times a week for the sake of Israeli statehood and Israeli security. The lobby's

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142. Ibid., 6.

main power is through its political will, and in the way certain individuals and organizations within the lobby take advantage of their leverage on American politics. the lobby has built capabilities that would convince whichever administration is in power of its own interests, which according to the lobbyists, are ‘in parallel’ with American interest. Evidence of this can be seen throughout all presidencies and real foreign policies have been articulated according to Israeli inducement, which has had a huge impact on the Middle East region.<sup>143</sup> At times, this has led the U.S to enforce policies that are against their observable interests. Mearsheimer and Walt argue that it is in the interest of the U.S to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict for its own national security. Ending the conflict would push terrorists away from the U.S, and it would also lessen the Arab backlash towards it for being Israel’s backbone and causing turmoil in the region. But this is not the case. In the words of Mearsheimer and Walt, “this will not happen as long as the lobby makes it impossible for American leaders to use the leverage at their disposal to pressure Israel into ending the occupation and creating a viable Palestinian state”.<sup>144</sup> There is ample evidence that the U.S cannot do much about the lobby’s political power, and that it will continue to dominate American foreign policy.

The question is how and why has the US been so easily convinced to follow in the footsteps of the Israeli lobby. Here, the Zionist ideology plays a role. The argument is that Jews have been suffering for years and have had tragic experiences, and the only safe place for Jews is Israel. Therefore, Israel should receive the special treatment it deserves according

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143. Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 6.

144. Ibid., 346.

to this ideology which the Israeli lobby has absorbed as their basis for argument.<sup>145</sup> We see that political Zionism has played the most important role in establishing this Israeli lobby, and in strengthening it further. This has often been the explanation given by Israeli and their American counterparts to the American policies that are in favor of Israeli interests. The argument has not only affected American sympathy for Israelis, but has attracted sympathy from other powers who also believe that Jews have suffered in their past.<sup>146</sup> American justification to whoever opposes such ideas is that it is the exporter of democracy, it believes in self-determination, and it will continue to support those who were once victimized.<sup>147</sup> Yet, what the Americans were not aware of is that by supporting those who have been victimized through the promotion of Israeli self-determination, they were and are still violating Palestinian self-determination, defeating the whole purpose of their policies, agendas, and their heroic rhetoric.

Behind this narrative however are real Zionist intentions with political and territorial aims. When Jews started to migrate to Palestine, there was never a strong stance against co-existing alongside the Palestinians. Yet, evidence proves otherwise. Mearsheimer and Walt argue that the intention to coexist actually never existed neither in the short run, nor in the long run.<sup>148</sup> This is because “that outcome was in direct conflict with their dream of creating a Jewish state in all of Palestine”.<sup>149</sup> This is the essence of what the Israeli lobby believes in

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145. Ibid., 92.

146. Ibid.

147. Ibid.

148. Ibid., 93.

149. Ibid.

and what it has been lobbying for in the U.S. The lobby has done a successful job at getting this message across, not only to the U.S administration in power, but also to the American public, winning sympathy and support from both ends. Winning support amongst the general public meant that the public would not question this special relationship between the U.S and Israel, instead they understood why such a relationship existed. Mearsheimer and Walt warn that, “groups in the lobby use their power to make sure that public discourse echoes its strategic and moral arguments for the special relationship”.<sup>150</sup> This has greatly reflected on the increased power in which the lobby has gained over time, as it minimizes enemies within the American political system. Not only has the Israeli lobby managed to succeed within the U.S, but also due to its widespread influence, it has allowed less people to criticize Israeli policies back home. The authors note, “it is just as difficult to criticize Israeli policies or question U.S support for Israel in polite company”.<sup>151</sup> American support for Israel has become by default, and although there are several voices within the Congress that have opposed this relationship, their voice remains weak and unheard of. This is all as a result of the Israeli lobby’s efforts and influence across all of the American administrations leaving no exception.

### **B. American Leaders and the Uninterrupted Flow in Israeli Aid**

We have already seen how the Israeli lobby has manipulated American foreign policy to serve its national interests at home. What this section will do is go into further detail,

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150. Ibid. 9.

151. Ibid.



addressing different administrations starting with the Bill Clinton administration, the presidency which witnessed the signing of the Oslo Accords.

### ***1. Bill Clinton: 1993-2001***

Bill Clinton generally had a well-established and strong relationship with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and later after Rabin's assassination, with Benjamin Netanyahu. In a speech given by Rabin in 1994, with all pleasure he stated: "We are more than thankful to you, distinguished members of the Congress, representatives of the American people, and to you, the wonderful people of America".<sup>152</sup> What Israeli prime ministers are best at is the play on words. They understand the effect of words, and use them very efficiently and to the targeted audience. The speech continued, "I do so because no words can express our gratitude to you...for your generous support, understanding, and cooperation which are beyond compare in modern history".<sup>153</sup> This continuous acknowledgement which Israeli prime ministers give to the American leaders often produce a boost in confidence considering that their wanted image of Great America is being portrayed accurately. Not too long after the assassination of Rabin, Netanyahu continued this same tradition. In a 1996 speech to Congress, Netanyahu expressed gratitude with the generous amount of aid he had been receiving from the Americans. He stated: "The United States has given Israel, apart from political and military support, munificent and magnificent

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152. "Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the United States Congress," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 26, 1994.

