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Between Conflict and Accommodation
PLO Strategies Toward Israel 1991 - 2000

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of M.A.”**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the initiation and dynamics of accommodation in protracted conflicts in the developing world characterized by important stakes and major asymmetries. The case study is the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in particular Palestinian strategy from 1991 – 2000. This thesis argues that external politico-military concerns are the main explanatory factors affecting the pursuit of accommodation in this type of case. Powerful third parties play a significant role in initiating / mediating processes of accommodation and in providing assurances / incentives to encourage its pursuit. Bilateral conditions, especially perceptions of irreversible decline by the weaker party and solid expectations of reciprocity from its opponent, are the key factors in generating meaningful accommodative moves. Difficult economic conditions serve as an additional spur for the pursuit of accommodation while difficult political conditions act as a constraint. However, established leaders with strong nationalist credentials have greater room for manoeuvre on foreign policy issues.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'initiation et la dynamique du compromis (accommodation) dans les conflits prolongés dans le tiers monde caractérisés par des enjeux importants et des grandes asymétries. L'étude de cas est le conflit Palestino Israélien et en particulier la stratégie Palestinienne de la période 1991-2000. La thèse démontre que les inquiétudes politico-militaires sont les facteurs explicatifs principaux affectant la poursuite de compromis dans ce type de cas. L'implication d'une tierce partie puissante joue un rôle significatif dans de l'initiation / la médiation des processus du compromis et en fournissant des assurances / encouragements pour le poursuivre. Les conditions bilatérales, surtout les perceptions de déclin irréversible de la part de la partie la plus faible et les espérances pleines de la réciprocité de son adversaire sont les facteurs clefs en générant mouvements accommodative sérieux. Les conditions économiques difficiles servent comme un stimulant supplémentaire pour poursuivre le compromis tandis que les conditions politiques difficiles agit comme une contrainte. Cependant, les chefs établis avec les qualifications nationalistes fortes ont une plus grande marge de manoeuvre en question de sujets de politique étrangère.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

At the heart of International Relations is a preoccupation with the two opposite ends of the strategic spectrum ; conflict and cooperation. Unfortunately, less has been written about the strategy of accommodation despite its crucial importance in the middle. After all, a host of protracted conflicts could well qualify as no-war / no-peace situations. Indeed, the grey area in international relations is much larger than what is being reflected in the existing body of literature. Moreover, there are even fewer works treating accommodation in the developing world, never mind addressing the simultaneous use of accommodation and confrontation. Therefore, one should attempt to improve our understanding of the path to accommodation and bridge this gap in the scholarly research.

The end of the Cold War marked a new era in international politics. Indeed, it was perceived as a new dawn for reconciliation amongst rival states engaged in bitter protracted conflicts. Why ? It was argued that the bipolar system was primarily to blame in impeding the conclusion of many hostilities especially between opposing client states in the Third World. How ? The United States and the Soviet Union provided their respective client states with a constant flow of new arms and demonstrated their strong political resolve vis-à-vis their counterpart thereby complicating the already deep animosities. In other words, escalation or de-escalation in the developing world - with the notable exception of the 1962 Cuba crisis - was a function of the Cold War's pressure tactics. Indeed, the softening or hardening of positions on the part of the two superpowers with regard to these regional conflicts was in essence a reflection of the ups and downs of their

tumultuous bilateral relationship rather than a substantial development in a given hotspot. Ironically, these perennial crises were aimed at their adversaries and allies alike by serving to constantly remind them of their strong leadership role on the world stage. Hence, reaching a negotiated settlement in the developing world was never really given a fair chance. For instance, in early 1971, Sadat had accepted the English version of UN resolution 242 and offered Israel a full peace treaty in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory (the nucleus of what later became the Camp David Agreement) and a resolution of the Palestinian problem. However, Israel declined the offer. Furthermore, its decision was backed by the United States since the general political mood between the superpowers at the time was that of *détente* and stalemate rather than peace or accommodation. In fact, Sadat's underlying reason to go to war in 1973 was to shake the status quo by pushing the situation to the brink of direct confrontation between the two superpowers, at which point they would both intervene and impose a solution to the conflict. In short, during the Cold War (1945 –1989) protracted conflicts in the developing world could not escape the East-West context .

Now that we are a decade into the post-Cold War era, overtures and gestures of accommodation seem much more common than before, with many examples of peace initiatives in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia. To name just a few, these have included accommodative moves (sometimes unsuccessful) between Syria and Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran, Ethiopia and Eritrea, India and Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers. However, the uses and limitations of the strategy of accommodation, particularly in the developing world, are still largely an unexplored territory. In other words, the detailed questions of 'why' and 'when' states adopt conciliatory moves towards their sworn

enemies are far from being well understood. This enigmatic issue becomes confusing when accommodation takes place between a state and a quasi-state, and gets even more complex if accommodation accompanies confrontation.

In this thesis, I will be exploring the topic of accommodation in protracted conflicts among developing states in the post-Cold War era . I will focus more particularly on the evolution of the PLO / Palestinian Authority's policy towards Israel as an example of attempted *accommodation in an asymmetric conflict*. What interests me the most in this case study is the evolution of Palestinian strategy. In the wake of the 1973 October war, the PLO strategy emerged as a mixture of conflict with some elements of accommodation from 1973 on. Indeed, the first *Intifada* which raged from late 1987 was the epitome of that mixed policy. In other words, the *Intifada* - by virtue of its non-violent nature - was procedurally conflictual but in fact was accompanied by accommodative steps toward Israel. This trend continued during the 1991 Madrid peace conference and the ensuing Washington talks. However, with the signing of the Oslo accords in 1993, the PLO's strategy became largely accommodative toward Israel, leading some analysts to mistake it for cooperation. It continued as such for the rest of the decade until the failure of the Camp David II summit in July 2000. The subsequent outbreak of *Intifada Al-Aqsa* reflected once again the re-emergence of the PA's mixed strategies of accommodation and confrontation towards Israel.

My major research question will be to explain the initiation by the Palestinians of policies of accommodation as well as their subsequent dynamics. Put differently, what caused these strategic turnarounds ? The secondary question centers on the uses and

limitations of strategies of accommodation as well as confrontation in this particular conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Accommodation

Let us begin by examining the concept of accommodation and the many forms it can take. The Penguin Dictionary of International Relations defines the term accommodation as follows :

The process whereby actors in conflict agree to recognize some of the others' claims while not sacrificing their basic interests. The source of conflict is not removed but the aggression it often generates is presumed to be. It assumes that international conflict is not zero-sum, where the gain of one party is automatically the loss of the other. It also assumes that total harmony of interests does not prevail. Thus, it can be described as a halfway house (place of 'accommodation') between confrontation and harmony.¹

Accommodation is distinct from conflict, which is defined by Paul Noble as “ Incompatibilities of interests / values of which the parties are aware and which they decide to pursue nevertheless, usually by coercive methods of some type (not necessarily military force).”² It is also distinct from cooperation, which Noble regards as

The adoption of common policies and /or the undertaking of concerted / joint action by two or more actors, whether informally or in an institutional framework. This cooperation can occur in a variety of frameworks ranging from informal common fronts / alignments or coalitions / concerts of powers through formalized alliances or international organizations to outright unions of states (formal integration). Such cooperation can develop at any level, from particular pairs of states to an overall regional system.³

¹ Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham eds., *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations* (London: Penguin Group, 1998), p.2.

² This definition was provided by Professor Paul Noble during the 'Security & Development' seminar on strategies (Winter 2001).

³ Paul Noble, "The Prospect for Arab Cooperation in a Changing Regional & Global System", in Michael C. Hudson, *Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p.60

Accommodation falls somewhere between the two above mentioned strategies. It can take either a *behavioural* or *substantive* form. In Noble's view, behavioural accommodation "involves limiting the methods used to pursue one's interests /values without reducing the incompatibilities themselves" (Arms control is perhaps the best example of behavioural accommodation) whereas substantive accommodation " involves reducing or even resolving the existing incompatibilities of interests / values". In fact, Noble regards "conflict resolution as the fullest expression of substantive accommodation." ⁴

An important cautionary note should be added here to avoid any confusion between accommodation and crisis management . The latter is defined by the Penguin Dictionary of International Relations as:

The attempt to control events during a crisis to prevent significant and systematic violence from occurring. The decision problem facing the would-be 'crisis manager' is to find a balance between being tough and being tender, between using coercion and offering concessions, between aggression and accommodation.⁵

In other words, the subject of this research is accommodation as a strategic choice, an attempt to achieve a far-reaching breakthrough in the context of a protracted conflict rather than a mere instrument of settling / de-escalating a given crisis.

Explanation of Accommodation

How does one explain the initiation and dynamics of accommodation? To date, the literature on the subject has focused heavily on cases of accommodation between major powers past or present. Some of this literature focuses on objective factors (the operational

⁴ I am greatly indebted to Professor Paul Noble for explaining the different forms of accommodation.

⁵ *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, pp. 104-6

environment) while other parts emphasize subjective factors (the psychological environment).

OBJECTIVE FACTORS (Operational environment)

The explanations offered here have centered primarily on characteristics of the (bilateral) relationship between the conflicting parties or in some cases on domestic conditions within the parties.

William Wohlforth looks at the dynamics of power relations. He argues that what causes the initiation of accommodation is a perception of an irreversible decline in one's power relative to an opponent. This in turn could potentially lead to irreversible external politico-military losses (threats to status and influence, autonomy, territory, existence). He uses the example of Gorbachev who, unlike Brezhnev, realized that the Soviet Union was losing the Cold War and hence abandoned the confrontational strategy in favour of improving relations with the United States.⁶

Richard Lebow, (who studied French-British accommodation in the early 1900s, the end of the East-West rivalry (1989) and the Egyptian-Israeli settlement (1979) argues that accommodation stems from the failure of prior confrontational policy vis-à-vis one's opponent (bilateral relations) and prospects of reciprocity from one's opponent (bilateral relations) as well as commitment to domestic reforms (domestic conditions). These reforms can be economic as well as political in the case of Gorbachev's *perestroika* / *glasnost*, while Sadat's '*Infitah*' program sought to liberalize the Egyptian economy and attract foreign investments. Interestingly, Lebow underlines the role of strong leadership as being crucial in his cases of accommodation. This suggests that there is an abundant

⁶ William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War", *International Security*, volume 19 no.3.

number of chances for accommodation between opposing states waiting out there for strong leaders to arise and give them the 'go ahead'.⁷

William Zartman links the initiation of accommodation to a situation of 'hurting stalemate' (bilateral relations) in which both sides not only are starting to feel the burden of confrontation but they fear the situation would further deteriorate and bring "unacceptable costs of a higher magnitude". He suggests that at this stage the conflict becomes 'ripe for resolution'. Put differently, the situation of 'hurting stalemate' could be described as one of political stagnation where no improvement is being made on either side ("stalemate") yet is accompanied by significant losses on both sides ("hurting"). However, Zartman does not define exactly what types of losses are involved which can bring about this sea change in the strategies of adversarial states.⁸

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS (Psychological environment)

The explanations offered here have centered primarily on the prospect of gains and/or losses on the part of the conflicting parties, and on the learning process of the leaders engaged in the conciliatory moves.

Richard Smoke uses game theory to explain the shift from an adversarial position to a more accommodative stance. He posits that national security can be seen as a zero-sum game in which both parties will prioritize their potential long term gains at the expense of their short term losses and hence opt for conciliatory moves. Put differently, conflictual strategy leads to losses for both parties by virtue of the massive political, military, and economic efforts dedicated to sustain the conflict. Experience / perception of

⁷ Richard N. Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen, eds. , "The Search for Accommodation" in *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 167-186.

⁸ William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution and Intervention in Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

this unwinnable prospect leads to a change of thinking and the pursuit of an accommodative strategy which leads to gains for both parties. Yet, this approach does not account for the timing of such reversal. Indeed, what assures the initiator of the accommodation that his / her moves will not be regarded by the rival as a short term concession ? ⁹

Janice Stein and Jack Levy have emphasized prospect theory whose premise is that humans by nature are 'risk-averse'. In other words, we are inherently prone to avoid losses rather than achieving gains. Hence, decision-makers place greater priority in their calculus on minimizing losses as distinct from maximizing gains.¹⁰ Stein seems to primarily emphasize external political losses as the basis of her theoretical explanation.¹¹

Jack Levy also examines the notion of learning (as distinct from simply adjustment to external forces) as a factor in changing policies.¹² He questions its causal role along with the nature of the learning process. In other words, who is the subject of the learning process –“an individual, a society, an organization, a government or an entire political system?”. Interestingly, he argues that “learning is neither necessary nor sufficient for policy change.”¹³ Janice Stein by contrast highlights the learning process which enables states to consider and adopt accommodation. She contends that “Gorbachev was an uncommitted thinker with respect to security issues”. Hence, he - along with the Soviet leadership - developed a new perception of the relationship with the West which led him into seeking accommodation rather than being driven by any decline in power vis-à-vis the

⁹ Richard Smoke, *The Theory of Mutual Security*, Working Paper No.11, 1990.

¹⁰ Jack S. Levy, “An Introduction to Prospect Theory”, *Political Psychology* 13,2 (June 1992): pp.171-86.

¹¹ Janice Gross Stein, “International Co-operation and Loss Avoidance: Framing the Problem”, *International Journal*, 47 (Spring 1992): pp.213-15.

¹² Jack S. Levy, *Learning and Foreign Policy: Sweeping a Conceptual Minefield*, a revised version (July 1993) of the 1992 paper delivered at the annual meeting of APSA.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.26

United States. This perception was enforced by an accumulation of foreign policy failures and increasing domestic concerns.¹⁴

Accommodation in the Developing World

Existing explanations have centered heavily on cases of accommodation between major powers past and present. Others, who have focussed on the developing world, notably Haroun Bhatti, have argued that additional sets of factors are needed to explain cases of accommodation between developing states.¹⁵ According to Bhatti, in addition to the characteristics of the bilateral relationship, two other sets of objective factors are crucial in understanding the accommodative behaviour of developing states. First, conditions of political and economic underdevelopment and the potential domestic political and economic losses that these generate for regimes and states, are pivotal in deciding to accommodate. Second, there is a strong role of powerful third parties (major powers) and the potential external political or domestic economic and political losses / gains that they could generate. He succinctly explains it as follows:

There are two chief causes of the initiation of accommodation, one related to the domestic politico-economic sphere and the other to the external politico- military sphere. The presence of either one of these factors is sufficient to forge a peace initiative. However, when both these factors are present independent of each other, an attempt at the initiation of accommodation becomes highly likely. The third factor, the involvement of a powerful third party, plays more of a permissive role in the initiation phase.¹⁶

¹⁴ Janice Gross Stein, "Political Learning by Doing: Gorbachev as Uncommitted Thinker and Motivated Learner" in Lebow and Risse-Kappen, eds., *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) pp. 223-258.

¹⁵ Haroon Haider Bhatti, *Pakistan's Accommodative Moves vis-à-vis India: A Case Study of the Dynamics of Accommodation in the Developing World*, MA Thesis, McGill University, 1999, p.20.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 21.

In order to accurately account for the initiator, the timing, and the reasons for accommodation, Bhatti hypothesized these factors :

1. A Desire to Minimize Losses (*Bilateral And Domestic-Level* condition).
2. A Commitment to Domestic Reforms (*Domestic-Level* condition).
3. The involvement of a Powerful Third Party (*Major Power* context).

Bhatti goes on to explain the nature of the losses sought to be avoided by an accommodative leadership; he divides them into external-politico-military losses, economic losses and domestic political losses. The first set of losses is perceived as a result of an impending event (war, crisis or even a near crisis) that will negatively alter the status quo. The second set of losses is expected as a result of the inability to absorb new shocks by the already fragile economies of the developing states. Finally, the third set of losses refers to the domestic political threats to both the small 's' state (institutions, regime, etc.) and to the large 'S' state (national unity, boundaries). In short, Bhatti highlights the overall weakness of the developing countries in terms of territorial integrity, economy, political stability and internal cohesion as a major impetus for accommodation with the opponent.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid, see Chaps. 1-3.

THE FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Here, I will attempt to sketch first the type of conflict involved, then the research question (dependent variable), and finally the explanatory factors (independent variables).

Type of Conflict

The previous review of the literature convinces me that although more attention is now being paid to the strategy of accommodation in the developing world, the subject is far from being exhausted. To start with, the developing world cannot be treated as a single homogeneous group of states simply because a number of protracted conflicts in the post-Cold War era have some distinguishing features.

There are in fact a number of dimensions in terms of which conflicts in the developing world can be classified / distinguished.¹⁸ The first is the nature of the actors. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not a traditional inter-state conflict but rather involves a state and a quasi-state, with a far less developed state apparatus, authority, and territory. A quasi-state also has a significantly narrower recognition-base internationally when compared to the sovereign state. As a result, this conflict has perhaps more in common with some 'internal' conflict in the developing world (e.g. Sudan vs. Sudan Popular Liberation Army, Sri Lanka vs. Tamil Tigers, and Colombia vs. FARC) than with inter-state conflicts. Also, for the party whose policy we are examining here (the PLO / Palestinian Authority) the stakes are very high in terms of national existence, statehood, and a viable territorial base. A second distinctive characteristic of the conflict involves the relative power levels of the parties. In this conflict, unlike for example the India-Pakistan conflict, the power imbalance is very high and the party that we are examining

¹⁸ These dimensions were reached through extensive discussions with Professor Paul Noble.