153. Ibid.

assistance in the economic sphere. With America's help, Israel has grown to be a powerful, modern state".<sup>154</sup> Both these speeches were made during the Clinton administration, demonstrating that relations were more than simply a friendly diplomatic relation between two states, instead, there was an agenda to be implemented.

It is very common for the Americans to send superfluous aid (financially or militarily) to Israel at times where Israel is undergoing a peace process with any of its Arab neighbors. This was the case with Jordan in 1994, where the U.S doubled the amount of aid it sent Israel as a way to support the process. It was also the case during the Oslo process. Mearsheimer and Walt argue that in an effort to enhance the Oslo peace process and allow the parties to go further with it, the Clinton administration sent Israel an extra \$1.2 billion only in military aid.<sup>155</sup> To the outsider who is aware of this special relationship, it is easy to determine that the idea of "sending aid in the aim of advancing a peace process" is simply a cover-up narrative to avoid criticisms and backlash. However, I mentioned earlier that there was an agenda to be executed, and in this specific case, this argument holds. The extra aid was sent in the aim of winning Israel's acceptance of the Wye Agreement, which eventually took place in 1998.<sup>156</sup>

Clinton has not refrained from constantly expressing the level of professionalism that the Israeli lobby operates with, especially when referring to the American Israel Public

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154. "Speech by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to a Joint Session of the United States Congress," Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 10, 1996.

155. Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 38.

156. Ibid.

Affairs Committee (AIPAC). He once labeled the organization as “stunningly effective” and described it as “better than anyone else lobbying in this town”.<sup>157</sup> Other than Clinton, Aaron David Miller, a key member under the Clinton administration described the U.S administration as “Israel’s lawyer”.<sup>158</sup> This all portrays an image of how the U.S views Israel as its sole partner in the region, and also how much the U.S believes in the destinies which it could reach through Israeli capabilities. Nonetheless, this does not deny that at time, Clinton was not so happy with its all-time friend.

There were several times when the Clinton administration was furious with Israeli actions. Such include a time when Israel, under Netanyahu, cooperated with other foreign powers against the Oslo Accords. Although Clinton in the beginning was not in favor of the Oslo Accords, once the process was set, he believed it must go through till the end. Yet, when Israel did not commit to its terms and conditions, the American image was slightly shaken, considering that it witnessed the process and was the responsible player for implementing the agreement, which made Clinton unhappy. This frustration did not translate into anything. Evidence shows that even at times when Clinton expressed anger towards Israel, no policy was changed and aid continued to flow into Israeli banks. As argued, “such gestures are usually symbolic and short-lived, and have little lasting effect on Israeli conduct”.<sup>159</sup> This supports the idea which has been argued above, which states that American support for Israel comes by default, regardless of how much Israeli actions might irritate American leaders.

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157. Ibid., 153.

158. Ibid., 48.

159. Ibid., 39.

## ***2. George W. Bush: 2001-2009***

While during the Clinton administration, policies towards Israel were affected by the Oslo Accords, policies towards Israel during the Bush administration were majorly determined by the events of 9/11. In the period post 9/11, the Bush administration attempted to halt Israel's expansionist policy and promote the establishment of a Palestinian state, in the aim of destabilizing the support base in which groups like Al-Qaeda received from the Arab world. The years in which Bush was in office was a time where America was seeking to normalize relations with the Arab governments. Yet, things did not go so much as planned for Bush. Why did this happen? The answer lies in the efforts of the Israeli lobby and the various tactics used by the lobbyists during this period of time. These tactics led to convincing the administration not to be carried away by the current political surroundings and course of events.

Not so much similar to the Clinton administration, the period in which the Bush administration was in power witnessed a phase of tensions between the two states. Israel completely refused the idea of the U.S attempting to find a connection with the Arab states, and at times, took action to prevent such a reality. Israel was successful at doing so, once again, through its well-established lobby. Whereas on the one hand, Bush was trying to communicate with Arafat, on the other, Sharon and his American counterparts quickly reacted by emphasizing to Bush and to the general American public that Arafat is the same

as Osama bin Laden, and therefore both should be treated as terrorists.<sup>160</sup> Again, we see the use of a similar tactic developed by most Israeli leaders, a play on words. In a *New York Times* column in 2001, in an interview between William Safire and Sharon, Sharon claimed “you in America are in a war against terror. We in Israel are in a war against terror. It’s the same war”.<sup>161</sup> The effect of such words is clear; creating a common enemy between the U.S and Israel helped enhance this relationship and further advanced the Israeli agenda.

As is the usual the case, Israeli actions often erupt a sense of anger on behalf of American leaders. In this case, Bush was very against Israel’s security wall in the West Bank, thus, in 2003, Bush decided to reduce a portion of the American loan to Israel. Whether this ‘punishment’ was effective or not was up for question. Mearsheimer and Walt argue otherwise. In their words,

Withholding the entire guarantee or reducing direct foreign aid might have had an effect, but Bush merely withheld a portion of the loan guarantee equivalent to the estimated costs of those portions of the wall that were encroaching on Palestinian lands.<sup>162</sup>

All that this ‘punishment’ led to was that Israel had to pay a slightly higher price in interest rate on American loan, which did not really impact the bigger picture. The extra amount was too little compared to the entire amount of aid sent by the U.S, demonstrating that despite

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160. Ibid., 205.

161. William Safire. “Israel or Arafat,” *New York Times*. December 3, 2001.

162. Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 40.

American interest in punishing Israel, it does not have any will to damage the Israeli economy nor the Israeli military.

Within Bush's inner circle, one could say that several pro-Israeli Americans played the role of the 'whisperer'. These are people who ensured that Bush was not going to turn against Israeli interests, and that Bush would listen to the Israeli lobby with a careful ear. In fact, every time Bush attempted to punish Israel, his actions would be reversed and would eventually end up enforcing policies in favor of Israel. Brent Scowcroft, a previous national security advisor, asserted in 2004 that Sharon had President Bush "wrapped around his fingers".<sup>163</sup> There is a clear influence on American leaders, and especially on Bush in such a critical time.

To summarize Bush's term in office, Mearsheimer and Walt note, "absent the lobby, the Bush administration almost certainly would have been much more self-interested and hard-nosed in pushing for peace between Israel and the Palestinians".<sup>164</sup> Had it not been for the constant role in which the lobby had played, Israel would have faced more challenges and would have possibly been forced to accept compromises. Yet, evidence shows that no matter how frustrated an American president might be with Israel, it will not take action against Israel's will under any circumstances.

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163. "US Scowcroft Criticizes Bush Admin's Foreign Policy," *Financial Times*, October 13, 2004.

164. Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 225.

### 3. *Barack Obama: 2009-2017*

Obama's rise to office was seen as a hope for all peoples who wished to see peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This was majorly a result of his speeches and his presidential campaign. In his famous Cairo speech in 2009, Obama declared: "the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own".<sup>165</sup> This was the first time an American president was explicitly and publically defending the Palestinian cause, which made heads turn in anticipation of the new presidency. Palestinians felt like they had finally welcomed the American president that they had been waiting for.<sup>166</sup>

Not so long after entering office, Obama inherited a huge burden; a Middle Eastern burden. He became too caught up with older foreign policies which were under the Bush administration for two terms, not allowing him to implement any changes in the region. Yet, during his presidential campaign, Obama made sure that he would not emphasize on change much in order not to disappoint the general public. Instead, as argued by Shahram Akbarzadeh, Obama took a realist approach on the Middle East region, where his aim was "not to implement change but to manage the existing institutions free of value

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165. "US President Obama's Remarks in Cairo University (excerpts) – Non-UN Document – Question of Palestine," United Nations, June 4, 2009, , <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/us-president-obama-s-remarks-in-cairo-university-excerpts-non-un-document-2/>.

166. Shahram Akbarzadeh. *America's Challenges in the Greater Middle East: The Obama Administration's Policies*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011), p. 94.

judgements”.<sup>167</sup> On the topic of the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, Obama commented that “the issue is too complex to be resolved overnight and expectations need to be tempered”.<sup>168</sup> This approach was essentially applied to the conflict, where the world witnessed a deficiency in the use of American soft power on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in general, and on Israel in particular; a scenario that had not been foreseen beforehand.

This does not imply that American aid to Israel was reduced or that policies were changed. There is no doubt that the same old diplomacy of supporting Israel through military and economic means continued even under the Obama administration. In a 2010 memorable image, American vice president Joe Biden and Israeli prime minister Netanyahu stood side by side in the aim of symbolizing an ‘unbreakable bond’”.<sup>169</sup> This image of an unbreakable bond is inherited to every U.S president that has and will come. In a similar pattern to the tensions which arose between the U.S and Israel under the Bush administration, tensions arose under Obama as well. What happened under Obama is that a realization occurred on an outstanding issue which Israel did not wish to tackle. Obama realized and stated that the conflict cannot move through a period of transitional justice if the Israeli settlements continue to be built. Whereas under previous administrations, this issue was perceived as an obstacle to peace, it was only during Obama’s time in office that it became acknowledged as an impossible factor to reaching peace.<sup>170</sup>

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167. Ibid., 7.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid., 96.

170. Ibid., 95.



It is easy for an American leader to speak, but once foot is stepped into office, narratives often change. Evidence shows that there was no attempt made to change the ways for communication and dialogue with the Palestinians under the Obama administration. Hamas was still considered a terrorist organization by the U.S, and therefore the U.S cannot communicate with its leaders directly unless Hamas renounces the use of violence and recognizes the existence of Israel.<sup>171</sup> On another note, the U.S made no effort into pushing a resolution with Israel to stop the building of settlements, despite American declarations around the sensitivity of this topic and the impediments its creates to peace. Disappointments amongst many who believed in the power of a new rising president arose dramatically, especially on the Palestinian and Arab end. In a 2010 poll, only 9.9% of Palestinians believed that the newly elected president would bring peace to the region and to the conflict.<sup>172</sup> Palestinians became skeptical of American capabilities, losing hope once again. At the same time, Israelis were also starting to become skeptical of American agendas in the region, especially on its plans in the West Bank which aimed to enhance PA security at the expense of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF).<sup>173</sup> Obama's time in office marked a period of disappointment for Palestinians, a period of skepticism between Israelis and Americans, and more importantly, it marked a period of no progress in the conflict.

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171. Ibid., 96.