(the Palestinians) is vastly inferior to its opponent. A third characteristic is the vast disparity in international support received by the parties with Israel enjoying strong backing from the sole superpower (the US) while the Palestinians have no backing from any major power. Finally, in this conflict, the stakes involved namely the territory, population and national existence of 'Palestine', are under the physical control of its opponent.

In short, this is a highly unequal conflict characterized by four major sets of asymmetries (status, power, backers, and stakes). All of these have an important impact on the strategies of the parties, particularly on those of the weaker party (the Palestinians). Therefore, any findings of this study regarding the initiation, dynamics, uses and limitations of strategies of accommodation in the developing world will presumably be most applicable to conflicts and actors with similar characteristics.

Research Question (Dependent Variable)

The primary research question of this study centers on the initiation and dynamics of accommodation in protracted conflicts in the developing world. More particularly, why did the weaker party initiate accommodative moves vis-à-vis Israel or respond favourably to initiatives by third parties ? What explains the early progress of the accommodative process and then its stalling and regression later on ? The secondary question investigated here deals with the uses and limitations of strategies of accommodation in comparison with those of confrontation.

Explanatory Factors (Independent Variables)

My explanatory framework involves a combination of objective and subjective factors among which certain factors will receive special emphasis.

OBJECTIVE FACTORS (Operational environment)

External Politico-Military Conditions:

- Bilateral Relations (the opponent).
- Powerful Third Parties.
- Regional Environment.

Domestic Conditions

- Economic.
- Political.

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS (Psychological environment)

- External Politico-Military Concerns.
- Economic Concerns.
- Domestic Political Concerns.

OBJECTIVE FACTORS

This is where the permissive (constraints and opportunities), stimulus, and efficient (pressures) causes of accommodative moves can be found.

External Politico-Military Conditions

Bilateral Relations (with Israel)

One could hardly address the issue of accommodation without referring to Zartman's notion of a hurting stalemate. For accommodation to exist between two foes

they both have to reach a point in their conflict where the struggle becomes mutually unbearable. He eloquently reports:

The basic component of a ripe moment is a deadlock that keeps both parties from achieving their goals. But deadlock alone is not enough, it must be a particular kind of stalemate that hurts both parties enough to make them feel uncomfortable and unable to break out by an escalation with acceptable costs. But a mutually hurting stalemate is not enough either; in order to be effective, it generally needs to be riveted to the parties' perception through a recent or looming catastrophe that acts as a deadline or is remembered as a warning and that threatens to impose additional and unacceptable costs of higher magnitude.¹⁹

It is important to point out that that the notion of a hurting stalemate has two main components. First, the stalemate between the two conflictual parties - which means little or no prospect of success in satisfying one's interests. Second, the hurting nature of the stalemate situation - positing substantial costs involved in pursuing one's interests.

These costs are not necessarily equal but they constitute substantial costs for one's population. Thus, the favourable atmosphere for seeking accommodation has to be in place. The hurting stalemate is probably necessary but it may not be sufficient for accommodative moves. Another pertinent notion in the area of accommodation is that of power disparity as advanced by Wohlforth. The argument suggests an inclination on the part of the weaker power to initiate accommodative moves. This is particularly true when it perceives a serious (irreversible) decline in its power position leading to potential permanent losses in territory, national existence, sovereignty, autonomy, influence. Finally, it is argued for accommodation to proceed there must be some expectation of flexibility/ reciprocity on the part of one's opponent before a state undertakes any significant accommodative moves (before there is important progress toward substantive accommodation). In other words, it takes two to tango. However, it is not clear how

¹⁹ William Zartman, "Conflict and Resolution: Contest, Cost, and Change" in *THE ANNALS*, volume 518, November 1991: p.17.

necessary is the anticipated reciprocity for the *initiation* of accommodation. Moreover, especially in the context of the developing world, it is not clear whether one's opponent is the only source of such anticipated reciprocity. Put differently, the reciprocity might come from a powerful third party.

Powerful Third Parties

To be sure, when one is dealing with conflicts between lesser powers (non-major powers), the role of powerful third parties (i.e. major powers) in promoting accommodation should not be understated. How so? Major powers can contribute to the process of accommodation in protracted conflicts among lesser powers in a number of ways. First of all, they can create constraints on the use of coercive measures. Secondly, they can provide assurances regarding their support for an honourable settlement (contributing to the notion of anticipated reciprocity). Thirdly, they may offer material incentives to these parties to pursue a course of accommodation. Finally, they can serve as an actual go-between/ mediator in the attempt to reach a settlement. In fact, Bhatti's work provides a reminder of the developing world context in which the sponsorship of a major power is crucial to the success of accommodation regardless of the interests sought by the above mentioned major power.

Regional Environment

One could hardly look at the issue of accommodation in absence of the regional context surrounding the protracted conflict under study. Why? Simply because regionalism plays an ever increasing role in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, regionalism is often reflected in the creation of security zones and security systems in different parts around the world. There are several factors at the regional level that could contribute to the adoption

of policies of accommodation. These include: first, a catalytic regional event that opens the door to accommodation (e.g. the 1967 or the 1973 wars, the Gulf War 1990-91, or possibly the current US-Iraq War). Secondly, there is the predominance of policies of accommodation in a region. Thus, if the region surrounding the protracted conflict is moving towards accommodation it will be an incentive to initiate accommodation. However, if the region is moving away from accommodation, it will be a lot harder for any of the conflicting parties to initiate let alone proceed with accommodation. To be sure, the Arab states were mainly moving towards accommodation with Israel after 1973 but Egypt's unilateral approach (1977-79) was rejected. In other words, the regional environment was unfavourable to Egypt's move but she proceeded nevertheless. However, the dispute among the front line states was over procedural accommodation rather than substantive accommodation (i.e. the rush to convene the Geneva conference). A final factor is the fierce competition among frontline Arab parties to reach a settlement, or at least not to be the last to reach a settlement with Israel (i.e. competition for the most favourable settlement and the payoffs thereof). This can generate a prisoner's dilemma situation for these parties that creates added pressure to reach an accommodation. These all operate in a loose way as permissive causes of accommodation with the exception of the third factor which seems to serve as a motivating cause for a settlement.

Economic Conditions

Both Lebow and Bhatti provide four useful explanations at the domestic level to explain the shift to accommodation. They argue that a commitment to domestic reforms by the leadership will lead them to seek accommodation in order to implement these economic programs. For instance, Sadat's October plan - which later came to be known as

Infitah (Opening) - is evidence of such will. However, this is not exactly the case when it comes to quasi-states who lack sovereignty over their territories. Put differently, a quasi-state is not a sovereign economic actor with a central bank issuing its own currency. However, that is not to say that economic conditions are not taken into account in the quasi-state's calculations. The most pervasive argument here is that economic underdevelopment combined with a protracted conflict inflict a heavy economic burden on the population of a developing country. This in turn, generates a lot of pressure on its leaders to adopt accommodative policies which will produce some economic benefits. These can take the form of direct third party assistance, reduced economic pressures from one's opponent, the freeing of national resources for economic development, and / or more attractiveness for foreign investment following conflict reduction / resolution. The motives for accommodative policies by the leadership of a developing state could stem from a genuine concern for the economic welfare of the population, and / or from a concern for the regime's survival (i.e. in terms of consolidating support among elites & interest groups, and reducing dissatisfaction among the population at large). However, given the politically / economically underdeveloped nature of the quasi-state, the motive would probably be more related to regime security.

Domestic Political Conditions

If difficult economic conditions tend to encourage accommodative policies, difficult political conditions are likely to have the opposite effect, namely to maintain rigidity (i.e. a conflictual posture) in a country's policy toward traditional opponents. This is because in a context of domestic political instability and intense political competition

governments will be unwilling to generate further opposition by seeking to soften policies toward traditional enemies.

A further domestic political factor that affects the ability of a government to undertake a policy of accommodation is the presence / absence of a strong leader and the degree of autonomy of a regime from its society in the area of foreign policy.²⁰ The stronger the position of the leader and the more autonomy a regime enjoys in the area of foreign policy, the greater the ability of the leadership to engage in a policy of accommodation.

In sum, quasi-states - not unlike states - have their domestic political conditions. Normally, they suffer - by virtue of the lack of a sovereign government - from weak internal cohesion and fragmentation. However, the role of a strong leadership could maximize the sense of unity. Indeed, a quasi-state needs a unifier in order to embark upon accommodation.

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

Politics is replete with uncertainties. In fact, decision-making is all about speculating about the future and placing political bets on the outcome of events. One way to reduce the uncertainties of politics is risk aversion. In other words, the desire to minimize losses. As a strong believer in prospect theory, I must follow Bhatti's footsteps and include this factor as a motive for state or non-state actors to initiate accommodation towards their rivals. If objective factors serve as the permissive, stimulus and efficient causes of accommodation, then subjective factors constitute the motivating causes of such policies. Here we will focus on the leadership's calculus of gains and losses not just in

²⁰ Bassel Salloukh, *Organizing Politics in the Arab World: State-Society Relations and Foreign Policy Choices in Jordan and Syria*, PH.D. dissertation, McGill University (Montreal, June 2000): pp.45-50.

general but rather - as advocated by Bhatti - in terms of particular types of gains or losses, which provide the motivation for accommodation. These include, in particular, external politico-military, economic, and domestic political gains / losses. We are also interested in the relative importance of these various concerns in promoting accommodation.

External Politico-Military Concerns

The politico-military sphere constitutes a key source of motivation for accommodation. The main concerns at stake here include: national existence / statehood, territory, national status, influence or power and national autonomy. These serve as a powerful motivation for accommodation if there is the prospect of an irreversible decline or loss in one or more of these spheres. They also can contribute to the initiation of accommodation provided there is a sense of responsiveness / reciprocity either from an opponent or a powerful third party regarding a state's vital interests in these areas.

Economic Concerns

Since we are dealing with economically underdeveloped countries, economic concerns are bound to feature prominently in their calculations. Potential motivations here include concern for the external economic position of the country, the economic welfare of the population, and the economic welfare of the regime / authorities. These involve actual or potential gains / losses (in term of aid, investment, markets...etc) arising from economic pressures / rewards generated by one's opponent or third parties and the impact this has on the resources available for economic development.

Domestic Political Concerns

Given conditions of political as well as economic underdevelopment, developing countries are generally afflicted by multiple problems including fragmented societies,

weak states / regimes, intense political competition (e.g. splits between radicals and moderates) as well as persistent political instability. These conditions are bound to generate persistent acute domestic political concerns on the part of national authorities. These concerns normally would operate as significant constraints on any accommodative moves towards long-standing external opponents and lead instead to continued policy rigidity / conflict in these relationships. Sometimes, however, leaders of developing countries can achieve a position of strength for themselves and their regimes through a combination of the attractiveness of their policies / achievements, possession of sufficient resources to co-opt key elites / interests as well as coercive resources to deter any challengers. In so doing, they come to enjoy relative autonomy from their societies (e.g. President Hafez Al-Assad's Syria) which gives them considerable freedom of manoeuvre (to undertake accommodative moves) in foreign policy. Alternatively, accommodation may be perceived as likely to generate sufficient economic resources to co-opt key elites / interests and undercut domestic political opposition.

Methodology

In this thesis, I am attempting to address the weakness in the current literature by formulating a theoretical model that will not only account for the initiation of accommodation by the PLO / PA, but will also be adequate enough to be applicable to other cases of accommodation between states or states and quasi-states locked in protracted conflicts. My conceptual views originated from the vast scholarly research on accommodation, confrontation, conflict resolution, mediation, and developing world politics. However, some of my opinions were reached through extensive discussions with Professor Noble to whom I am greatly indebted.

I utilize a comparative case study method to analyze the PLO's strategy of accommodation . My study divides the process of accommodation with Israel (1991-2000) into three phases which are subjected to the same analytical criteria. In other words, each period will be tested against the same theoretical framework. This method will provide a better understanding of the inner workings of the Palestinian strategy by monitoring the factors and weighing their relative importance. The choice of these three periods was based on the general view of them being decisive. They represent turning points in the overall course of accommodation : initiation, progress, and finally mixed.

CHAPTER II

The Evolution of PLO Strategy toward Israel 1964-1990

To place in perspective Palestinian / PLO attempts at accommodation with Israel in the 1990s, let us examine briefly the evolution of PLO policy toward Israel from its founding (1964) until the Gulf War (1990). For a clearer understanding of the nature and scope of the changes, policy will be analyzed along three dimensions: the substantive, the behavioral and the procedural.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was created by the Arab League in 1964 to address two issues simultaneously. One was the rise in Palestinian national consciousness in the early 1960s which demonstrated itself in the proliferation of small Palestinian militant groups with competing agendas.²¹ Among the most influential groups were: the Palestine Liberation movement (Fatah) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The second was the Arab states' desire (particularly Egypt) to control the Palestinian national movement and thus meet their collective need to "draft a common strategy against Israel."²² Therefore, it is safe to say that the regional environment – not unlike other national liberation movements in the developing world – had an important effect on the PLO's psyche / thinking and influences its political calculations.

The PLO's strategy was modelled on that of the Algerian Front de Liberation National (FLN), which reaped the fruits of its struggle against a foreign occupier by

²¹ Mohamed E. Selim, "The Survival of a Nonstate Actor: The Foreign Policy of the Palestine Liberation Organization", in Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1991), p.261.

²² Ibid.

achieving the independence of Algeria from France in 1962.²³ Hence, The PLO perceived its strategy as a combination of two mutually reinforcing trends; armed struggle and mass political mobilization.

A war of liberation launched by a revolutionary vanguard creates the right atmosphere for mobilization of the masses, which in turn provides the war of liberation with new momentum. In theory, the strategy goes as follows; a long series of small attacks on virtually all Israeli targets is to be launched. During these attacks, the resistance movement will avoid direct military engagements with the adversary in order to neutralize the latter's technological superiority. By persisting in this process regardless of short-term setbacks, the resistance movement will finally achieve its ultimate goal. For the PLO, the popular war of liberation has many advantages. It prevents Israel from enjoying the fruits of a peaceful occupation, continues the spirit of resistance, wears Israel down, and keeps the problem on the agenda of the world community.²⁴

Thus, the PLO's intended strategy was in essence a protracted confrontation to terminate Israel and its 'modus operandi' was a lengthy guerrilla warfare. However, by the time the PLO stood on its feet and began its activities the conditions were most unfavourable. All Palestinian lands - even those annexed to Jordan or those administered by Egypt - were lost to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day war and had gone under her direct occupation.²⁵ Hence, from early on there was an inherent limitation to the PLO's policy by virtue of its lack of the territory, autonomous resources and the population to operate from within. In other words, the PLO's strategy could not steer a truly independent course from the strategy of its host (Arab) countries (e.g. Jordan, Lebanon, or Tunisia) not to mention that its finances were at the mercy of a variety of financial backers. In fact, even in inter-Arab

²³ There were huge differences between the two cases. For instance France had no ideological /religious claims in Algeria; also, there was hardly any international sympathy for France's claims in Algeria.

²⁴ Selim, "The Foreign Policy of the PLO", pp. 282-3.

²⁵ This dramatic loss led to a regime change from within the organization removing the old-line nationalists in favour of the militant guerrilla groups headed by Fatah.

politics the PLO's leadership had limited maneuverability, lying in the small margin where Arab countries may agree.²⁶

In terms of its **substantive** policy toward the conflict (i.e. policy regarding the existence / recognition of the opponent as well as the terms upon which the conflict might be settled),²⁷ the PLO has gone through three phases:

The first was the *No Recognition / Liquidation of Israel* phase (1964-1968), which prevailed during the early years of the organization's existence. All of the Palestinian National Congress (PNC) resolutions passed during that period spoke of the official goal of the PLO as the total liberation of Palestine. Indeed, any mention of the 'Zionist presence' was closely accompanied by the unambiguous objective of destroying it. Even after the utter defeat of the 1967 Six-Day War and the loss of all Palestinian land to Israel, the PLO nevertheless took pride in Nasser's defiant slogan at the 1967 Khartoum Summit of the three Nos ' No to recognition of Israel. No to peace with Israel. No to negotiations with Israel.' Interestingly, the 1968 National Charter explicitly placed the onus on Palestinians themselves to liberate Palestine as opposed to an implicit duty of the Arab armies in the earlier resolutions.²⁸

Secondly, came the *Bi-national State* phase (1969-1973) where a shift occurred in the PLO's goal from an essentially Arab state in Palestine, to one that would encompass all Jews resident in Palestine providing they renounced Zionism. In other words, the new

²⁶ Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Negotiations between Arabs and Israel: Peace of Illusions – Pre and Post Oslo (volume III)* (Cairo: Dar El-Sherouq, 1996), pp.86-7 (in Arabic).

²⁷ I thank Professor Noble for providing me with this definition of substantive policy.

²⁸ For more information on this phase see Helen Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); William B. Quandt, Fuad Jabber, and Ann Mosely Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Isa al-Shu'aybi, *Palestinian Statism: Entity Consciousness and Institutional Development* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1979) (in Arabic).

objective was a bi-national state which did not recognize Israel, but would somewhat accommodate the Jews who wish to continue living on the land of Palestine.