172. Ibid.

173. Ibid.

### C. The “Deal of the Century” and the Trump Administration

It is difficult to imagine Trump as the driving force behind the “deal of the century” considering his lack of experience and knowledge in the political scene. Yet, it is a reality that one has to accept. Although it has not yet been formally announced nor published, several scholars have speculated the components of this deal. It is a deal that determines the future of the Middle East, and especially the future of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There is no doubt that the deal is one that is pro-Israeli to the most maximum level it could reach. Stated by Zaha Hassan,

On the negotiating table that Trump is setting, the status of Jerusalem and refugee claims have been removed, and with those files, Palestinians argue, any possibility of an agreement they could sign. Trump’s Middle East peace team is moving forward with a Gaza-plus plan: a statelet in Gaza enlarged by annexing part of the Sinai.<sup>174</sup>

There are several crucial points to be made here. First, is that two of the most determining factors in the Palestinian struggle are simply swiped off the negotiation table: the status of Jerusalem and the right of return. These two struggles have been at the core of every speech made by Palestinian leaders, and at the core of every demonstration by Palestinian resistance fighters since day one. By eliminating these two factors from the deal, Trump is purely saying Palestinians no longer have the right to question the status of these two cases, essentially eliminating any other right to Palestinian self-determination. Second, is that Trump is putting forward such deals knowing that Palestinian authorities will not agree to them, while Israeli

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174. Hassan. "Trump's Plan for Israel and Palestine: One More Step Away from Peace".

authorities will be more than happy to do so, showing the world that the former will always be an obstacle to peace. Third, is this “Gaza-plus plan”. Putting this forward will mean that the only “Palestine” Palestinians could get is what is known as the Gaza Strip and by taking Egypt’s Peninsula, Sinai (to say that Egypt will not object such an annexation). For now, this is what scholars have envisioned as the “deal of the century”.

These speculations are not out of thin air. Scholars have taken into consideration recent actions taken by the Trump administration. Most importantly, this includes announcing the state of Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel and moving the American embassy to the “new capital”. Thus, what does this all imply for the future of the conflict and what is the Trump administration aiming to produce? As argued by Hassan: “Trump and Netanyahu believe that Palestinians can be lulled into trading sovereignty or political and civil rights for an upgrade to their quality of life”.<sup>175</sup> This is also to confirm that what is being discussed in the making of the deal is being discussed first with prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In fact, close sources to the Israeli cabinet have verified such statements. The Middle East Eye states: “Yossi Alpher, a former aide to Ehud Barak during his premiership in the late 90s, said it was clear Netanyahu was being ‘kept in the loop’ by Trump officials. He told MEE: ‘He is being apprised of what is coming. There won’t be any surprises for him’”.<sup>176</sup> This does have any good implications for Palestinians.

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175. Ibid.

176. Jonathon Cook, "What's in Trump's 'deal of the Century'? The Answers Are in Plain Sight".

To understand the “deal of the century” further, one needs to ask specifically who is running the process. In short, the following statement briefly describes the scenario at hand, and who is controlling the terms and conditions of the deal. “Trump’s policy toward Israel is informed by an evangelical base and pro-Likud campaign donors that view the Israel-Palestine conflict through a biblical prism in which only one side has legitimate claims”.<sup>177</sup> To state a few names, here are the “dealmaker trio” as they came to be known.<sup>178</sup> The trio are: Jared Kushner, senior advisor to Trump, who is also Trump’s son-in-law, Jason Greenblatt, Trump’s advisor on Israel and David Friedman, United States Ambassador to Israel. The purpose behind picking such political actors to create the deal is axiomatic: there is a Greater Israel that all parties need to recognize and accept. Not only is the deal aiming to confront Palestinians, but it has a regional strategy that needs to be understood. Marwan Bishara claims:

Behind their talk of fanciful prosperity lies a cynical strategy to build a new regional order based on an alliance between a Greater Israel and Arab dictatorships against the Islamic Republic of Iran and violent Islamist groups.<sup>179</sup>

This strategy has greater implications for the Middle East region, one that will confront Iran and Islamists, both of which support the Palestinian cause.

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177. Hassan. "Trump's Plan for Israel and Palestine: One More Step Away from Peace".

178. Marwan Bishara, "What's the Big Deal... of the Century?" Palestine | Al Jazeera, July 2, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/big-deal-century-180702084056723.html>.

179. Ibid.

How have the involved players in the conflict reacted to what is known about this deal? There are three perspectives to take into consideration: the Palestinian, the Israeli, and the Arab. In a short informative video published by TRT World, talking about the deal, President Mahmoud Abbas describes the deal as the “slap of the century”.<sup>180</sup> Thus, is it really the “deal of the century” or the “slap of the century”? Perspectives vary, but it can sure be said that across all factions within the Palestinian nation and authorities, this is an American-Israeli slap across not only Palestinians, but across all Arabs. On the other hand, the Israeli perspective on the deal is rather an optimistic one. In an interview conducted by the Middle East Eye with former Israeli foreign ministry official, Eran Etzion, Etzion states: “Israel has a much freer hand than it did in the past. It feels confident enough to continue its existing policies, knowing Trump won’t stand in the way”.<sup>181</sup> It is crystal clear that Trump is no longer hiding his ambitions of creating a Greater Israel, an ambition that he has been working on since he stepped foot in office, and Israelis are well aware of this. Daniel Byman and Tamara Cofman Wittes note: “gone are the days when a U.S. administration would chastise Israel for building more settlements in the West Bank or killing civilians in Gaza.”<sup>182</sup> This is a reality. The Trump administration is not one that condemns the building of illegal Israeli settlements, but is one that supports it. Also in its strategy, the deal is to gain Arab government support.

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180. TRT World. Trump's 'Deal of the Century'. July 05, 2018.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G8Ciey5Ync&t=19s>.

181. Jonathon Cook, "What's in Trump's 'deal of the Century'? The Answers Are in Plain Sight”.

182. Daniel L. Byman and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "In Trump We Trust? Israel and the Trump Administration," Brookings, October 26, 2018,  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/10/26/in-trump-we-trust-israel-and-the-trump-administration/>.

The Arab government perspective varies across different states, but a critical one to study is the Saudi (and its counterparts, i.e. Egypt) perspective. Bishara argues that Mohammed bin Salman has repeatedly publicized that Palestinians should “shut up and accept” terms and conditions given to them by the Trump administration, a statement that has been approved by Israeli lobbyists. Such statements made by Arab leaders have never been so explicit and oblivious as afore.

To end this summary on the “deal of the century”, I will use a quote by Jared Kushner published in an interview he conducted with Al Quds. He alleges that this deal “puts aside the ‘grandfather's conflict’ for the sake of the ‘children's future’”.<sup>183</sup> This is essentially the plan. It is to erase all what the Palestinian child knows from his grandfather. It is to erase a generational struggle for what might be a brighter future. One might argue that at this point, Palestinians are willing to reach this compromise more than they used to in order to have better standards of living. Some Palestinians might agree to such a compromise so that for once, the new generation of Palestinians will live without the fear of having their homes, schools and hospitals bombed at any moment. But this might not be as easy as the Trump administration believes it to be. As argued:

A Gaza-plus/Palestinian state–minus plan is not the making of a just and durable solution. Offered to an occupied people living for decades without hope for a political horizon, it may seem like the deal of the century to some. But it will mean perpetual conflict that is likely to spill beyond Israel and the occupied territories.<sup>184</sup>

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183. Bishara. "What's the Big Deal... of the Century?"

184. Hassan. "Trump's Plan for Israel and Palestine: One More Step Away from Peace".

The exact consequences and reactions to the “deal of the century” remain unknown for the time being.

#### **D. Summary: An Unbreakable Bond – What Next?**

Chapter six thoroughly analyzed the American position in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and especially in relation with its regional counter-part, Israel. The chapter began by discussing the Camp David Accords, signaling an important phase in the history of the conflict, where the U.S decided that it no longer needs to interfere through direct means and will leave it up to the conflicting sides to resolve their issues. But a Palestinian-Israeli conflict absent from American influence is a far reality. This essentially comes down to the Israeli lobby, which was the next section discussed in chapter six. The Israeli lobby has historically played different roles within American foreign policy, but at all stages, the Israeli lobby ensured that U.S presidents place Israeli interests as their main priority. Evidence shows that the lobby succeeded at doing so, and their influence continues to prevail allowing Israel to supersede its enemies in the region.

The chapter addressed the American position and actions taken towards the conflict starting with the Clinton presidency, moving on to the Bush administration, moving on to the Obama administration, and finally on to today’s Trump administration. The four presidencies and their relationship with Israel can be described in the following statement:

Over the decades, this bond has been institutionalized and reflected throughout the American political system as well as more broadly in the United States, where sympathies for Israel have been strong and crystalized around assumptions that the country is an ‘island of democracy’ in a region of hostile and violent Arab-Muslim neighbors.<sup>185</sup>

The relationship between the U.S and Israel shifted from general public sympathies with a historically victimized people to institutionalized politics, where American interests must take into consideration Israeli interests and security first and foremost.

The next chapter will be a final conclusion summarizing the analysis made in this research. The research required a comparison to be made between the political landscape of the Oslo Accords, and the political landscape of today’s reality, that is the Trump administration. So far, the reader has grasped a well-established idea of all the events needed to understand what has led to the reality faced by the Israelis and Palestinians today. The final chapter will make this comparison and will tackle the question of the future.

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185. Akbarzadeh, p. 90.



## CHAPTER VII

### A FINAL REMARK – FROM OSLO TO TRUMP

In chapter six, a focus was placed on the American position towards the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, and especially in relation to Israel; a relationship in which I have described as an unbreakable and unquestioned relationship. This chapter will address the political landscape of the Trump administration and address his ‘deal of the century’ as a potential peace deal (at least in the eyes of Trump), and compare it to the 1993 peace process. Therefore, I will take the components which were analyzed on the Oslo Accords, and use only those which are applicable to the ‘deal of the century’, considering that it is not precisely a peace process, but a peace deal. Of course, this is a personal analysis of what will be the ‘deal of the century’, because it has not yet been announced, and scholars have not yet analyzed the deal using any specific theory. The analysis will also not be dealt with the same way as with the Oslo Accords, because the ‘deal of the century’ does not involve the two disputed ends at any negotiations table, instead it involves a United States and an Israel aiming to steer the conflict according to what they believe is right. The components which will be used in this chapter out of the eight which have been demonstrated in chapters two to four are *justice and moral ethics, discontinuity of the use of violence, passiveness and compromise, access and transparency, equal allocation of control, and legal status of agreement.*

## A. A Brief Recap

This research made a thorough analysis of a pivotal point in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; the Oslo Accords, a point onwards where Israel found a justification and the legitimacy in any action it took. However, the research was not simply an analysis of the Oslo Accords. It started with giving a roadmap of events which were explained in the first chapter, leading eventually to the ‘deal of the century’, which was the analysis made in this last chapter. This roadmap included the following events: 1960s-1970s Nasser’s Pan-Arabism, 1987 *first intifada*, 1993-1995 Oslo Accords, 2000 *second intifada*, and 2006 Hamas’ electoral victory. These were all critical junctures which must be understood before delving into today’s political landscape. The theory which this research was based on was the *peace negotiations theory*, which has been commented on by uncountable scholars. Due to the huge amount of information on this theory, I simplified the theory into three main phases, and into eight main components which were to be applied to both the case study of Oslo and the case study of the ‘deal of the century’.