Thirdly, there was the *Two State Solution* phase (1974-1987) in the wake of the 1973 October War which on the one hand exposed the military vulnerability of Israel, but on the other hand exposed the Arab overall military weakness. This required a revision of the goal of liberating all of historical / mandate Palestine to the more moderate / conservative goal of liberating all Palestinian land which could be liberated, namely the pre-June 5th 1967 borders. In fact, the 1974 PNC issued a ten-point program calling for “the establishment of the people’s national, independent, and fighting authority on every part of Palestinian land to be liberated.”²⁹ Indeed, the mere use of the term ‘Authority’ as distinct from state represents a significant shift.³⁰ Furthermore, the 1977 PNC went as far as demanding “an independent national state on their own land” without any reference to total liberation.³¹ This phase lasted throughout the second half of the 1970s to the 1982 Lebanon War. Indeed, the PLO’s insistence on the two-state solution led it to reject the 1979 autonomy talks held at the Mena House Hotel in Cairo. However, the Israeli victory in the 1982 war meant the end of the PLO’s military presence in South Lebanon which in turn signaled the demise of any solution from outside the Occupied Territories. From 1982 onward, establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital remains the goal of the PLO.³²

²⁹ Mohamed Muslih, “Toward Co-existence: An Analysis of the Resolutions of the PNC”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, volume XIX no.4, (Summer 1990): p.18.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. p.19.

³² For more information on the idea of establishing a ministate in the West Bank and Gaza see Helena Cobban, “Palestinian Peace Plans” in Willard A. Beling (ed.), *Middle East Peace Plans* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), pp.43-44.

With regard to **behavioral** policy (i.e. the methods used to pursue one's interest and deal with the conflict situation)³³, the role of military force in the PLO's overall strategy has passed through three main phases:

The first was the *Radical Primacy* phase (1964-1974) during the infant years of the organization. This era encompassed the chairmanships of Ahmed Al-Shukairy (1964-1967), Yehia Hammouda (1967-1969) and the early years of Yasser Arafat's chairmanship (1969-74). During that decade-long phase, the use of military force was seen as the one and only instrument that could bring about the liberation of all historical / mandate Palestine (until 1969), then the establishment of the secular democratic state (until 1974).³⁴ That perception was greatly influenced by the revolutionary writings of Ché Guevara and Nasser's radical slogan of "What was taken by force will not be restored but by force."³⁵

Secondly, the *Conservative Primacy* phase (1974-1982) which still placed substantial importance on military force as the principle strategy, but increasingly emphasized the simultaneous importance of diplomacy. This re-assessment came in the wake of the 1973 October War whose results highlighted on the one hand the importance of using military force against Israel and dispelled the myth of its invincibility, but on the other hand highlighted overall Arab military limitations.³⁶ Interestingly, the war also exposed the PLO's marginal role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Strategically, the Arab states did not even consult with the organization in their decision to wage the war, while militarily the PLO's participation did not amount to anything more than launching a few

³³ I am greatly indebted to Professor Noble for providing me with this definition of behavioral policy.

³⁴ Selim, "The Foreign Policy of the PLO", p.262.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Peter Mansfield, *A History of The Middle East* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p.307.

rockets and conducting some small guerrilla attacks along the Israeli-Lebanese border.³⁷ Furthermore, it was quite clear ever since the signing of the first, then the second Disengagement Treaty that Egypt was withdrawing from the Arab military equation and would not risk fighting again in the near future. In fact, Sadat left no doubt when he declared that “ the October War will be the last of wars.”³⁸

Sadat’s accommodative moves meant that the PLO had to work on its own without Egyptian military support. However, the organization gained instead much-needed political support from the Arab World. During the Rabat Summit (1974), the Arab League declared the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Hence, the PLO gained more legitimacy in the eyes of the international community and as a result, Arafat was invited to the UN General Assembly in the same year. Early signals of accommodation were present in Arafat’s historic speech at the UN when he stated : “ I come with an olive branch in one hand, and a freedom fighter’s gun in the other. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hands.”³⁹ However, he stopped short of formally recognizing Israel which in turn did not recognize the PLO.

While the newly-earned round of international legitimacy obviously did not solve the conflict with Israel, it had a significant positive outcome, namely an increased sense of self-confidence for the PLO.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Heikal, (volume III) *Peace of Illusions: Pre and Post Oslo* , p. 46.

³⁹ Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, p.307.

⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that as a result of the 1973 October War Western European states began tilting more towards the Arab side. Moreover, 27 African states broke off their diplomatic relations with Israel.

Indeed, the latter boost enticed the PLO to lower its expectations from the maximalist goal of a democratic Palestinian state on the entire land of historical / mandate Palestine to the more realistic goal of a transitional mini-Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Hence, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) agreed in its 1974 Transitional Political Program to accept a separate Palestinian state in any 'liberated' part of Palestine.

However, the military instrument still remained the quintessential component of the PLO strategy as illustrated in this excerpt:

The PLO is fighting by every means, primarily by armed struggle, to liberate the Palestinian land and establish a national independent and fighting authority in every part of Palestinian soil which can be liberated.⁴¹

The 1977 PNC supported “armed struggle ‘in conjunction with various forms of political and mass struggle.’”⁴² For instance, it authorized the PLO to widen its recognition-base by allowing it to participate in all international conferences and forums, it also authorized contacts with “Jewish democratic and progressive forces.”⁴³ Therefore, for the rest of the 1970s to 1982, the PLO continued to launch guerrilla attacks from South Lebanon against both military and civilian targets in Northern Israel. Consequently, these raids invited a series of reprisals and incursions from the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) against the PLO bases located in what came to be known as ‘Fatahland’ in South Lebanon and along the Beqa’a plain. In 1982, Israel launched a massive invasion of Lebanon with the goal of rooting out the PLO’s military infrastructure and bringing peace to its Northern areas.

⁴¹ Selim, “The Foreign Policy of the PLO”, p.281.

⁴² Muslih, “Toward Co-existence: An Analysis of the Resolutions of the PNC”: pp.22-23.

⁴³ According to Muslih, as early as 1974 arrangements were made for a meeting between Arafat and Nahum Goldman, the president of the World Zionist Organization at the time, however they never met because of strong pressure from the Israeli government. For more on these contacts see Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within* (London: Zed Books LTD., 1985), pp.195-199. Also the monthly Paris journal *Israel et Palestine* for the months extending from December 1977 to February 1978, as well as the French daily *Le Monde* of 6 and 11 January 1977.

However, 'Operation Peace for Galilee' did not stop in South Lebanon and the IDF pushed instead all the way to the outskirts of Beirut. Arafat, along with thousands of the PLO fighters was besieged in the capital which - for 63 days - sustained heavy bombardment from the land, the air and the sea. After extensive regional mediations, the US pressured Israel to a conditional cease-fire during which Arafat and his men were evacuated from Beirut. To be sure, the PLO's defeat in the 1982 Lebanon War further undermined the military dimension of its strategy and accentuated the political / diplomatic dimension instead. In fact, Arafat began to express this opinion right after the PLO- Israel confrontation by stating the following: "The Palestinians have the right to struggle by all military, political, diplomatic and information means."⁴⁴

The PLO's relocation to Tunis in 1982 marks the beginning of the third basic change in its behavioral strategy - the *Political* phase (1982-1987). Being far removed from the borders with Israel, the PLO didn't have the luxury of entertaining the military option. Hence, all talk about armed struggle took a back seat and the search instead was on for a political and diplomatic solution with Israel. This accommodative stand was facilitated by a positive new perception on the part of the PLO leadership of its enemy. Indeed, the emergence of Israeli accommodative groups such as the Peace Now movement helped change the long-held image of the Jewish state as a monolithic society bent on occupying the entirety of Palestine.⁴⁵ In fact, some PLO figures such as Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and his assistant Dr Essam El Sartawi called on the PNC to allow communications with both Israel and the US, and the recognition of UN

⁴⁴ Selim, "The Foreign Policy of the PLO", p.283.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.279.

resolution 242.⁴⁶ By February 1983, the PNC authorized the PLO's contacts with Jewish peace advocates both inside and outside Israel. Unfortunately, Dr El Sartawi was assassinated in Lisbon where he was due to meet Shimon Peres.⁴⁷ By the 1987 PNC, the authorization extended to an explicit mention of "relations with Israeli democratic forces that support the Palestinian people's struggle."⁴⁸

Finally, with regard to **procedural** policy (i.e. issues related to the form and processes of settlement, such as linked vs. separate settlements, preconditions for negotiations, and representation issues)⁴⁹, there was an increased loosening / relaxation of procedural conditions concerning Palestinian diplomatic representation internationally. Thus there were was a shift from independent Palestinian representation to participation on an equal footing in an Arab negotiating team and even eventually to joint Jordanian-Palestinian representation (post 1982). Moreover, with regard to the form of the Palestinian state, the 1983 PNC stated that "future relations with Jordan should be on the basis of a confederation between two independent states."⁵⁰ This came as a concession to satisfy on the one hand both Israel and the US, and satisfy on the other hand both Jordan and Egypt.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Heikal, (volume III) *Peace of Illusions: Pre and Post Oslo*, pp.146-47.

⁴⁷ Some blame his murder on the Mossad which was under the Likud's firm control, others blame it on Abu Nidal's group. In either case, it was a setback to the accommodative process. See Heikal, *Peace of Illusions – Pre and Post Oslo*, p.148.

⁴⁸ Muslih, "Toward Co-existence", p.23.

⁴⁹ I am greatly indebted to Professor Noble for providing me with this definition of procedural policy.

⁵⁰ Muslih, "Toward Co-existence", p. 21. For more details on PLO-Jordanian relations see Arthur R. Day, *East Bank / West Bank: Jordan and the Prospects for Peace* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986), pp.112-141.

⁵¹ Ibid.

THE EVOLUTION OF PLO POLICY (1987-90)

In December 1987, the *Intifada* broke out in the Gaza strip and spread to the rest of the Occupied Territories. Explanations vary for the original incident that triggered the uprising.⁵² In any case, mass protests ensued across the territories which later escalated into a national movement of civil disobedience enjoying active participation from all sections of Palestinian society (students, labourers and even some women and elderly men). The protestors adopted a number of methods including: organized commercial strikes (days of rage), stone-throwing demonstrations, and a boycott of Israeli goods and services aimed at achieving a “disengagement from the Israeli economy.”⁵³ Nonetheless, the most effective weapon of the *Intifada* was the use of stones by Palestinian teenagers against heavily-armed IDF soldiers. In other words, throwing stones stood out as a symbolic yet ingenious tactic of warfare which did not need supply lines nor arm deals.⁵⁴ But why did the *Intifada* take place?⁵⁵ Regionally, the Palestinians had received a rude awakening at the 1987 Amman summit which - for the first time ever - regarded the Iraq-Iran War as a more threatening issue than the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Domestically there was an accumulating sense of despair and oppression caused by twenty years of Israeli occupation. In fact, Thomas Friedman predicted it succinctly as follows:

⁵² According to some accounts, an Israeli truck driver deliberately rammed his vehicle into a number of Palestinian laborers in Gaza killing four and injuring more. Other accounts attribute it to the murder of two Birzeit University students during clashes with Israeli soldiers.

⁵³ Selim, “The Foreign Policy of the PLO”, p.268.

⁵⁴ Heikal, *Peace of Illusions – Pre and Post Oslo*, p.191.

⁵⁵ According to Mohamed E. Selim, the Intifada is the result of the convergence of certain variables, namely: 1-the maturation of a new Palestinian generation that became convinced, thanks to the October 1973 War and the Israel-PLO War of 1982, that Israel is not invincible 2- the rapid growth of education in the West Bank and Gaza where schools and universities became centers for civil resistance 3- the mobilizational activities of the PLO and some resistance organizations. See his article “The Foreign Policy of the PLO” in *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*.

Palestinian residents of the occupied territories, frustrated at the fact that no solution, either diplomatic or military, to their situation seems to be in the offing, and seeing no direction coming from Palestinians abroad, were seen to be taking matters into their own hands.⁵⁶

While all accounts of the *Intifada* agree that its outbreak was not a PLO initiative, it is important to note that the latter - from its headquarters in Tunisia - soon took charge of managing and financing it. Indeed, this active role in sustaining the *Intifada* cost it the life of one of its top leaders - Khalil El-Wazir (Abu Jihad), who was assassinated by the Israeli Mossad in his home in Tunis in April 1988. Generally speaking, Palestinian groups - with the notable exception of Hamas and Islamic Jihad - succeeded in resisting the temptation to resort to violence despite the harsh Israeli military response.⁵⁷ In other words, the non-violent nature of the *Intifada* cost Israel dearly; not in terms of human casualties but rather a moral and economic price.⁵⁸

Encouraged by the political success of the *Intifada*, Arafat declared twelve months later - at the 1988 PNC meeting in Algiers - a Palestinian state in exile. Simultaneously, the PLO - in the Political Statement - vowed to renounce all acts of terrorism and affirmed Israel's right to exist within secure borders. In fact, Arafat went as far as suggesting meeting directly with Israeli leaders to negotiate a 'two-state' solution of the Palestinian question. However, Israel still shunned him, describing the PLO as a terrorist organization.

⁵⁶ Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*, 14 April 1987.

⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that Hamas (acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement) was born out of the Intifada.

⁵⁸ Naseer Aruri, "A New Climate of Opportunity" *Middle East International* (2 December 1988): pp. 18-19.

Thus with regard to substantive policy, the PLO now clearly emphasized its objective of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza living peacefully alongside Israel. Indeed, Arafat's unconditional acceptance of UN resolution 242 and 338 in 1988 was the clearest recognition yet of Israel's right to exist, marking a significant development in the PLO's strategy. Furthermore, Arafat stated in May 1989 that "the Palestinian National Charter was obsolete or null and void."⁵⁹

With regard to behavioural policy, the PLO from 1987-90 continued to use a mixed policy which on the one hand sought negotiations with Israel while on the other hand prolonged the *Intifada* and emphasized its non-violent nature. This was a marked shift from the PLO's earlier attachment to armed struggle as one of its key instruments.

The PNC also issued a political statement affirming the Palestinian commitment to the right to resist while at the same time rejecting "terrorism" in all its forms. This formula goes somewhat farther than a statement by Arafat in 1985 in which violence outside Israel was rejected. The *Intifada* meant direct confrontation of the Palestinian people with the armed forces of Israel and armed Israeli civilians –but not such acts as petrol bombings.⁶⁰

To be sure, the international community - in light of the *Intifada* – saw a significant shift of the conflict from an Arab stubborn refusal to accept Israel's right to exist to one where Palestinians demanded their legitimate rights.

The PLO's accommodative line was slightly abandoned in May of 1990 to a more militant tone when Arafat refused to condemn a seaborne commando attack led by one of the PLO groups (Palestine Liberation Front). The reason given by him was that the PLO

⁵⁹ Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", in Ami Ayalon and Haim Shaked, eds., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XIII, 1989, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1990): p.197.

⁶⁰ Godfrey Jansen, "Independence and the Recognition of Israel", *Middle East International*, (18 November 1988): p.3.

still supported armed struggle. Consequently, the US suspended its dialogue with the organization.⁶¹

Finally, during the 1987-90 period PLO procedural policy underwent a number of key changes, loosening - if not dropping altogether - earlier firm demands. For instance, by unilaterally accepting UN resolution 242 and 338, the PLO dropped its long-held insistence on mutual recognition as the basis for negotiations with Israel. Hence, it is a strong indication of Arafat's keen efforts to accommodate Israel.

Another area of change was the form of Palestinian representation (PLO from outside vs. inside the Occupied Territories). This issue was a huge concern for Arafat and the PLO leadership abroad due to the fear of a deal between Israel and West Bank local leaders. Why? Mainly because the Palestinian Diaspora views the latter possibility as reducing the conflict to a mere border dispute between the nascent Palestinian state and Israel, thus negating / undercutting their rights (such as the right of return to what is now Israel or compensation). However, under US-Israeli pressure the PLO leadership demonstrated flexibility by allowing West Bank and Gaza Strip local leaders to hold official meetings, dialogue and talks (i.e. not negotiations) with the Israeli government in the lead up to an international conference. Indeed, the PLO accepted the representation of the local Palestinian delegation to hold a dialogue with the Israeli government in Cairo in 1990. However, the dialogue never took place since the Israeli government collapsed over the issue in March 1990.⁶²

⁶¹ Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XIV, 1990, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991): p.211.

⁶² Teitelbaum, "The PLO", *MECS*, volume XIV, 1990: p.211

With regard to negotiating with or without preconditions, there was also a gradual loosening of the PLO's position. A case-in-point is the Israeli demand for the holding of local elections in the Occupied Territories as a pre-requisite to any negotiations. At first, the PLO reluctantly accepted the idea known as the Shamir plan but called in exchange for a symbolic withdrawal from at least a small part of the Occupied Territories to occur simultaneously with these local elections. However, when Israel refused, the PLO simply dropped its condition. These local elections were never held because – as mentioned earlier - the Israeli coalition government collapsed in 1990 over the issue of Palestinian representation.

Contrary to prevailing thinking, the 'Saddam Hussein connection' to the PLO began earlier than the Kuwait crisis in August 1990. In fact, the Baghdad Arab summit called by Saddam in May 1990 issued a staunch communiqué against both the US role in the region and the massive influx of Soviet Jews to Israel. This militant trend was reinforced later - in August 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait - by Arafat's refusal to condemn the Iraqi invasion at the subsequent 1990 Cairo Summit. Furthermore, he sided with Saddam's conditional link between the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.