Divided into three phases, pre-negotiations, around-the-table negotiations, and post-negotiations, the research divided the analysis on Oslo into three chapters, each focusing on the respective phases. The aim of these three chapters were to see precisely how Oslo failed at all these levels, and at each of the eight components of analysis. However, this was not the sole aim of the analysis, it was done in order to be compared with another pivotal point in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; that is the Trump administration and the new Middle East agenda which is yet to be announced to the world. Also throughout the research, an

effort was made to bring up important aspects that were either a result of the Oslo Accords or a reason behind its failure. The re-emergence of Hamas as a newly determined Islamist organization after the *second intifada* is one of the results of the Oslo Accords that this research has shed light on.

Because the United States has played a fundamental role in the politics of the dispute, a chapter was dedicated to scrutinize the American position since 1993 starting with the Clinton administration. This gave the reader an idea of how the American position has evolved, or has not evolved over time ultimately giving rise to the Trump ideology which is one that does not give much optimism to a greater Palestinian future.

### **B. Applying Oslo's Components to the Deal of the Century**

There is a zero percent of presence in the *justice and moral ethics* component to the so-called deal. In chapter six, I jotted down the two main pillars of the deal: first, the status of Jerusalem and refugee claims were not to be addressed in the deal, and second, Palestinians would get a 'Gaza-plus' plan which is a plan to self-govern Gaza and the Sinai only. The justice and moral ethics component is one that requires the disputed ends to acknowledge that they are conducting illegal and immoral actions towards the other. By simply not addressing the status of Jerusalem and refugee claims to return, the deal does not serve justice nor ethics on any level, considering that these are the two most debated topics between the Palestinians and Israelis. In fact, the deal only serves justice to the Israeli side because to the them, Palestinians should not think twice about questioning these two topics

as they have no right to do so. In their minds, Jerusalem was and will always be associated with Jewish history, and refugees should not question their return because Jews have been expelled from various areas and victimized for years prior to the establishment of Israel. Therefore, while the deal only serves justice to the Israeli side, it is completely ignorant of the Palestinian side, who has just an equal say in what will be their destiny.

In chapter six, the following quote was mentioned: “gone are the days when a U.S. administration would chastise Israel for building more settlements in the West Bank or killing civilians in Gaza”.<sup>186</sup> This quote indicates that both the *justice and moral ethics*, and the *discontinuity of violence* components are absent from the deal. Whereas previously, American leaders would attempt to cover up for Israeli actions against global human rights, with Trump, the situation is marginally different. Trump has never condemned the building of Israeli settlements, and has not condemned any Israeli bombings against Palestinian civilians, and therefore, nor will his deal do so. This suggests that Israel will no longer give much attention to how it will be portrayed on an international level, considering that one of the world superpowers, and its biggest supporter, will not criticize it for its wrongdoings. The U.S will also not wait or ask for the violence to stop between Palestinians and Israelis to announce its deal; a component that has proven to be essential to any peace deal or peace process.

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186. Byman and Wittes. "In Trump We Trust? Israel and the Trump Administration,"

The most common component that was absent from the Oslo Accords, and which happens to be the case as well with the “deal of the century” is the *passiveness and compromise* component. Once again, Palestinians, considered the weaker and more inferior party, are expected to compromise more than the Israelis. Yet, the Trump administration truly believes that by doing so, Palestinians would be going after their own good. In other words, Trump and his small circle surrounding him believe that by giving up their seventy-plus year struggle and accepting a statelet in Gaza is in the benefit of all Palestinians; they would finally get some sort of self-autonomy despite the fact that this would only be constrained mainly in the Gaza Strip. While some Palestinians might be interested in an improved standard of living under the Gaza Strip, many Palestinians are still attached to historical Palestine, and especially amongst those who belong or support Palestinian Islamist organizations. The ‘deal of the century’ once more refuses to accept this reality, and believes that compromise will have to come first from the Palestinian Authority, more so than from the Israelis.

The deal is being architected by the “dealmaker trio” who are three pro-Israeli officials referred to in chapter six. An important point to note here is that this trio has been discussing the deal and consulting with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu since day one, leading to a deficiency in the *access and transparency* component. While one might argue otherwise, and that discussing the deal with one of the disputed parties is giving transparency to the situation, yet, this is not so much the case. Palestinians are once again left out from the deal, leaving all their demands and issues out of the picture. This in turn leads to absolutely no access and no transparency, and only to a biasness in results. In fact, many members of the Israeli cabinet have confirmed that Netanyahu is being updated at every stage, and that

all outcomes will not be new to his knowledge. This also touches upon the *equal allocation of control* component. Giving a heads up to the Israeli prime minister is giving him leverage over the deal, leading to an imbalance of power. If we are to consider the U.S as a mediator to this deal (which technically it is not- the US alongside Israel is the maker of this deal), then it has failed in its sole role of equally distributing control to all conflicting sides. It has created a surplus of control, if not full control benefiting the Israeli end only.