The question is why did Arafat act in such a way when this behaviour clearly undermined what the PLO's principles and its struggle stood for? Analysts argue that on the one hand, Arafat and the PLO leadership at large could not go against their Palestinian constituency inside and outside the Occupied Territories if they were to remain in power. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians could not resist the temptation of supporting Saddam's anti-American, anti-Israeli and anti-Gulf states stand

and saw him as an Arab champion putting both Israel and the US in their place. On the other hand, Arafat – apparently - was under the wrong impression that the Kuwait crisis would be solved by non-military means. It seems that he thought that the massive US military buildup was just to set the stage for a political settlement in which Iraq gets to keep the two disputed islands and half of the Rumeila oil fields.⁶³ That calculation proved to cost the PLO dearly with the defeat of Iraq. Not only was the latter badly defeated, but the public sympathy for the Palestinians generated by the *Intifada* - especially within the European Union – quickly faded away. Furthermore, the PLO was isolated regionally, especially from the Gulf States and Egypt.

⁶³ Heikal claims that Arafat was made aware of a 1982 secret conversation between William Casey (the head of the CIA in the Middle East) and Dr. Fadel El Barak (the chief of the Iraqi intelligence) in which the former did not strongly oppose Iraqi historical claims in Kuwait. Moreover, the assurances of April Glaspey the US ambassador to Iraq to Saddam Hussein followed the same line. See Heikal, *Peace of Illusions – pre and Post Oslo*, p. 232.

CHAPTER III *

*The PLO's Policy in 1991**Initiation and Dynamics of Accommodation*

As we have seen, the PLO during the 1970s and 1980s had made a number of accommodative moves toward Israel, modifying its substantive policy and to a lesser extent its behavioural and procedural policy. This culminated in the PNC resolutions of November 1988 which accepted UN Resolution 242 and recognized Israel's existence. These attempts at accommodation had met with little or no response from Israel. They had, however, received a partial favourable response from the US which opened official discussions with the PLO, thereby implicitly recognizing their right to represent the Palestinian people.

Now, following the Gulf War (1991) the US undertook a major initiative to promote accommodation and even conflict resolution between the frontline Arab parties and Israel. This initiative involved first of all the convening of a multilateral international conference of the conflicting parties, other regional states, and major powers. This was to be followed by bilateral discussions between Arab frontline parties and Israel which were to be the principal framework for negotiations. On the Palestinian front specifically, the US - reflecting Israel's conditions for participation - proposed that the issue of Palestinian representation be resolved through the formation of joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation composed on the Palestinian side by residents of the West Bank / Gaza with no open ties to the PLO.⁶⁴

* I wish to thank Professor Paul Noble for the substantial assistance he provided in developing the analytical material in this and the following two chapters (Chapters III, IV and V).

Jordan and Syria assented without too much difficulty to the proposed framework. After considerable discussion, the PLO gave its agreement as well in order to ensure Palestinian participation in the emerging peace process. In doing so, the Palestinians effectively made significant concessions on the procedural front. These Palestinian accommodation moves involved first the dropping of a series of preconditions previously emphasized by the PLO including : guarantees by the US or Israel regarding an independent state, a freeze on settlement activities in the Occupied Territories before or during the talks, guarantees on self-determination, guarantees on a sovereign East Jerusalem, guarantees of Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank.⁶⁵

Above all though, as we have seen, it involved accepting US-Israeli conditions regarding Palestinian representation. Specifically, Arafat agreed to a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation in these talks as opposed to full and separate representation. Moreover, he did not insist on the participation of PLO representatives from inside let alone outside the Occupied Territories. In other words, there were no representatives from the Palestinian Diaspora, hence risking the negation of their rights. Furthermore, the Palestinian activists who were eventually chosen had to meet Israel's criteria (they were meticulously screened to ensure there were no grass-root supporters of the PLO) in order to deprive the organization of any credit in the Occupied Territories. Israel - under pressure from the US and with several of its procedural conditions met - finally agreed reluctantly to participate in the proposed negotiations.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Khalil Barhoum, "What Price Madrid for the Palestinians?", *Middle East International*, (17 April 1992): p.15.

⁶⁵ Lamis Andoni, "After The PNC: Will The PLO Have to Back-track?", *Middle East International*, (11 October 1991) : p. 7.

⁶⁶ Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Volume XV, 1991, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1992): pp. 218-219.

With the participation of all the frontline parties assured, the Middle East Peace Conference convened in Madrid on October 30th 1991. Israel, the neighbouring Arab states and Palestinian representatives sat around a square negotiation table at the conference with the intention of ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. While it was not the first time in the Arab-Israeli conflict that representatives from Israel and the Arab ring-states conducted multilateral talks, it was the first time in the history of the conflict that representatives from Palestine – the core issue – were present. For the PLO, it was the first official face-to-face meeting between its representatives – albeit hiding their association with the organization – and the state of Israel. Although most scholars lamented the lack of breakthroughs from the Madrid Peace conference, the mere fact of holding it spoke volumes about the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli track in particular. Indeed, Israel for years had maintained that ‘ there is no one to talk to among the Palestinians ’ and refused to consider them as negotiating partners over the very future of Palestine.⁶⁷ Hence, these direct Palestinian-Israeli talks were instrumental in debunking that long-held myth.

For the PLO, the relative success of the Madrid Peace conference was that despite its indirect / invisible role, it still managed to assert an undeniable presence throughout the conference. For instance Saeb Erekat, one of the Palestinian delegates, chose to wear the Kifiyah (Palestinian black-and-white scarf) as an unmistakable symbol of his PLO

⁶⁷ Editorial in *Middle East International*, (8 November 1991): p.3. For more information about Israel's relationship with the Palestinians see *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* by the Israeli historian Simha Flapan.

identity.⁶⁸ Furthermore, he openly stated in an interview with CNN that he was appointed by the PLO; yet Israel could not simply walk out of the conference.⁶⁹

The PLO public relations strategy succeeded in humanizing the Palestinian cause and in reaching out to the international audience through the eloquent and sobering speeches of Dr Heidar Abdel-Shafi and Dr. Hanan Ashrawi.⁷⁰ In fact, the Palestinian delegation got praise even from Israeli right-wing press as one reporter put it: “They demonstrated responsibility and restraint”⁷¹, prompting some analysts to argue that the Israeli insistence on Arafat’s absence from the scene at Madrid did the PLO more good than harm.

The cooperation afforded by the Jordanians also allowed the Palestinians to ‘run the show’.⁷² Moreover during the talks, each of the Jordanian / Palestinian delegates insisted on discussing its dimension separate of the other, which gave the PLO more room to maneuver. Ironically, the Israeli condition allowed representatives from East Jerusalem (who otherwise could not participate) to join the Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

The Madrid peace conference was in essence a regional conference rather than an international conference under UN auspices, hence indicating another significant concession on the procedural level. To be sure, the PLO gave in to these demands despite

⁶⁸ Kim Murphy, “For the Palestinians, New Faces and A Measure of Legitimacy”, *Los Angeles Times*, (3 November 1991).

⁶⁹ Editorial in *Middle East International*, (8 November 1991): p.3.

⁷⁰ Nora Boustany, “Palestinian Movement’s New Face; Negotiating Team Personifies Political Evolution of Group’s Struggle”, *The Washington Post*, (17 December 1991).

⁷¹ Joel Greenberg, *The Jerusalem Post*, (8 November 1991).

⁷² Editorial in *Middle East International*, (8 November 1991): p.3

risking its own marginalization and political demise in order to deny Israel any excuse to walk out from the peace conference.⁷³

The relative success of the conference - at least in the US view - encouraged Washington to invite Israel and the frontline Arab parties to participate in a second round, this time of bilateral talks, in Washington beginning in December 1991. These now became the principal framework for peace negotiations. Before long, the Jordanian / Palestinian-Israeli talks were informally transformed into separate Jordanian -Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli negotiations (with close consultation between Palestinian representatives and PLO officials).

During these bilateral negotiations, the Palestinians / PLO maintained the basic substantive accommodative policy that had been adopted in 1988 (i.e. recognition of Israel's existence, Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel with East Jerusalem as its capital). However, they also pressed hard for the achievement of their principal demands, namely how to get around the two-phased solution which lacked any assurances for an independent Palestinian state, and postponed the resolution of the status of Jerusalem and the settlements in the Occupied Territories to the final stage.⁷⁴ Furthermore, procedurally the Palestinians sought to alter the conditions imposed on them regarding Palestinian representation (i.e. the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation).⁷⁵ The PLO also continuously urged greater American involvement in the peace process.⁷⁶

⁷³ Arafat wanted a UN sponsored conference with coercive powers as opposed to a regional conference for fear of Arab normalization with Israel at the expense of the Palestinian cause. See Teitelbaum, "The PLO", *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Volume XV, p.219.

⁷⁴ Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, Volume XVI, 1992 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1993): p.245

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.247.

Behaviourally, the PLO sought to maintain its leverage over Israel by prolonging the *Intifada*. (Regionally, the PLO continued its attempts to recover from its political and financial isolation in the Arab world through active diplomacy, while another goal was to prevent other parties from signing separate treaties with Israel).

Substantively, Israel's Likud government was unyielding although, as we have seen, it did allow some informal modification of the negotiating framework to permit separate talks with Palestinian representatives.

Nevertheless, given the Shamir government's hard-line substantive position, the negotiations achieved virtually nothing as long as it remained in power (i.e. until the June 1992 Israeli elections).

Explanations of Palestinian Accommodative Moves

What factors best explain the PLO's favourable response to the US initiative? What is the relative importance and role of these various factors in the PLO's accommodative moves at this point ?

OBJECTIVE FACTORS

Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions, notably the activities of the powerful third parties and bilateral conditions (the state of relations with Israel) played the most important roles in the PLO's involvement in an accommodative process. The following factors – at various points- pushed toward or pulled back from accommodation.

External Politico-Military Conditions:

Powerful Third Parties:

The role of powerful third parties was arguably the most important set of factors in the PLO's decision.

During the Cold War, there was an axiom in Middle Eastern politics suggesting that 'The road to war (against Israel) is through Moscow, while the road to peace (with Israel) is through Washington'. Certainly, that saying held true in the case of Egypt, Syria and the PLO especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, by the time of the *Intifada* (December 1987 on) the role of the Soviet Union (reflecting its declining power) was largely accommodative.⁷⁷ In other words, the USSR was trying to resolve some of its differences with the US in key Third World regions. In the Middle East, this led to reduced support for confrontational policies on the part of former Soviet regional clients (PLO) and some encouragement to resolve their differences with regional opponents (notably Israel). The sharp decline in Soviet material and political support served as an important constraint on the pursuit of a confrontational policy toward Israel by the PLO (permissive causality – constraint).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 further enhanced the constraint on the PLO's pursuit of a confrontational policy and the end of the Cold War rendered the non-aligned movement meaningless. Meanwhile China – fearing the same fate as the USSR - was increasingly looking inward and showed less interest in world affairs. The Kuwait War also exposed Western Europe's strategic dependence on the United States.

⁷⁷ The Soviet Union pressed the PLO in 1988 to tone down its declarations toward Israel. Moreover, it welcomed the US-PLO dialogue. See Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the Middle East" in *MECS* volume XV, 1991 : p.43.

Hence, the PLO realized that its peace must be sponsored by the only remaining superpower - rather than through the UN - as the US is the sole state that can significantly exert political and economic pressure on Israel. These factors pulled the PLO to accommodation and functioned as *permissive* cause.

More importantly though, in the wake of the Gulf War the US began to play a very active role in pressing for a settlement between Israel and the frontline Arab parties. In fact, it played an important dual role, on the one hand undertaking a leadership role in initiating / managing the peace process, and on the other hand providing important incentives and constraints that would induce the parties to participate and undertake accommodative moves (permissive causality – opportunities / constraints). Thus, at one level Washington provided some assurances to the Palestinians that their legitimate interests would be supported⁷⁸ (which was probably more important than the loss of Soviet support in getting the Palestinians to the table). At another level, the US exerted economic pressures on Israel (i.e. threatening the withholding of \$10 billion in loan guarantees in the event of the building of new settlements in the Occupied Territories) to ensure that it participated in negotiations.⁷⁹

In short, the Kuwait war brought about the direct intervention of the U.S. (the only remaining superpower) whose efforts acted not only as a stimulus cause, and possibly efficient cause, but also as a permissive cause (opportunity) for the PLO's accommodative moves. For these helped generate a perception of potential reciprocity from the most powerful third party (rather than from the PLO's opponent Israel).

⁷⁸ The US talked about "legitimate Palestinian Rights". See Barry Rubin, "The United States and the Middle East" in *MECS*, volume XV, 1991: p.29.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.32.

This in turn strengthened the Palestinian population and pushed it toward accommodation.

Bilateral Relations (with Israel)

This was arguably the second most important set of factors shaping Palestinian accommodative moves. Here, the Palestinians were caught in a highly asymmetrical hurting stalemate. The worst aspect about this stalemate is that it was one in which Israel held all the stakes as it occupied / controlled both the Palestinian land and population. The Palestinians - despite the mounting human cost of the *Intifada*- remained under occupation with no recognized national existence or land of their own.

The two most important aspects of bilateral relations were the changing power relations (with Israel) and the perception of the opponent's (Israel's) policies.

Changing Power Relations :

The outbreak of the *Intifada* in December 1987 had expressed the continuing strength of Palestinian national consciousness and forced both Israel and the US to take the Palestinians / PLO more seriously. This, combined with the new moderate PLO substantive policy (1988), had led to a temporary breakthrough in relations with the US by achieving a direct dialogue. This had strengthened the position of the Palestinians and raised hopes for their future.

However, the Gulf War and Palestinian policy towards Iraq had weakened the Palestinian position significantly (including the loss of substantial financial and diplomatic support from the Gulf states). Israel's regional position meanwhile had been strengthened considerably by the outcome of the Gulf War combined with the fall of the

Soviet Union.⁸⁰ Moreover, the migration of some 200,000 Jews from the Soviet Union in the late 1980s further consolidated Israel's powerful position.⁸¹ Indeed, Shamir talked about his plans of 'Big Israel' to absorb the expected million Soviet immigrants and the transformation of the physical and demographic makeup of the Occupied Territories.⁸² This possibility seriously challenged the premise of the 'Palestinian Atomic Bomb' (i.e. population growth). In either case, time was not on Arafat's side as the migration of Soviet Jews and building settlements on the West bank gained pace while signs of financial deprivation, fatigue and disillusion with the *Intifada* were starting to take its toll on the Palestinians for the lack of foreseeable results.

This led to a perception of a continuing significant and irreversible decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel resulting in the potentially irreversible loss of vital Palestinian / PLO interests (e.g. statehood, sovereignty, territory etc...). This constituted not only an important constraint (permissive cause) on the successful pursuit of a confrontational policy towards Israel, but also a powerful stimulus (stimulus cause) to seek accommodation.

Opponent's (Israel's) Policies

After the Gulf War and during the lead up to the convening of the Madrid Conference, there was little or no perception by Arafat / the PLO leadership of likely reciprocity from the current Shamir government. Instead, the only significant signs of potential reciprocity at this stage were from a powerful third party (US). Thus, the PLO

⁸⁰ Gad Barzilai, "Israel", *MECS*, volume XV, 1991 : p.478.

⁸¹ Ibid. p.465. In 1991 alone some 170,000 immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union in addition to 15,000 Jews who came from Ethiopia. Israel planned to reach a population of 7 million by 2010 while retaining the Occupied Territories.

⁸² Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XIV, 1990 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991): p.215.

came to realize that accommodation with Israel – through the US connection - was now or never as the Palestinian position was weakening by the day.

Regional Environment

Conditions in the regional environment were less important than bilateral relations or the role of powerful third parties but were still a factor nevertheless. Regional factors contributed to accommodation in four ways.

1- The Regional Catalyst

To be sure, when Saddam Hussein – in his initiative of 12 August 1990 - linked Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait to Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories he embarrassed the US administration in the Arab world. Hence, the latter promised the Arab members of its international coalition to bring about a comprehensive peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict after Iraq had been driven out of Kuwait. The outcome of the Kuwait War 1990-91 (which was a partly regional / partly global decisive event) served as both a stimulus and a permissive factor for the initiation of accommodation. In other words, it both provided a stimulus and opportunity for the US to intervene and to actively pursue accommodation and also weakened the regional constraints on accommodation.

2- The Regional Climate

When on the regional level the strategy of accommodation is looked upon favourably (i.e. as the solution to the deadlock in the conflict), then initiating accommodation is of relative ease. Indeed, ever since Egypt boarded the ‘peace train’ in 1979, the other Arab countries were moving - albeit at different speeds - towards the same destination. Put differently, the tactics may have differed from one Arab-Israeli

track to another but the strategic choice (i.e. accommodation) remained the same. One important indication in this regard was Syria's agreement in the summer of 1991 to participate in the Madrid conference (permissive causality). To be sure, Egypt's role in prodding the PLO to seek accommodation with Israel was also instrumental. Indeed, the US-brokered Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was seen as a positive precedent as the fruits of its peace were beginning to emerge not only in the return of lost territory but also in the form of an economic recovery. If Arafat were to pursue the road of peace – with Mubarak's blessing - yet fail to achieve it because of Israel's intransigence, Egypt would feel much more compelled to support the Palestinians politically (permissive causality).

3- The PLO Loss of Regional Support

The Gulf war (1990-91) was a regional setback for the PLO as it had to take sides between opposing Arab camps. The PLO's misplaced support of Saddam Hussein cost it its political, financial support from the Gulf states (namely Kuwait). This loss of support translated into economic pressure from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. This in turn served as a constraint on confrontation with Israel and a stimulus for the pursuit of accommodation.

4- The Prisoner's Dilemma of Frontline Arab Parties

The PLO along with other frontline Arab parties in conflict with Israel found themselves in a Prisoner's Dilemma situation before and during the Madrid / Washington process. To participate and make progress toward an honorable settlement would require making a number of concessions, some potentially quite painful, in the substantive, procedural and behavioral spheres. However, refusing to participate or move forward in negotiations involved a serious risk that other frontline Arab parties would move ahead on their own and achieve more favourable terms of settlement as well as greater

economic side payments. Holdouts and the last to settle risked being offered the least favourable terms.

PLO-Syria Dilemma: Arafat wanted to link all the Arab-Israeli tracks together (i.e. multilateral talks). However, he was concerned that Assad – not wanting to be outdone by Sadat's Camp David deal - was in no rush for the return of the Golan Heights. Indeed, apart from its huge strategic significance as a plateau overlooking the Galilee, the Golan Heights – unlike the Sinai peninsula - had little economic importance (e.g. oil fields, re-opening of the Suez Canal). Moreover, Israel did not claim any historical or biblical rights in the Golan. Therefore, despite Israel's formal annexation of the Golan (1981) and the building of some settlements there since 1967, reaching an agreement with Syria regarding it seemed far less problematic compared with the Israeli-Palestinian track. Assad also held other important cards such as the Syrian military presence in Lebanon, the strong strategic Iranian connection, and the Hezbollah factor.

On the other hand, Arafat was also concerned that Assad – having formally conceded Israel's right to exist in the 1991 peace conference - might go first in a separate peace deal exploiting the Palestinian cause to Syria's advantage.⁸³ In other words, Israel – in a replay of the Camp David agreement with Egypt (1978) - would neutralize Syria by fully withdrawing from the Golan at the expense of the Palestinians who would be then "left out in the cold".⁸⁴ Thus, an Arafat-Assad rapprochement came about in October 1991 (with Arafat's first visit to Damascus since 1983) to coordinate their positions. Interestingly, Assad was equally concerned that any Israeli security arrangement reached

⁸³ Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Negotiations between Arabs and Israel: Peace of Illusions – Pre-and Post Oslo*, (volume III), p.296 (in Arabic).

⁸⁴ Lamis Andoni, "A Leap Into Darkness", *Middle East International*, (25 October 1991): p.4.

with the PLO could eliminate Syria's role as a regional power broker without regaining the Golan Heights.⁸⁵

PLO-Jordan Dilemma: Equally important to Arafat was the Israeli-Jordanian track in which King Hussein could use the Palestinian cause to further the idea of a confederation between his kingdom and the territories. Put differently, despite Jordan's 1988 formal disengagement from the West Bank, Arafat was always suspicious of King Hussein's intentions with regard to the Palestinian-Israeli track.⁸⁶ The Jordanian scheme would undermine Palestinian national aspirations for an independent state, yet Arafat had to accept procedurally that the Palestinian delegation would be a part of a mixed Jordanian-Palestinian delegation at the Madrid Peace conference.

With both Jordan and Syria's agreement to participate in the Madrid conference, there was now a potential competition (i.e. prisoner's dilemma) between Arab frontline actors to reach the best political settlement with Israel (stimulus causality).

Economic Conditions

By 1991, economic conditions in the Palestinian territories had become increasingly difficult. Part of this was due to the cumulative effects of the Intifada with its disruption of the Palestinian economy through organized strikes (i.e. days of rage), Israeli punitive measures, cessation of foreign investment, and a badly hit tourism industry. In addition, Palestinian policy toward the Kuwaiti crisis had resulted in the adoption of substantial punitive measures by the Gulf states against both the PLO and the Palestinian community.

⁸⁵ Avraham Sela, *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998) p. 308.

⁸⁶ Heikal, (volume III), *Peace of Illusions – Pre-and Post Oslo*, p.296.

In the case of the PLO, this involved the termination of direct grants (around \$ 480 million annually) as well as the halting of the liberation tax (5%-7% of salaries) deducted from Palestinian workers in the Gulf and transferred to the PLO (\$40 million - \$45 million annually).⁸⁷ The end of Saudi financial assistance was especially drastic as it equaled 10 percent of the GDP of the entire West Bank and Gaza.⁸⁸ Moreover, Kuwait (where 350,000 Palestinians resided) and Saudi Arabia expelled large numbers of Palestinians from their territories, most of whom took refuge in Jordan.

Together these developments had a very damaging effect both on the financial position of the PLO and on living conditions in the territories. In the case of the PLO, the serious budget shortfall forced it to lay off, cut back salaries, and sharply reduce services to the population. At the same time, the Palestinian unemployment rate rose substantially while per capita income dropped sharply between 1987 and 1991.

In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to which about 30,000 Palestinians returned from Kuwait, per capita income had already declined as a result of the Intifada. The Gulf crisis resulted in the loss of remittances, subsidies, and trade all amounting to a loss of hundreds of millions of dollars that annually came from external sources. This further reduced per capita income by another 15-20 percent, down to \$800 annually, or half what it was in 1987. In Gaza, economic deterioration resulted in a dramatic decline in the standard of living, a doubling of child labour, supplementary feeding programs of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and a substantial increase –100,000 families- in Palestinians needing emergency food relief.⁸⁹

These developments generated not only serious problems of social / human security for the Palestinian population but also of budget security for the PLO. This in turn gave rise to growing concerns on the part of the PLO about regime security.

⁸⁷ Teitelbaum, "The PLO", *MECS*, volume XIV, 1990 : p.227.

⁸⁸ Sara Roy, "Separation or Integration: Closure and the Economic Future of the Gaza Strip Revisited", *Middle East Journal*, volume 48 no.1, (winter 1994): pp. 13-14.

⁸⁹ Philip Mattar, The PLO and the Gulf Crisis, *Middle East Journal*, volume 48 no.1,(winter 1994): p.43.

These difficult economic conditions not only served as a constraint on the pursuit of conflictual policies (permissive cause) but also generated pressures on the PLO to adopt a policy of accommodation to encourage the flow of external financial resources necessary to alleviate Palestinian economic difficulties (stimulus cause). While immediate and relatively serious, however, economic problems were not as decisive as external politico-military conditions in the initiation of Palestinian accommodative moves at this point.

Domestic Political Conditions

Arafat's pro-Iraqi tilt during the Kuwait crisis isolated the PLO regionally and led to serious economic pressures against the PLO / Palestinian community from the Gulf states. At the same time, this stand had served to reinforce the PLO's political position in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The blend between secular nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism that Saddam has achieved seems to be reflected in the occupied territories. The PLO and the Islamic Hamas movement have been brought closer as both have been supportive of Iraq and opposed to the US and its allies. As for the possibilities of an alternative leadership to the PLO arising in the occupied territories, there are no signs that this is possible. While Israel is trying to entice some municipal and clerical officials by granting them favours during the period of the curfew, none of them are interested in a political position. It is clear that support for the PLO still runs very deep.⁹⁰

However, the protracted character of the *Intifada* with its ever-rising human as well as material costs combined with the lack of any positive political gains to compensate for this had greatly increased political frustrations in the Palestinian territories.

⁹⁰ Daoud Kuttub, "Arafat Rides High", *Middle East International*, (22 February 1991): p.9

These frustrations were exacerbated by the fact that the Kuwaiti crisis had also served to eclipse the *Intifada* regionally and internationally. As a result, the *Intifada* slowly deteriorated into violence with an increasing number of attacks against Israelis (using knives and sometimes firearms) while directing brutal attacks against known and suspected Palestinian collaborators. The local Palestinian press began to question the future of the *Intifada* and its direction.⁹¹

In these conditions, the initiative began to pass to Islamic opposition groups (namely Hamas and Islamic Jihad) with their religion-based uncompromising stand against any recognition or coexistence with Israel. The Islamists' rising star was attributed to a number of armed attacks against IDF soldiers and Israeli settlers. Local PLO leaders also assumed greater prominence.⁹²

In addition to these challenges to its leadership, the PLO's loss of regional financial support and the deteriorating economic conditions in the territories served to weaken the PLO's political position. In particular, the substantial decline in financial resources sharply reduced the PLO's capacity to co-opt elites / interests as well as ease popular dissatisfaction and frustrations.

Despite these political difficulties and emerging opposition, the PLO remained the preeminent - if somewhat challenged - political force in the territories and Arafat its unquestioned leader. Thus domestic political conditions, while worrisome, were not as immediate or as acute as economic problems. As a result, Arafat retained a significant degree of autonomy in the Palestinian political arena and especially a continuing margin

⁹¹ Elie Rekhess, "The West Bank and the Gaza Strip", *MECS*, volume XV, 1991 : pp. 267-8.

⁹² Teitelbaum, "The PLO", *MECS*, volume XV, 1991: p.214.

of maneuver in foreign policy which allowed him to engage in some accommodative moves vis-à-vis the US and Israel (permissive causality- opportunity).

At the same time, the combined economic and political troubles generated incentives to seek (through accommodative moves) both progress in the achievement of Palestinian national rights as well as the economic resources that would improve domestic political and economic conditions.

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS (Psychological environment)

The examination of the objective factors facing the Palestinian leadership in 1990-1991 has revealed the pressures, both external and internal, that were forcing a rethinking of Palestinian policy toward Israel and even pushing behavior in certain directions (stimulus / efficient causality). It also provided us with a sense of the factors both external and internal obstructing or facilitating what the Palestinian leadership could do (permissive causality – constraints and opportunities).

We will now explore the subjective factors influencing Palestinian policy, notably the calculations (in light of the objective conditions) of the likely gains or losses to important state, regime or societal interests. These helped shape the basic motives for which the Palestinian leadership acted in 1991 (motivating causality) which were broadly speaking of three types: external politico-military concerns, economic concerns, and domestic political concerns.

External Politico-Military Concerns

The most pressing concern for Arafat and the PLO in 1991 was the danger that, unless some serious steps were taken, Palestinians were facing the potentially permanent loss of vital national interests notably national existence, statehood, and a viable national

territory (the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem). This was arguably the strongest motive for undertaking accommodative moves.

After 1948, the Palestinian found themselves dispossessed of a national home and in many cases of their homes and lands as well, fragmented into many territories / jurisdictions, and everywhere under the control of others. After the 1967 war, the Palestinians' one hope for a viable national territory and national existence, namely the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, was taken from Jordanian and Egyptian control and brought under Israeli occupation.

When the Gulf War ended in 1991, this territory had been under Israeli occupation for nearly 25 years. During this time, Israel not only occupied the territory but constantly encroached on Palestinian lands, building settlements and expanding the Jewish population of the territories. They took over control of the water resources of the West Bank and also built bypass roads linking the various settlements to each other and to Israel. All of this effectively divided the Palestinians into a large number of non-contiguous towns and villages. Under the Likud government of the time (1991) these processes seemed likely not only to continue but to intensify.

Moreover, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union at this time, Israel was experiencing a dramatic inflow of large numbers of Soviet Jews (200,000 immigrants and expected to reach one million). These were perceived as substantially strengthening Israel in demographic terms and skill levels thereby offsetting Palestinian growth rates. They were also seen as providing a base for a substantial expansion of settlements in the Occupied Territories.

Finally, the Palestinians had lost important regional political and financial support (\$480 million in direct aid). This threatened to lead to a substantial ongoing decline in their economic and other capabilities leaving them unable to cope with the newly strengthened Israel.

Given the ongoing Israeli encroachment / expansion into the Palestinian territories and the potentially irreversible decline of Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel, the Palestinian leadership perceived a serious danger of the permanent loss of Palestinian national territory, of the basis for a viable national society, and ultimately of the chance for national existence / statehood. As a result, there developed a strong motivation to drastically slow down, halt, or even reverse this process by taking advantage of a favourable shift in US policy to undertake accommodative moves that would win support from the US and lead to negotiations with Israel.

Economic Concerns

The difficult economic conditions in the Palestinian territories resulting from the prolonged Intifada and Israeli repressive measures were made even worse by the substantial economic penalties imposed by the Gulf states on the PLO and the Palestinian community for siding with Saddam Hussein during the Kuwait crisis. These not only penalized the PLO but also seriously harmed the population of the territories themselves through sharp cutbacks in a variety of PLO funded services including welfare, educational and medical services.

The acute economic difficulties facing both the PLO and Palestinian community generated security concerns at several levels. One set of concerns centered on the economic welfare of the population (i.e. societal or human insecurity). Of more direct

concern to the PLO leadership, however, was its severely weakened financial condition (budget (in)security) which not only reduced its capacity to co-opt key elites and interest groups but also led to lay offs of officials and sharp cutbacks in social services to the population of the territories. These problems in turn gave rise to concerns about near to medium term regime (in)security. Finally, persisting economic difficulties and weakness also gave rise to longer term concerns about growing weakness and vulnerability leading to a potentially irreversible decline in the relative strength / status of the Palestinian community vis-à-vis Israel (national (in)security).

In short, for the Palestinian population, after national existence and territory the main concern was the economic welfare of society. However, for the PLO leadership the concern was not so much the economic hardships of the population for their own sake or for their longer term impact on national strength /status but rather their impact on regime security (a domestic political concern). Thus, the difficult financial / economic conditions of the PLO / Palestinian population may have been an immediate concern for both but for the PLO the more important underlying concerns were national existence / territory (external politico-military concern) and regime survival (domestic political concern).

Domestic Political Concerns

As already noted, in the wake of the Gulf War (1990-1991), Yasser Arafat and the PLO faced various domestic political difficulties and emerging challenges but there was no immediate serious threat to their position. The threat was perceived to lie more in the medium term (i.e. the rise of Hamas). Hence, in terms of objective factors, economic conditions posed the greater threat and ranked ahead of domestic political conditions in pushing the PLO toward accommodative moves.

In terms of subjective factors, however, while economic conditions were a more immediate concern than domestic political conditions, the latter were arguably a more important underlying concern. This was due to the fact that persistent economic and financial difficulties were perceived as likely to threaten regime security / survival since they both generated popular and elite dissatisfaction and seriously undermined the ability of Arafat and the PLO to co-opt key elites and interest groups. For Arafat and the PLO, regime survival was presumably a more vital interest than economic conditions in society.

While the Madrid Conference (1991) was not the first time that representatives from Israel and the Arab frontline states had conducted multilateral or bilateral talks, it was the first time in the history of the conflict that representatives from Palestine – the core issue – were present. For the PLO, it was the first official face-to-face meeting between its representatives – albeit hiding their association with the organization – and the state of Israel. Although most scholars lamented the lack of breakthroughs from the Madrid process, it was the mere fact of holding it that spoke volumes about the evolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli track in particular. For the PLO, the relative success of the Madrid peace conference was that despite its indirect / invisible role it still managed to assert an undeniable presence throughout the conference.

At Madrid and in the subsequent bilateral negotiations, the Palestinians / PLO maintained the basic substantive accommodative policy that had been adopted in 1988. At the same time they sought to modify the negotiating framework to permit separate talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives. The Israeli Likud government for its

part was unyielding substantively although it did make informal procedural concessions by allowing quasi-separate talks with Palestinian representatives. Nevertheless, given the Likud's hard-line position, negotiations achieved virtually nothing as long as it remained in power (i.e. until the June 1992 elections). The Palestinians / PLO however, saw no use in abandoning the talks which would be negatively viewed as a lack of interest in resolving the conflict.

There are various factors that led the PLO to participate in the 1991 Madrid conference. Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions stand out as the most important. In fact, the activities of the powerful third party and bilateral conditions (vis-à-vis Israel) are crucial in understanding the PLO's accommodative moves. Interestingly, a perception of reciprocity from the US (rather than from Israel) combined with a perception of an irreversible decline in the Palestinian position vis-à-vis Israel is what strongly motivated the PLO to participate in the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. Among the subjective factors, external politico-military represented the most pressing concerns for the PLO, while economic concerns and their subsequent effects on the PLO's financial security represented the second most pressing motive for seeking accommodation with Israel. Little wonder that by going to Madrid in 1991 the PLO sacrificed most - if not all - of its previous firm procedural stands.

CHAPTER IV

***Attempted Palestinian-Israeli Accommodation
(1993-1995)***

Initiation and Dynamics of Accommodation

As we have seen, in the first phase of attempted Palestinian – Israeli accommodation (1991-92), a superpower (the US) was the main initiator of the process. The PLO responded favourably to this initiative, making procedural concessions regarding the framework of the talks and terms for Palestinian representation. In addition it reaffirmed its earlier major substantive concession (recognizing the existence of Israel). Israel – by contrast - proved more reluctant, making only a minor procedural concession (i.e. not looking too closely at the credentials of West Bank / Gaza representatives within the combined Jordanian – Palestinian delegation). As a result, a multilateral peace conference was initiated followed quickly by bilateral talks between Israel and Jordan / the Palestinians as well as Israel-Syria. In these talks (1992) no substantive progress was achieved on the Israeli-Palestinian / Jordanian front due to Israel's Likud government's continued insistence that “ autonomy ” within a limited territorial base was the most that it was prepared to concede. However, there was some limited procedural advance as the Israeli government informally accepted separate talks with Palestinian representatives thereby providing some implicit recognition of a distinct Palestinian identity.

As long as the Shamir government had been in power, no progress had been achieved either with Syria or with the Palestinians, though Israel was willing to conduct separate talks with the Palestinian delegates. As a matter of fact, Israel was dealing indirectly with the PLO, which remained the source of authority and legitimacy for the Palestinian delegation.⁹³

⁹³ Sela, *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.336.

In short, this phase was characterized by procedural advances. There was also some limited behavioural accommodation since the previous phase of conflict alone (the *Intifada*) was now replaced by a mixture of limited conflict (a subdued *Intifada*) and negotiation.