The final component to be analyzed in this case study is the *legal status of agreement*. Although this cannot be elaborated on in full detail considering that it has not yet been given any legal status, some speculations could be made. It was argued in chapter six that according to several statements made by Israeli officials, Israel feels like it has an upper hand and a much-relaxed hand than it had with leaders prior to Trump. They believe “Trump will not stand in their way”, which ultimately means that Trump will be giving Israelis more legal legitimacy. At the end of the day, if the U.S wishes to give this deal legal legitimacy it will simply do so, and if not, it will follow the same course of actions that took place between 1993-1995 with the Oslo Accords; a process which ended up with no legal framework. The only difference between the Oslo Accords and the ‘deal of the century’ in reference to legal framework is that had there been a legal framework to the Oslo Accords, a fair settlement might have been reached, but if there will be a legal framework to the ‘deal of the century’, the losses for Palestinians will immensely outweigh the minimal amount, if any, benefits coming out of it.

### C. The Palestinian Backyard Then and Now

In making a comparison between the political landscape of the Oslo Accords and the political landscape of the “deal of the century”, one must examine the existing surroundings in the Middle East region to understand how and why things turn out to be the way they are. In other words, taking into consideration the Arab surroundings, what are the factors that might be contributing to either the failure of Oslo or what will be the failure of the ‘deal of the century’? Manuel Hassassian makes an important note on the external surroundings while the Oslo Accords were taking place. He argues,

When Palestinians entered the negotiations, their own backyard could not have been more chaotic. Naturally, this weakened the Palestinian negotiating position and resulted in an agreement that is far from satisfying the requirements of a lasting peace with justice.<sup>187</sup>

What does it mean that the Palestinian backyard was chaotic? It means that some Arab states were undergoing political instability on a local level, and others had already signed peace deals with Israel, in turn, weakening the Palestinian position. Both Iraq and Libya were under siege, Egypt had signed Camp David with Israel, Jordan and Morocco also had some sort of peace with Israel, Syria shared a mutual interest with Israel and was cautious of its actions towards it, the Gulf states were beginning to show interest in finding peace with Israel, and Iran was infiltrating its influence in the region while at the same time it did not trust the

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187. Hassassian, p. 122.

Arabs.<sup>188</sup> Clearly, the positions in which these various states took were not in favor of the Palestinians at the time. This majorly contributed to the failure of forcing any pressure on Israel at Oslo, considering that the Palestinians did not have the enough support and strength to do so.

Keeping this in mind, one must therefore ask what are the current Arab surroundings that have led to having such a ‘deal’ and again, to a dwindling Palestinian voice. Despite the fact that the Middle East region has not had stability for as long as one can remember, a focus must be placed on the region post-2011. The Middle East post-2011 can be characterized as a region of political instabilities, warfare, and regime coups to say the least. Since the outbreak of what has been named as the Arab Spring –yet it is far from any spring– each of the Arab states has faced immense challenges and a political tumult at home. After civil wars and civil unrest had broken out in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and several other Gulf states, one could imagine what the Palestinian backyard looked like once again. Argued by Alain Gabon, he describes the Middle East,

Today, the region seems further than it ever was from the vision of democratised, peaceful, just, prosperous and all-inclusive societies that was the dream of the millions who took to the streets and public squares with immense hope and joy all over the region, from Morocco to Bahrain and from Egypt to Yemen.<sup>189</sup>

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188. Ibid.

189. Jonathon Cook, "What's in Trump's 'deal of the Century'? The Answers Are in Plain Sight".



This is the Middle East reality that the Trump administration has inherited and has taken advantage of, giving him absolutely no obstacle to creating the so-called ‘deal of the century’. In conjunction with the Arab Spring, the Gulf diplomatic crisis against Qatar took place in 2017, where a Saudi-led coalition with its other Gulf counterparts diplomatically cut off ties with Qatar for supposedly supporting terrorism. This has further worsened relationships within the Gulf states. This political turmoil in the region has led to nothing but more dependence on the West, and especially on the United States for assistance. Depending on the United States means that these states will also have to accept the American agenda in the region; that is, its ‘deal of the century’. The most obvious example of such developments would be Mohamed bin Salman’s alliance with the US and Israel since his rise to power in 2017. Yet again, the Palestinians have been abandoned and left unaccompanied in the face of Israel for two main reasons. First, the Arab states who are still firm in their positions against Israel are not so stable at home, and do not have the capabilities of standing side by side with the Palestinians before solving their own issues. Second, there has been an extra dependency on the United States, leading states who are not very against allying with Israel to completely abandon the Palestinian cause.

#### **D. How do we go forward from now?**

Before explaining how ones goes forward in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, one must understand what the conflict means to each of the disputed sides. The conflict has reached a point where the disputed sides are no longer only concerned with gaining more territory than the other, instead symbolism has played a much bigger role over time. Land has been given

another meaning. This land now has religious, historical, existential and sovereign magnitudes. According to Karen Feste, “the land itself serves as a symbol of a more complicated, intense relationship between the parties, suggesting that neither a negotiation process nor a particular conflict resolution decision would lead automatically (or logically) to a reconciliation”.<sup>190</sup> If the Oslo Accords as a peace process had a possibility of succeeding in 1993, it has absolutely lost this possibility at this stage of the conflict. Today, if the Palestinian wins any strip of land beyond what has been given to it, the Israeli identity is touched, the Israeli statehood loses, and the Israeli rhetoric will be damaged. This is certainly not a reality that the Israeli state is willing to face nor accept under any circumstance.