The Oslo Accords

The second phase of attempted accommodation began not long after the election of a more flexible Labour government in Israel (June 1992) replacing the previous rigid Likud government. During this phase (1993-1995), the initiative for accommodation shifted from the superpower (US) to the parties themselves. With the help of a relatively uninvolved small power (Norway) secret talks were initiated by the new Israeli government and the PLO parallel to the official public talks in Washington. These talks resulted in a landmark framework agreement between Israel and the PLO / Palestinians (Oslo Agreement – September 1993).

As the bilateral negotiations in Washington DC were going nowhere, Israel and the PLO surprised the US, the international community, and even their own delegates in late August 1993 by declaring that they had reached a framework agreement.⁹⁴ They revealed that secret negotiations between PLO representatives and Israeli officials had taken place in Oslo – using Norwegian good offices - from late 1992 to 1993 producing a breakthrough understanding that came later to be known as the Oslo Accords.

The two agreements hammered out in the forests near Oslo were unprecedented. The first was a document of mutual recognition in which Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and, in return, the PLO unequivocally recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security, renounced the use of terror and violence, and pledged to remove the clauses in the PLO Charter that called for the elimination of the state of Israel. The second

⁹⁴ Gideon Gera, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", in Ami Ayalon, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XVII, 1993, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994): p.37.

agreement, formally known as the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-rule but commonly referred to as Oslo I, outlined a five-year program for interim Palestinian autonomy.⁹⁵

In a ceremony at the White House, the Declaration of Principles (DoP) was signed on September 13th 1993 and a historic handshake between Arafat and Rabin epitomized the mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel.⁹⁶ As already noted, the US was only brought into the picture at a very late stage. From that point on, it helped to facilitate the last stages of the agreement, to bless it, and provide material support (especially incentives and side payments) for its implementation.

This second phase of accommodation was more far-reaching than the first in that it involved not only procedural and limited behavioural accommodation but also important elements of substantive accommodation. Thus in the Oslo Accord (1993), the PLO officially recognized Israel's right to existence and pledged to amend the Palestinian National Charter to remove clauses calling for the elimination /destruction of Israel (substantive accommodation). It also renounced terror and violence. In line with this latter provision the PLO undertook more extensive measures of behavioural accommodation, bringing the *Intifada* to a close. Thus, from 1991 to 1993 the PLO had continued to prolong the *Intifada* as a leverage over Israel. However, the peaceful uprising was losing steam and was increasingly becoming violent. Indeed, there were a record 508 incidents of

⁹⁵ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000), p.487.

⁹⁶ The Oslo Agreement between Israel and the PLO were initiated by Peres and Abu Ala on 20 August. It was approved ten days later by the Israeli Cabinet. By the same time, it was endorsed by both Fatah and the PLO Executive Committee. The agreement comprises four main documents : an exchange of letters dated 9 September between Rabin and Arafat ; a letter, on the same date, by the latter to Norwegian FM Holst ; and the DoP on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, initialed in Oslo on 20 August. The DoP was signed in Washington DC on September 13th 1993, in the presence of President Clinton, by Foreign Minister Peres for Israel and Mahmoud Abbas for the PLO and witnessed by the Foreign Ministers of the US and Russia. For more details see *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.379.

use of firearms in 1992 as opposed to 297 in 1991 and 168 in 1990.⁹⁷ It was only after the White House ceremony on September 13th 1993 that the uprising came to an end. In his letter to Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst on September 9th, Arafat implied the cessation of the *Intifada*.⁹⁸ He ordered Fatah military units in the Occupied Territories to cease their armed struggle, calling for the “normalization of life.” Relative calm soon ensued as Fatah loyalists (including the militant Fatah Hawks faction) complied with Arafat’s order and suspended their military action against Israeli targets.⁹⁹ Despite ending the *Intifada*, PLO officials called on the Arab states not to end the boycott against Israel and not to establish diplomatic relations with it pending a final settlement of the Palestinian problem.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Israel should not be integrated regionally before fulfilling all of its obligations to the PA.

Apart from leaving the core issues to the final status talks, the PLO also demonstrated - throughout the Oslo process (1992-1993) - an impressive procedural flexibility.¹⁰¹ For instance, it loosened an important long-held pre-condition by reaching interim agreements without first securing a freeze on the Israeli settlement activity.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Elie Rekhess, “The West Bank and the Gaza Strip”, *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : pp.301-2.

⁹⁸ Heikal, (volume III): *Peace of Illusions, Pre and Post Oslo*, p.318.

⁹⁹ Elie Rekhess, “The West Bank and the Gaza Strip”, *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.221

¹⁰⁰ Gabriel Ben-Dor and David B. Dewitt, *Confidence Building and the Peace Process in the Middle East*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995), pp.342-43.

¹⁰¹ Furthermore, throughout the subsequent negotiation process (1993-95), the PLO maintained its procedural flexibility. The talks - which centered on security measures between the PLO and Israel - went relatively smoothly. For instance, during the Taba Talks, Israel refused to accept the membership of Amin Al-Hindi in the PLO’s delegation because of his alleged role in the 1972 Munich Olympic massacre. By contrast, the PLO did not object to the membership of General Shahak for his alleged role in the commando raids against PLO officials in Lebanon in 1982 and the assassination of Khalil Al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) in Tunis in 1988. Another instance is the issue of Palestinian prisoners (whose holding contravenes international law), yet Palestinian officials did not object to presenting their release as a generous Israeli concession.

¹⁰² Lamis Andoni, “US attacks Palestinians”, *Middle East International*, (20 March 1992): p.6.

Another example is the relatively long transition period which the PLO was usually very reluctant to accept. However, the organization calculated that this inconvenience could be compensated for by gaining a foothold in the West Bank (i.e. Jericho).¹⁰³ Indeed, there was a general fear among Palestinians that an Israeli plan of “Gaza first” could become instead “Gaza last”.¹⁰⁴

Israel, for its part, embarked on a considerable change in policy both in substantive and procedural terms. For the first time it recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and established direct negotiations with it. Israel also agreed to negotiate a withdrawal from a significant portion of the Occupied Territories and the establishment of a Palestinian authority to govern during a five year interim period of autonomy. It also implicitly recognized Palestinian national identity but left the resolution of the issues of the ultimate political status of the territories, borders, Jerusalem, settlements and refugees to final status negotiations toward the end of the five year period of autonomy.

In sum, the PLO made more extensive commitments than Israel (e.g. recognizing Israel's right to exist versus Israel only recognizing the PLO's right to represent the Palestinians)¹⁰⁵ but since these were largely reiterations of previous concessions, the change in policy was not that significant. It has been argued - on the one hand - that the Oslo Accords constituted a procedural victory for the PLO in terms of gaining recognition by Israel and the international community. Furthermore, the accords paved the way for a number of statehood symbols such as stamps, an international telephone code, an

¹⁰³ Gera, “The Arab-Israeli Peace Process”, *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.40.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Meir Litvak, “The Palestine Liberation Organization”, *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.171.

international airport (albeit under strict Israeli control) and the use of Palestinian laissez passer travel documents (with the title of passport) for Gaza and Jericho residents.

Moreover, the PLO argued – to its critics - that once the PA established itself in the Occupied Territories it could then start building the much-needed infrastructure crucial for the future Palestinian state. Indeed, the PA was not unlike the Yishuv community which served as the building block for establishing the state of Israel. In other words, the PLO saw the Oslo Accords as opening the door to some improved socio-economic conditions in the territories – through the help of foreign economic aid - and the emergence of some form of Palestinian quasi-state which would enable the Palestinians to negotiate with Israel on a stronger footing, “making statehood an option that Israel would be unable to ignore.”¹⁰⁶ The change in Israeli policy - on the other hand - was more extensive than that of the PLO even though its commitments in the Oslo agreement were more limited. To be sure, the Oslo Accords had little or nothing- in terms of details. Not surprisingly they were labeled by analysts around the world as the “agreement to agree”. However, PLO officials praised the very lack of clarity on the different issues as “constructive ambiguity.”¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, neither Arafat nor Rabin signed the declaration of principles (DoP), reflecting the fragility of the process; it was signed instead by Foreign Minister Peres and Mahmoud Abbas, the PLO foreign policy spokesman.¹⁰⁸

Following the initial framework agreement (Oslo I Accord), the PLO and Israel concluded a number of specific accords to implement this. The first was the Gaza-Jericho

¹⁰⁶ Gideon Gera, “The Middle East in 1993 – Challenges of Peace and Islamism”, *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.175.

¹⁰⁷ Mouin Rabbani, “A Smorgasbord of Failure: Oslo and the Al-Aqsa Intifada”, in Roane Carey, ed., *The New Intifada*. (New York: Verso, 2001), p.75.

¹⁰⁸ Donald Neff, “Arafat’s Triumph in Washington”, *Middle East International*, (24 September 1993) : p.3.

accord of May 1994 which - as the name implies – established the Israeli withdrawal from these two areas and the setting up of a Palestinian Authority (PA) to administer them.

During the signing ceremony in Cairo, Arafat was shocked by the Israeli map presented to him reducing the surface area of Jericho to 25 square km from what the PLO had estimated at 350 square km.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, he refused to sign the map causing an unprecedented incident in the history of protocol and international relations. It was only through last minute pressure from president Mubarak of Egypt that Arafat agreed to tentatively sign the map.¹¹⁰ On May 10th 1994 Palestinian police entered Gaza while Arafat returned home – the first time since 1967 - to a hero's welcome on July 1st 1994. However, Israel still controlled the areas around the Jewish settlements.

The next was the 1995 Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Oslo II, or Taba agreement). This was by far the broadest and most tangible agreement concluded between the PLO and Israel. This agreement provided for the withdrawal of the Israeli army from six major West Bank Palestinian cities (Zone A – 2.7 percent of the West Bank), the election of a Palestinian chairman and a Palestinian Legislative Council, and the sharing of control over much of the Occupied Territories between the Israeli military and the Palestinian Authority (Zone B – 25 percent of the West Bank).¹¹¹ Oslo II also laid the ground work for close cooperation – through liaison offices - between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in terms of security, economic, legal, and political affairs.

In short, the Oslo Accords package (Oslo I, Gaza-Jericho, Oslo II) represented a quantum leap in the Palestinian-Israeli track during the 1993-95 period. Indeed, these were

¹⁰⁹ Ben-Dor, Dewitt, *Confidence Building and the Peace Process in the Middle East* : p.339.

¹¹⁰ Heikal, (volume III) *Peace of Illusions: Pre and Post Oslo*, pp.367-68.

¹¹¹ Rex Brynen, *A Very Political Economy: Peace Building and Foreign Aid in the West Bank and Gaza*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000), p.60.

great achievements in terms of substantive accommodation as Israel ceded relatively big chunks of land to the PLO's new entity (the Palestinian authority) in a relatively short time making statehood an achievable hope.

In contrast to the overwhelming progress in substantive accommodation and to a lesser extent procedural accommodation (i.e. unmistakable signs of statehood), there was hardly anything to speak of in terms of behavioural accommodation as the *Intifada* had officially ended after signing Oslo I. Almost all violence against Israel from September 1993 on was waged by Hamas' militants rather than the PLO.

Explanations of Palestinian Accommodative Moves

What factors best explain the initiation of this new phase of accommodation ? What is the relative importance and role of these various factors in the PLO's accommodative moves at this point (1993)? What had changed ?

OBJECTIVE FACTORS

Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions, notably changing bilateral conditions (the state of relations with Israel) and to a lesser extent the activities of a powerful third party played the most important roles in the PLO's active involvement in the accommodative process. The following factors – almost all – pushed toward the policy of accommodation.

External Politico-Military Conditions

Bilateral Relations (with Israel)

This was arguably the most important set of factors shaping Palestinian accommodative moves. Here, the Palestinians were still caught in the highly asymmetrical hurting stalemate mentioned in chapter II. While the political position of the PLO remained

generally weak vis-à-vis Israel (if not further weakening), nevertheless the election of a new Israeli Labour government (known for being more flexible) in June 1992 projected the potential for some reciprocity. The two most important aspects of bilateral relations were power relations and, especially, changes in the opponent's (Israel's) policies.

Power Relations

First, the stalemate situation between the PLO and Israel continued on from 1991-1992 as on the one hand the *Intifada* failed to liberate any inch of the Occupied Territories while on the other hand Israel failed in all of its efforts to end the uprising, tarnishing its image in the international community. Furthermore, the several rounds of Palestinian-Israeli bilateral talks in Washington could not reach a diplomatic breakthrough. Secondly, the hurting nature of the stalemate situation between the two parties lingered on - albeit disproportionately - in the form of human casualties on both sides. For the Palestinians, the *Intifada* was running at a relatively high human cost without achieving any concrete results (i.e. recognition by Israel of Palestinian statehood). For the Israelis, the uprising was turning increasingly violent against its soldiers and settlers, prompting a general fear among Israeli politicians that Hamas was rising at the expense of the more accommodative PLO. In fact, Hamas claimed responsibility for more attacks in the second half of 1992.¹¹²

Before the elections, Rabin had promised a deal with the Palestinians on autonomy within six months to a year. Yet time went by and the talks led to nowhere, with Rabin blaming it on the PLO, effectively admitting that there was no alternative to the PLO as a partner to agreement with Israel, though he still believed that nothing could come out of direct contacts with it. The prolonged impasse at the official Israeli-Palestinian talks, combined with increasing armed operations by Hamas, were behind the secret talks that started in early 1993 between Israeli scholars – with unofficial approval of Deputy FM Beilin – and PLO officials in Oslo, under Norwegian auspices. Threatened by a government coalition crisis due to the prolonged stalemate and without a better alternative,

¹¹² Rekheh, "The West Bank and the Gaza Strip", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : pp.301-2.

Rabin gave his consent to turning the Oslo secret channel into full-fledged official negotiations between Israel and the PLO.¹¹³

Thirdly, the perception of serious (irreversible) decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel leading to potential permanent losses of vital interests continued on during 1992-93. In fact, the continuing settlement activity by the Shamir government and then the Rabin government meant that the Palestinians were losing more territory every passing day.

Israel's Changing Policy

The most important factor in explaining the renewed push for accommodation and the PLO's receptivity to this was undoubtedly the much greater flexibility in Israeli policy resulting from the election of a new Labour government in June 1992. Indeed, as soon as Rabin assumed the premiership in late June 1992, he set out on a number of conciliatory moves: the freezing of a considerable part of the settlement activity, the release of 800 Palestinian detainees, the postponement of the expulsion of 11 *Intifada* activists, the reopening of the Arab Studies Center in Jerusalem (Feisal El Hussein), the willingness to hold general elections in the territories (compared to Shamir's municipal elections), and finally the acceptance of the participation of Diaspora Palestinians in the steering committee and five working groups of the multilateral talks in London in December 1992¹¹⁴ (compared to Shamir's refusal in the first meeting in Moscow in January 1992).¹¹⁵ The PLO justifiably saw these overtures as a positive development.

¹¹³ Sela, *The Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.337.

¹¹⁴ Mordechai Gazit, "The Middle East Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992: p.125.

¹¹⁵ Barry Rubin, "The United States and the Middle East", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.35.

This was reinforced by Israeli willingness to participate in secret negotiations in Norway beginning in early 1993 and by the flexibility manifested by its representatives in these discussions. The flexibility / assurances of a powerful third party may be useful in initiating a process of accommodation but no real substantive progress is possible without prospects of reciprocity from one's actual opponent.

Powerful Third Parties:

The role of a powerful third party (the US) was (much) less significant in promoting accommodation during this phase.

Paradoxically, at the very height of its potential power in the Middle East, the US was less actively involved there in 1993 than in many previous years. The most important development, the Israeli-PLO accord, came about without the involvement or even knowledge of US government.¹¹⁶

Nevertheless, the US did have an indirect role to play in initiating this phase as well as some direct role in the final stages of bringing the parties together. In 1991-92, the US had provided an important stimulus for the initiation of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations both in convening the Madrid conference and in overseeing the subsequent bilateral talks in Washington. In so doing, it had also generated some momentum toward a political settlement. This stimulus and momentum contributed notably toward the substantive progress achieved during this phase (1993-95). Moreover, in 1991-92 the Bush administration had clearly signaled its unhappiness at the rigidity of the Shamir government's policies toward the Palestinians (and other frontline Arab parties) and had exerted pressures to bring about a change in Israeli policies.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p.19.

For instance, the US voted in January in favour of a UN resolution that strongly condemned Israel's decision to deport a number of Palestinians for their role as *Intifada* activists. Then in March the Bush administration applied pressure in two critical areas: the sale of military technology and economic aid. First, the State Department leaked a report accusing Israel of systematically selling US military technology, including cluster bombs and aircraft radar, to China and South Africa (both on the US's embargo list).¹¹⁷ Interestingly, there was nothing new about this piece of information as it was by and large an 'open secret' in defense circles. However, the timing of releasing this report to the media constituted an unmistakable threat to Israel's arms industry which account for 40 percent of Israel's exports and is largely based on US technology.¹¹⁸ Then the Bush administration linked \$10 billion in loan guarantees to the freezing of settlement activity in the Occupied Territories. This unfavourable US attitude was not witnessed in Israel since the 1956 War when the Eisenhower administration threatened to cease its economic aid if Israel did not withdraw from Sinai.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Rubin, "The US and the Middle East", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : p.17.

¹¹⁸ Donald Neff, "Bush and Shamir Ready for a Shootout", *Middle East International*, (20 March 1992): p.3.

Interestingly, although every US administration since 1967 has opposed the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, none of them has been willing to take any action to back up this policy. Only in 1992 have President Bush and secretary of State Baker finally –firmly, publicly and unequivocally – linked US financial assistance with settlements. Baker went before Congress on 24 February and laid out the administration's policy (1) No guarantees for Israel's \$ 10 billion, five-year loan request unless all new settlements are halted. (2) If Israel insisted on completing housing units already under construction, it nonetheless had to halt all new settlements and the cost of completing existing ones would be deducted from the loans. (3) The administration viewed new settlements as not just the construction of housing units but the infrastructure that goes with them – roads, sewers, water. No such construction would be allowed. (4) The administration would be the sole arbiter on what constituted a violation of the agreement. It reserved the right to cut off the guarantees at any time that in its judgement a violation had occurred. The freeze applied not only to the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights but to East Jerusalem as well.

¹¹⁹ Donald Neff, "A Firm, Public No Unless..", *Middle East International*, (6 March 1992): pp.4-6.

This US pressure took its toll on the Shamir government and Israeli public opinion – fearing both military and economic deprivation – opted for Rabin's more accommodative Labour government.

Relations with the US (which) for years were considered by Israelis as an important pillar of their country's foreign policy were perceived as threatened by Shamir's obvious crash course with the Bush Administration. Even staunch supporters of the Likud could see that erecting a new settlement in the territories each time Secretary of State James Baker arrived in Israel for talks had a justifiably irritating effect on Washington. The US refused to compromise on its conditions for granting Israel the long-sought guarantees for the purpose of absorbing immigrants from the former Soviet Union, namely a freeze in settlement activity in the territories -which Shamir was unwilling to concede. Moreover, the American preference to see a new government in Jerusalem had become apparent.¹²⁰

Rabin wanted to improve the strained relations with the US. Hence, he promised in his election campaign an immediate halt in building all 'political' settlements (as opposed to security settlements) planned but not yet under construction.¹²¹ The Bush administration, for its part, sent an invitation to Rabin to visit the US only a few hours after he was sworn in.¹²² Furthermore, the US announced plans to supply Israel with Apache and Black Hawk helicopters from its stockpiles in Europe, and offered her up to \$400 million worth of combat equipment.¹²³ Clearly without US pressure and the resulting change in Israeli government, the measures of substantive accommodation achieved during this phase would not have been possible.

Despite these contributions, it was not the powerful third party (US) but a small power (Norway) that acted as the facilitator in the initiation of serious negotiations between the new Israeli government and the PLO.

¹²⁰ Efraim Inbar and Ellie Reckhess, "Israel", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : p.503.

¹²¹ Ibid. p.124.

¹²² Rubin, "The US and the ME", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.19.

¹²³ Rubin, "The US and the ME", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992: p.19.

The Norwegian Connection

In the course of researching the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Occupied Territories, the director of the Norwegian Trade Union Center for Research, Investigation and Documentation (FAFO) discovered that a number of senior Palestinians and Israeli government officials were open to the idea of direct PLO-Israeli negotiations.¹²⁴ As a result, the Norwegian foreign ministry volunteered to host a behind-the-scenes liaison between the two sides and proposed the idea to Israeli deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin. The latter welcomed the proposal and approved on September 10th 1992 some exploratory contacts between academics. These secret meetings took place during 1992-93 (totalling 14). Indeed, the talks received Rabin's approval and soon revolved around establishing a "Palestinian interim self-government Authority" in the Occupied Territories.¹²⁵ Notwithstanding the Norwegian role, it would be analytically incorrect to regard the Oslo back-track channels as a separate process of accommodation by itself. Indeed, it clearly stands out as a by-product of the 1991 Madrid peace conference.

Explanation of Norway's Successful Third Party Role:

Analytically speaking, the role of the US in achieving the Oslo Accords is quite problematic as the PLO and Israel publicly failed in Washington but secretly succeeded in Oslo. In fact, major powers - as explained in chapter I - contribute to the process of accommodation between lesser parties through their ability (a) to create constraints on the use of coercive measures between lesser powers (b) to offer material incentives to these parties who wish to pursue the course of accommodation and (c) to serve as go-between / mediator. Yet the Norwegian government provided the least important of these roles which

¹²⁴ Rubin, "The US and the ME", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.36.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* pp.36-37.

is the good offices platform. In other words, Norway qualifies as a third party; but has hardly any political or economic leverage on either side usually associated with 'major' third parties. So what explains the appeal and success of the Norwegian connection? The answer lies in the positive perception of Norway by the two parties.

PLO

The PLO saw Norway as much more even-handed than the US. Indeed, Norway's policy was more neutral than the US, which was less sympathetic to the idea of a Palestinian state. In fact, the US Department of State issued a statement which agreed with the Israeli notion that the West Bank was disputed land rather than occupied land. Not only that, but there was a different understanding by the Americans of the terms of reference such as settlements and human rights violations.

The official American view since the Reagan initiative sees no place for Palestinian statehood on the negotiating agenda. Although the US disagrees with the Israeli interpretation of 242, and supports the principle of exchanging land for peace, it does not see eye to eye with the way the Palestinians used 242 to advance their claims to statehood. In other words, the US does not see a place for 242 in the ongoing interim period negotiations, at least not in the sense that 242 should be implemented or start to be implemented during the interim period.¹²⁶

The PLO felt much more comfortable in dealing with Israel in secret far from the international spotlight of Washington. Back channel talks also offered a chance to deal directly with Peres and the Israeli foreign ministry which were seen as more flexible than Rabin and the security establishment who dominated the Washington talks.¹²⁷ In other words, secret negotiations in Oslo were procedurally better.

¹²⁶ Lamis Andoni, "US Attacks Palestinians", *Middle East International*, (20 March 1992): pp.5-6.

¹²⁷ Meir Litvak, "The Palestine Liberation Organization", *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XVII, 1993: p.160.

Israel

As for the Israelis, they came to realize that the PLO was the only political entity capable of reaching an agreement. They also concluded that negotiating with the PLO in secret was the only way to seriously probe its intentions and determine if it was a serious peace partner. To be sure, this was best done far from the international spotlight of Washington and without the involvement of the US to ensure that no leak occurred that would damage negotiations before they could make serious progress.¹²⁸

During secret negotiations in the first eight months of 1993, Israel and the PLO made extensive progress toward accommodation on their own with some help from Norway their host. During the last stages of the process the US was apprised of developments and helped to support / reinforce the progress made. The US role in this landmark agreement was largely limited to providing its public blessing, acting as a guarantor, and providing / mobilizing side payments for the parties (mainly economic but also to some extent military in the case of Israel) to encourage the implementation of the accord. In subsequent agreements during this phase, however, it also played a more active facilitating role.

Secret talks and their benefits are nothing new to the Arab-Israeli conflict. For instance, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty was first negotiated through secret talks in Morocco. While the Gaza-Jericho option was discussed in the public bilateral talks (the tenth round) in Washington prior to the publication of the PLO-Israel agreement, the Israeli proposal came very late when compared to the back-channel in Oslo.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Gera, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : pp.36-37. For more information on Israel's perspective see Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House Inc., 1998).

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p.34.

Regional Environment

Conditions in the regional environment were less important than bilateral relations or the role of powerful third parties but were still a factor nevertheless. Regional factors contributed to accommodation in four ways

1- Regional Developments As Catalyst

The reverberations of the Kuwait War were still regionally felt in 1993, but they were slightly weaker than in 1991. Indeed, US pre-eminence in the Middle East materialized in the shape of Bush's New World Order (i.e. Iraq came under sanctions and the US augmented its military presence in Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia). Hence, the consequences of the Kuwait War continued to serve as both a stimulus and a permissive factor for sustaining the dynamics of accommodation. In other words, they continued to weaken the regional constraints on accommodation, and combined with the collapse of the Soviet Union, allowed a dominant US role.

2- The Regional Climate

Despite the general deadlock in the Arab-Israeli talks, the regional desire for accommodation did not abate. On the contrary, it was strengthened by the positive statements issued by prime minister Rabin who offered to meet personally with the Arab heads of state to advance the process. Mubarak warmly welcomed the election of Rabin and invited him to visit Cairo within days of assuming the premiership (by contrast to his refusal to meet with Shamir).¹³⁰ Moreover, Mubarak strongly supported the Oslo secret channel. Not only that, but during the subsequent negotiation process (1993-1995), it is believed that some Palestinian negotiators were given training courses on Israeli

¹³⁰ Mordechai Gazit, "The Middle East Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : p.124.

negotiating strategy at the Egyptian foreign ministry. The latter had gained valuable experience during the negotiation process of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

3- The PLO Loss of Regional Support

The PLO continued to suffer from partial isolation and loss of financial support in the Arab world. Despite its active diplomacy there were few signs of improvement. For instance, Saudi Arabia did not resume its governmental aid to the organization.¹³¹ Furthermore, it did not authorize the transfer of funds collected by popular committees to the Occupied Territories when it turned out they had to be distributed through the PLO.¹³² This loss of support continued to serve as a constraint on confrontation with Israel and a stimulus for the pursuit of accommodation.

4- The Prisoner's Dilemma of Frontline Arab Parties

The PLO's Prisoner's Dilemma situation worsened in 1993 as Rabin's accommodative line was gathering pace resulting in a heated competition among the various Arab tracks. Palestinians were particularly fearful of being left behind in the peace process to face Israel alone as the other Arab ring-states showed keen interest in Rabin's overtures.

PLO-Syria Dilemma: Relations with Syria were slowly deteriorating despite the sudden rapprochement reached between Arafat and Assad on the eve of the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. The main cause of the strained relations was the heated competition with the Syrian track in 1992-93.¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid. p.274

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Mariam Shahin, "Worries over Syria", *Middle East International*, (9 October 1992): pp.6-7.

In fact, the prospect of a Syrian-Israeli agreement heightened with the appointment of professor Itamar Rabinovitch as head of the Israeli delegation with Syria who, unlike his predecessor, accepted UN resolution 242 and began to use the term “ withdrawal “ in October 1992 for the first time.¹³⁴ Furthermore, US sources began portraying Warren Christopher’s trip to Damascus in August 1993 as a possible prelude to a separate Israeli-Syrian accord.¹³⁵ To be sure, this put pressure on Arafat and the Palestinian leadership to reach a framework agreement first. Subsequently, Assad got angry at Arafat when the Oslo agreement was revealed in September 1993. Indeed, Syria demonstrated its objection by hosting the Palestinian opposition groups (10 rejectionist factions) to the Oslo Accords.¹³⁶

The Israel-PLO accord came under strong Syrian criticism. While not officially condemning it, the Syrians criticized the PLO for recognizing Israel, for making a separate agreement and far reaching concessions. While Syria continued to support the peace process, it summoned its Palestinian clients in Damascus for a conference that condemned Arafat’s agreement with Israel and formed a unified front to fight against it. On the whole, however, its low key response – abstaining from using force against Palestinian targets in Lebanon – reflected the loss of its veto power over the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.¹³⁷

PLO-Jordan Dilemma: Not unlike relations with Syria, PLO- Jordanian relations also deteriorated because of the heated competition between these two tracks. However, the PLO-Jordanian relationship was somewhat different in nature as the PLO needed Jordan to counterbalance Israel, yet simultaneously wanted to escape Jordanian tutelage. Hence, the confederation issue was advocated by the Palestinian leadership at times then abandoned at other times, reflecting their dilemma. Put differently, it seemed like the PLO wanted Jordanian economic support but without the political baggage that comes with it.

¹³⁴ Inbar and Rekhess, “Israel”, *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : p.521.

¹³⁵ Rubin, “The US and the ME”, *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.37.

¹³⁶ For more information on these groups see Anders Strindberg, “The Damascus-Based Alliance of Palestinian Forces: A Primer”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* , volume XXIV no.3 (spring 2000): pp.60-76.

¹³⁷ Sela, *Decline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p.338

One such indication was allowing Jordanian currency (the Dinar) and banks to operate in the West Bank yet not informing King Hussein of the Oslo back-channel for fear of negatively influencing it.

While in 1992 the PLO had upbraided Jordan for concluding a draft declaration of principles with Israel without coordinating with it, the organization itself did not inform Jordan of the Norwegian channel, confronting Jordan with the DoP as a *fait accompli*. The declaration eliminated the PLO's need for Jordan as a mediator to obtain its objectives from Israel, while also diminishing Jordan's ability to thwart the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Significantly, a Palestinian entity in the West Bank could enhance the PLO's influence over the Palestinian population in Jordan itself. The accords, nevertheless, did not totally eliminate the organization's need for Jordan, since Jordan served as the bridge between the territories and the Arab world, and close economic cooperation with it was the only alternative to Palestinian economic dependence on Israel. In addition, the PLO wanted to prevent potential Israeli-Jordanian cooperation aimed at imposing restrictions on Palestinian autonomy. Jordanian support for the accords was also important in view of Syria's opposition to it.¹³⁸

Another sign of the competition between the two tracks was in 1994 when Jordan reached its own agreement with Israel. The PLO rejected the clauses recognizing Jordan's special role in administering the Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem.¹³⁹

In sum, the heated competition between the Palestinian, Syrian and Jordanian tracks increased the incentive for the PLO to reach a framework agreement with Israel before the others (stimulus causality).

Economic Conditions

Dire economic conditions that lingered since the end of the 1991 Kuwait War continued to weaken both the Palestinian economy and the PLO's finances in the 1991-93 period. First, the already fragile Palestinian economy was worsening even more with the continuation of the disruptive effects of the *Intifada*. The closures had increased particularly in 1992 and 1993 which directly affected nearly 120,000 workers employed in

¹³⁸ Gera, "The Middle East in 1993", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.188.

¹³⁹ Litvak and Rekhess, "Palestinian Affairs", *MECS*, volume XVIII, 1994 : p.132.

Israel with a daily revenue loss of \$2m.¹⁴⁰ In September 1993 unemployment reached 55 percent in Gaza and 35-45 percent in the West Bank.¹⁴¹

A recent report by the UN Development Program (UNDP) points to the same dire conditions. According to the report, Palestinian income in the territories has dropped in the past five years by at least 36 per cent, while unemployment has jumped to 40 per cent. UNDP attributes the decline to economic disruptions caused by the *Intifada* and, since the Gulf crisis, the loss of roughly \$450m in remittances and some \$750m in aid from Arab donors.¹⁴²

To be sure, after years of Israeli occupation both the physical infrastructure and social services in the Territories were severely overburdened. Indeed, the World Bank cited sewage and solid waste disposal as the major infrastructure problems - especially in Gaza – along with much needed investments in housing, telecommunications, roads, power supply and the water system (where about 60% of piped water leaked), as well as health care.¹⁴³

Moreover, the PLO was still cut off from its Gulf financial lifeline.

The result was a major financial crisis for the PLO and hence for the institutions that the PLO supported in the West bank and Gaza. According to one Palestinian economist, PLO funding to the territories fell from \$350 million in 1988 to \$ 120 million in 1990 to 40 million in 1993. Certainly, by the summer of 1993 the PLO had been forced to suspend payments to the families of martyrs and reduce financial support for institutions in the territories by some 80 percent. As a consequence, universities were unable to pay staff, nationalist newspapers closed, and many organizations had to trim programs and services. This financial crisis had not only a social and economic impact but also a political one: as noted earlier, the suspension of Arab funding was one of the many factors that convinced the PLO to engage in the Madrid peace process and agree to the Oslo Accords.¹⁴⁴

To be sure, the deteriorating economic / financial conditions at the very least served as a constraint on the pursuit of conflictual policies (permissive causality – constraint).

¹⁴⁰ Elie Rekhess, "The West Bank and the Gaza Strip", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.206.

¹⁴¹ See Sara Roy, "Separation or Integration: Closure and the Economic Future of the Gaza Strip Revisited", *Middle East Journal*, volume 48 no.1 (winter 1994): p.16.

¹⁴² Jules Kagian, "Economic Asphyxiation", *Middle East International*, (28 May 1993): p.5.

¹⁴³ Litvak and Rekhess, "Palestinian Affairs", *MECS*, volume XVIII, 1994: p.157.

¹⁴⁴ Brynen, *A Very Political Economy*, p.48.

More importantly, though they intensified the pressure on the PLO to engage in a policy of accommodation in order to encourage the flow of external financial resources necessary to alleviate Palestinian economic difficulties (stimulus cause).

While more serious than before, these economic / financial problems were not as decisive as external politico-military conditions (especially the more flexible Israeli policy) in shaping Palestinian accommodative moves. They were, however, arguably still more important than domestic political conditions in shaping the potential for Palestinian accommodative moves at this point. Little wonder then that both Arafat and Abbas - during the DoP signing ceremony on September 13th 1993 - appealed for international economic aid to support the new Palestinian entity.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, the Paris Protocol signed on April 29th 1994 provided for economic cooperation between Israel and the PA in terms of common tariffs, taxes and Palestinian labour movement. Prospects of economic improvement emerged as substantial aid (some \$2.4 billion) was promised by the international community – mainly the European Union - aiming at improving the quality of life in the Occupied Territories. These sums were allocated to be invested in the infrastructure, education and health care systems.

While the bad economic conditions served as a stimulus to seek accommodation in 1993, nevertheless it took some time for the PA's accommodative line to bear fruit in the Occupied Territories.

The economic losses to Palestinians during the post-Oslo period have been devastating. The average unemployment rate, for example, increased over ninefold between 1992 and 1996, rising from 3 percent to 28 percent, one of the highest unemployment rates among nearly 200 countries and political entities, according to the World Bank. Real Gross National Product (GNP) declined 18.4 percent between the end of 1992 and the end of 1996. During the same period, real per capita GNP fell a dramatic 37 percent, with a concomitant increase in

¹⁴⁵ Litvak, "The PLO", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.173.

poverty years. Poverty, especially among children, is now visible in a manner not seen for at least twenty-five years.¹⁴⁶

In other words, despite being one of its core goals, the Oslo peace process did not bring immediate economic benefits to the Palestinians in 1993-95.