Israel has grown into a state known for its military victories, whereas the Palestinian Authority has no history of any military victory.<sup>191</sup> Israel has a long history of foreign support from various countries, especially from the United States, whereas Palestinians have been forced to accept moral and virtual support more than real support.<sup>192</sup> Israeli political factions have faced tensions in the past, but have aimed to stay unified because there is a bigger goal to reach, whereas Palestinian factions at times have fought wars against each other. This is why peace cannot be reached between the Palestinians and the Israelis; they have become too far apart in power, economies, social standards, and in international recognition.

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190. Feste, p. 61.

191. Ibid., 159.

192. Ibid.

In moving forward, there are certain things, if adopted by both sides, one could see a world where the Palestinian and the Israeli reconcile with each other. First, one of the most crucial factors which should happen in an ideal world is the elimination of any negative connotations regarding the ‘other’. Second, one must “develop sufficient communication links” which would be at the convenience of each of the conflicting sides; a communication method that satisfies both sides and does not allow the superior-to-inferior rhetoric to flow in.<sup>193</sup> Third, one must truly believe in the commitment phase of a negotiated process. The conflicting sides cannot simply use the power of words to manipulate results, they must acknowledge that securing the settlement on the ground is very important. Fourth, a factor with the biggest influence, is that the conflicting sides must identify common interests. Finding common interests will allow the disputed sides to overcome the differences and start developing schemes to satisfy those interests. Yet, leaders on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are not able to acknowledge these four points because both trust that whatever the results are, there cannot be a win-win situation, there can only be one winner and one loser.

A major challenge to moving forward will be faced by the Israeli lobby, who, as a strong established organization since its founding has not been willing to change its superior attitude. To be more specific, a bigger role is given to the Americans who are in strong support of the Israeli lobby. These Americans need to acknowledge that being hardcore supporters of the Israeli lobby, and constantly denying Palestinians the right to their

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193. Ibid., 145.

autonomy will not give the U.S, nor give Israel the security it demands.<sup>194</sup> Mearsheimer and Walt warn that “those who have lobbied the hardest for unconditional U.S. backing have ultimately nurtured Israeli and Palestinian extremism and inflicted unintended hardships on the very country that they need to support”.<sup>195</sup> Americans and Israelis must recognize that they are the ones giving birth to organizations which in their eyes are terrorist organizations, through their unwillingness to compromise and constant repression of the Palestinians.

The question is therefore, why have foreign powers as well as Arab states always been in favor of pushing a peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis, knowing that such processes will take much more effort, time, and aid than expected? The answer lies simply in the fact that these leaders are interested in the process, and not in the outcome. This is the main idea which this thesis aims to demonstrate. Clearly, the United States was never interested in ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; it could have easily pressured Israel to halt the building of illegal settlements which is often recognized as the main obstacle to peace. Yet, the U.S has other strategic interests in the region. Although earlier in chapter six, an argument was made that if the U.S follows its own national interests, far from listening to Israeli lobbyists, they would understand that they must end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict if they wish to keep terrorists away from America. Due to the strong American-Israeli alliance, this cannot happen. Thus, over the years, the U.S has been unremittingly initiating peace processes and advocating for peace talks only as a way to keep Palestinians calm, and to

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194. Mearsheimer and Walt, p. 347.

195. Ibid.

improve its image in the Middle East. Whether these talks bring about any change or implement real policies to better serve the future is not of any importance.

As mentioned in chapter one, there have been several statements made by Trump and his inner circle that indicate what their intention really is. This intention is that the world will see what they are planning, what peace schemes they have in mind, and the effort they are putting into developing the Middle East. But once the Palestinians object a settlement where Israel is the main winner, the blame will be put on the Palestinians for not accepting any settlement given to them. This way the Americans and Israelis win the peacemaker reputation, while the Palestinians end up with a negative reputation. We witnessed this happening at Oslo. Hassassian simplifies the failure of Oslo into two points, first, “constructive ambiguity did not work”, and second “the talk of a new Middle East was appealing, but only to those who speak the language of diplomacy”.<sup>196</sup> This is exactly what the American administration has been doing for years; using the language of diplomacy to basically produce absolutely nothing. In fact, Hassassian argues that leaders of the Oslo process wanted to prolong it as much as they possibly could, something which defeated its purpose considering that such a process should be short-termed in the aim of finding long-term solutions.<sup>197</sup> He notes, “sustaining [the negotiations] became an objective for diplomats while the people on both sides watched, with decreasing patience, the potential loss of their

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196. Hassassian, p. 115.

197. Ibid., 116.

dignity”.<sup>198</sup> This was the outcome of the Oslo Accords, and traces of such an outcome can be seen with today’s ‘deal of the century’.

Although I wished to end this research on a positive note, one cannot deny where the Palestinian dream has come to today. So long as nothing threatens the American-Israeli alliance, Israel will continue to penetrate through Palestinian territories and reject any level of Palestinian self-governing. And therefore, the Palestinian struggle will continue. Yet, only through comprehensively studying such events in a struggle can one understand how to move forward, which is what this research suggested in this chapter. Being a Palestinian myself, I have an obligation and a responsibility to carry in reminding the generations to come that this was the Palestinian reality before, and this is what the Palestinian reality has become. Doing so will not allow the Israeli dream of ‘forcing the young generation to forget, while the old generation dissolves’ come true.

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198. Ibid.

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