Domestic Political Conditions

As we have seen in Chapter II, the PLO's domestic position was reinforced by its pro-Saddam position in the Kuwait War. However, the organization – for a number of reasons - began to lose its preeminence in the Palestinian street in the wake of the 1991 Madrid Peace conference. For instance, the PLO was eclipsed by the overwhelming publicity and support which Hamas gained from the deportee crisis (December 1992). Furthermore, the PLO was alarmed when Hamas turned to Syria for a solution to the crisis as this move undermined its claim to represent all Palestinians.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, the PLO's claim to political primacy now began to be challenged.¹⁴⁸

The PLO was in a state of increasing disarray. Following the Gulf War the organization's international and inter-Arab standing had been diminished, its finances depleted ; the *Intifada* was leading nowhere – after its initial political success – while conditions of life in the Occupied Territories deteriorated and the number of casualties grew; Arafat was facing internal power struggles among his Fatah loyalists, including those with delegates to the Madrid talks from the territories; and his supporters in the territories were losing ground to the Islamist Hamas. Yet Arafat alone had the stature to make the necessary concessions for a deal with Israel, which was considered by senior PLO leaders as the only way to break the deadlock.¹⁴⁹

In short, while Palestinian political and economic conditions, remained almost constant in the 1992-93 period, it was mainly the election of the Rabin government in mid

¹⁴⁶ Sara Roy: "Decline and Disfigurement: The Palestinian Economy After Oslo" in Roane Carey, ed., *The New Intifada*, pp.91-92.

¹⁴⁷ Litvak, "The Islamic Resistance Movement – Hamas", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.197.

¹⁴⁸ Cleveland, *A History of Modern Middle East*, p.487.

¹⁴⁹ Gera, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: pp.35-36.

1992 and the rise of Hamas that brought the PLO and Israel closer to each other. In other words, the hurting stalemate situation and the common fear of Hamas brought about direct PLO Israeli – albeit secret – negotiations.

As a result of the Oslo Accords, Arafat and the PLO's position began to strengthen vis-à-vis the Islamic opposition. Indeed, the signing ceremony in Washington in September 1993 constituted a major boost for Arafat as he was finally received in the White House and major European countries as a statesman rather than a terrorist. It is noteworthy that the return of almost half of the deportees to the territories took place only a few days before the DoP but went completely unnoticed reflecting “ Hamas's shifting political fortunes in the territories, especially in Gaza.”¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, Hamas tried to distract the Palestinian street by a series of attacks against Israeli soldiers on the eve of the signing ceremony.¹⁵¹ However, mainstream Palestinians were unmoved by this act. In fact, opinion polls showed a 44 percent rise in Arafat's popularity and a 63 percent support for the accords.¹⁵² Moreover, Arafat denounced the death of “innocent Israelis” in these attacks. Indeed, the PLO / PA had to tread - from this point on - a fine line between meeting Israeli security demands in cracking down on the Islamic Resistance while not being viewed at the same time as a collaborator. By contrast, the PLO behaved differently for attacks coming from outside the Occupied Territories. For instance, the PLO did not condemn a sea raid carried out by the PFLP on October 9th 1993 (i.e. shortly after the DoP in September 1993). Moreover, Israel

¹⁵⁰ Graham Usher, “Hamas' Shifting Fortunes”, *Middle East International*, (24 September 1993): p.11.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

recognized the Palestinians for the first time as nearly equal partners whose national rights should be addressed.¹⁵³

As Palestinians had insisted all along, Israel at last was admitting that the basic nature of the conflict was not Arab-Israeli fight but an Israeli-Palestinian struggle over the same land. In recognizing Arafat as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians- and thereby finally recognizing the Palestinians themselves as a distinct national grouping – Rabin and Israel had finally abandoned their decades-long insistence that the Palestinians did not count or, as Golda Meir said, exist. Now Israel was acknowledging that the fundamental problem was its relations with the people it had dispossessed and occupied during the 46 years of its existence.¹⁵⁴

Indeed, the main physical achievement of the accords was the Israeli army re-deployments outside of the major Palestinian cities and the transfer of power to the Palestinian Authority in the liberated areas. In January 1996, free elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the presidency of the Palestinian Authority and for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). Arafat received 90 percent of the vote, reflecting the wide support for the peace process and the inability of Islamists to mobilize against it.

In sum, Arafat and Fatah's domestic political situation - prior to the Oslo I agreement (early to mid 1993) – was worse than it had been in 1991. Failure to achieve progress regarding external politico-military conditions combined with deteriorating economic conditions had eroded their political position. Despite the intensified domestic political competition and opposition, which might have served as a constraint, Arafat still enjoyed sufficient autonomy to be able to pursue a major accommodative initiative. Hence, domestic political conditions, although worsening, are still less important at this point than external politico-military conditions or economic conditions in shaping the potential for Palestinian accommodative moves.

¹⁵³ Litvak, "The PLO", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.173.

¹⁵⁴ Donald Neff, "Arafat's Triumph in Washington", *Middle East International*, (24 September 1993): p.3.

By contrast, after the breakthrough Oslo I framework agreement, and for the duration of this phase (late 1993-late 1995), domestic political conditions were significantly improved for Arafat and Fatah. In fact, their strengthened political position not only reduced constraints but also generated increased opportunity for the pursuit of further accommodation with Israel (Oslo II) (permissive cause – opportunity). Despite improving the opportunity for subsequent accommodative moves, domestic political conditions were still no more important than economic conditions in shaping Palestinian accommodative moves during the latter part of this phase.

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS

The examination of the objective factors facing the Palestinian leadership in 1993-1995 has revealed the pressures, both external and internal, that generated the momentum for a Palestinian accommodative policy toward Israel (stimulus / efficient causality). It also provided us with a sense of the factors both external and internal facilitating or obstructing what the Palestinian leadership could do (permissive causality – opportunities and constraints).

We will now explore the subjective factors influencing Palestinian policy notably the concerns (in light of the objective conditions) about likely gains or losses to important state, regime or societal interests. These helped shape the basic motives for which the Palestinian leadership acted in 1993-95 (motivating causality).

External Politico-Military Concerns

The most pressing concern for Arafat and the PLO in 1993-95 as in 1991 remained the threat of potential permanent loss of vital Palestinian national interests (i.e. national existence, statehood and a viable territory). Arguably, this continued to be the strongest

motive for sustaining the accommodative moves. As discussed in chapter II, the settlement activity (and the influx of Soviet Jews) continued during the 1993-1995 period to constitute a serious concern for the Palestinians. Indeed, Israel as early as 1992 had already settled more than 13 percent of the Soviet immigrants in the Occupied Territories, in violation of its formal commitment not to do so.¹⁵⁵ It is true that the Palestinians felt slightly reassured by the new Rabin government (which declared a freeze on building new “political” settlements in the Occupied Territories); however it did not stop building the “security” settlements which were already under construction under Shamir’s Likud government.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, the main motivation for Arafat to sustain the accommodation process continued to be to check the Israeli capture and control of more Palestinian land.

Economic Concerns

As noted above, economic conditions in the Occupied Territories in general and the financial situation of the PLO in particular were more serious in 1993-95 than in 1991. These conditions constrained any pursuit of conflictual policies (permissive cause) and generated pressures (stimulus cause) on the Palestinian leadership to seek the framework agreement with Israel (Oslo) with Israel in the 1993-95 period. Indeed, Arafat wanted to ease the deteriorating economic situation (i.e. societal or human insecurity) and the PLO’s difficult financial situation (budget insecurity) in order to avoid a potentially irreversible decline in the relative strength / status of the Palestinian community vis-à-vis Israel (national (in)security) and in the domestic political position of the PLO / Fatah (regime (in)security).¹⁵⁷ Through substantial economic aid, the PLO / PA could create a prosperous

¹⁵⁵ See *Middle East International*, (7 February 1992).

¹⁵⁶ Mordechai Gazit, “The Middle East Peace Process”, *MECS*, volume XVI, 1992 : p.124.

¹⁵⁷ For more information see Rex Brynen, “The Neopatrimonial Dimension of Palestinian Politics”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, volume XXV no.1, (Autumn 1995) : pp.23-36.

national economy in Gaza and the West Bank and win the Palestinian street back with the tangible results of peace. Thus the economic and financial difficulties of the Palestinian community / PLO were more immediate and pressing problems than domestic political conditions, even in the first part of this phase (pre Oslo I). Nevertheless, domestic political concerns and especially external politico-military concerns were arguably more fundamental concerns for Arafat and Fatah.

The importance of economic considerations in the establishment of a Palestinian self-governing authority was well emphasized in the DoP. One of the first priorities of the PLO was to mobilize adequate resources from the international community for a power transfer in Gaza and Jericho, for the immediate improvement of living standards and services there, and the easing of the financial stranglehold by the Gulf States. To gain more independence in economic affairs, the PLO established the Palestine Economic Development and Reconstruction Agency (PEDRA) as a counterpart to the international donors.¹⁵⁸

Domestic Political Concerns

As we saw earlier, the political position of the PLO in 1992-93 was significantly weakening vis-à-vis Hamas. In fact, the rise of Hamas which was regarded earlier (in 1991) as a medium term threat became now a more immediate one. Prior to Oslo I (early to mid 1993), domestic political conditions (objective) and therefore presumably domestic political concerns, were more serious than those in 1991. This increased political competition and opposition did not, however, lead to rigidity in policy towards one's traditional opponent (Israel) as it often does.

¹⁵⁸ Gera, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993: p.42.

Rather, the heightened domestic political concerns seem to have contributed to accommodation as Arafat sought to achieve a major breakthrough with Israel not only for its own sake (to promote vital national interests) but also to bring about a significant improvement in domestic economic / financial conditions (economic concerns). Resolving these two major concerns would in turn be the means to dramatically reduce domestic political opposition and strengthen the position of Arafat and the PLO in the Palestinian political arena. Thus during this portion of the phase (1993) domestic political concerns were not only almost as immediate and pressing as economics but also probably more fundamental.

By contrast, during the post Oslo I phase (late 1993 - late 1995) domestic political conditions were much more favourable for Arafat and Fatah. Thus domestic political concerns were less immediate and pressing and somewhat reduced in salience as compared to national politico-military and economic concerns.

Still, given the recent intensified experience of domestic political competition and opposition, domestic political concerns continued to provide a motive for Arafat to work for further accommodation with Israel in order to undercut political challengers (motivating causality). At the same time, lessened domestic political concerns also served to enhance Arafat's domestic room for maneuver in pursuing further accommodation (permissive causality – opportunity).

Shortly after the Oslo Agreement, surveys suggested that around 45 percent of Palestinians supported Fatah, around 10 percent supported the various leftist groups (notably the PFLP), and some 20 percent or more looked to Hamas. However, in the darker days of 1990-91 Islamist groups had taken almost half the vote in professional association elections in Gaza, underscoring their substantial potential threat to Fatah should the peace process falter.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Brynen, *A Very Political Economy*, p.52

Hence, domestic political concerns and regime survival served as strong motives for the pursuit of accommodation. In terms of objective factors, while domestic political conditions now posed the greater threat to the PLO's supremacy they still came behind economic conditions in pushing the PLO toward the Oslo accords. In terms of subjective factors, while domestic political concerns were more immediate than in 1991 (Hamas and some PLO mutineers from inside the Territories) seriously threatening the regime's security / survival like never before, economic conditions were still the more pressing concern to the PLO in mid-1993.

The 1991 US-led Madrid peace conference heralded a series of Arab-Israeli bilateral talks. Eleven rounds of Palestinian-Israeli bilateral talks held in Washington DC reached a deadlock because of Israel's reluctance to offer anything more than mere autonomy. The US role in the 1992-93 period involved it taking the role of an observer of the ensuing talks. This was a departure from its earlier role in 1991 when the US initiated the process of accommodation and was actively involved in it. Put differently, the US chose the driver's seat in 1991 while it chose the back seat in 1992-93 and then in 1993-95 in dealing with the dynamics of accommodation. These talks produced an unprecedented framework agreement (the Oslo Accord) calling for mutual recognition between the two parties, a peaceful resolution of the conflict, a limited Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, and the transfer of powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority (PA). A subsequent accord (Oslo II – September 1995) provided for a more extensive Israeli withdrawal and accompanying transfer of powers to the PA. By contrast, key issues such as borders, the refugees, the settlements, Jerusalem and even Palestinian statehood would remain 'ambiguous' for an interim period of a maximum of 5 years. In contrast to Madrid's

1991 procedural accommodation, the progress achieved by the Oslo Accords 1993-95 was significantly substantive.

In order to fully understand the PLO's reasons behind the accommodation process, one has to distinguish here between two phases in the 1993-95 period: pre-Oslo I (from early to mid-1993) and post-Oslo I (late 1993-1995).

With regard to pre-Oslo I, the phase from early to mid-1993 was basically “ the moment of truth ” for the PLO's leadership. There were various factors that prompted the organization into reaching a vague framework agreement with Israel. Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions still stood out as the most important. In fact, bilateral conditions (especially positive changes in Israeli policy) were the crucial factor which turned the situation around while the activities of the powerful third party were scaled down. In other words, the perception of reciprocity from Rabin's Labour government in 1993 (rather than the US as in 1991) combined with a perception of irreversible decline in the Palestinian position vis-à-vis Israel propelled the accommodation process. The economic situation comes a strong second as the overall Palestinian economic situation and the PLO's finances in particular were in dire straits. While Hamas was gaining more ground in early 1993 – mid 1993 as a result of the deportees crisis, Arafat and his Fatah faction still maintained some autonomy to go ahead with the accommodation process. Among the subjective factors, external politico-military concerns remained the most pressing concerns as the Palestinians still found themselves stateless. Economic concerns come next as the most pressing concern to the PLO's leadership was how to alleviate the economic hardship of the Palestinians in general and the organization's finances in particular. The rise of Hamas (which in 1991 was perceived only as a medium

term concern) was undoubtedly a serious concern for Arafat and the Fatah faction. However, as with the objective factors, Fatah didn't see its weakening position vis-à-vis Hamas as irreversible and hence did not impede its accommodation with Israel. Ironically, Hamas' rise boosted the process as both Arafat and Rabin were equally concerned with the threat coming from Hamas.

With regard to post-Oslo I, the phase from late 1993 to late 1995 was essentially "accommodation at work" for the PLO's leadership. There were various factors that prompted the organization to sustain the accommodation process with Israel. Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions still stood out as the most important. In fact, bilateral conditions (especially Israeli concessions on the ground) were increasingly seen as favorable to the Palestinians, surpassing the perception of reciprocity of the powerful third party. In other words, the perception of reciprocity from Israel in 1993 –95 combined with the perception of an irreversible decline in the Palestinian position vis-à-vis Israel propelled the accommodation process further. Economic conditions – as in pre-Oslo I – came a strong second as the Palestinian economy / PA finances began to receive massive foreign aid. Although this did not bring about an immediate economic recovery, it raised the expectations of both the Palestinian society and Palestinian Authority of statehood and a better future. The domestic political situation comes third as Fatah regained some of its lost ground to Hamas in late 1993 – late 1995 as a result of the achievements of the agreements and the economic windfall that came with them. Among the subjective factors, external politico-military concerns still remained the most pressing concerns in the post-Oslo I. However, it lessened somewhat in salience as the nucleus of the Palestinian state was taking shape. While economic conditions remained almost

constant in the 1993-95 period, there was a comforting outlook on the future, lessening the PLO's previous economic concerns. By contrast, Fatah's strengthened position after Oslo I relegated domestic political concerns to a distant third place.

CHAPTER V

The PA's Mixed Policy in 2000

A Prelude to the Camp David Summit in July 2000:

As we have seen, the PLO and Israel broke the stalemate in the Washington public bilateral talks by reaching the 1993 Oslo Accords largely on their own. These had set in motion a number of interim agreements calling for Israeli withdrawal from parts of the Occupied Territories and the transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority (PA). By all accounts, there was impressive progress in the accommodation process during the 1993-1995 period despite some delays in implementation. In other words, accommodation between the PLO and Israel had gone beyond the original point of initiation to achieve significant substantive progress, thereby raising hopes on both sides that the conflict would be finally resolved through negotiations. Indeed, this progress on the peace front earned Arafat, Rabin and Peres the Nobel peace prize in 1994. However, this optimism was short lived as a series of events stalled the peace process.

The Freezing of Accommodation (1996 – 1999)

While the intricate details of Israeli politics are beyond the scope of this study, it is important to sketch briefly what took place on the Israeli political scene resulting in huge ramifications for the Palestinian Authority, namely the freezing of the peace process and compromising the perception of Israeli reciprocity.

On November 4th 1995, prime minister Rabin was assassinated by an Israeli Jewish fundamentalist who vehemently opposed Rabin's alleged selling out of the "Land of Israel" (Eretz Israel). Rabin's assassination served to ease some of the pressure on the

Palestinians, as it clearly indicated to the international community that radicalism / extremism was a problem in Israel too. In other words, not only were there extremists within Israeli society who didn't want peace with the Palestinians but these - for the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict - were willing to go as far as assassinating their political leaders to curb the process.

Rabin's death, on the other hand, meant the disappearance of the most influential peace advocate in Israeli politics. Indeed, Rabin – unlike his successor Peres - had a respectable political weight and credibility within Israel by virtue of being an ex-general in the IDF on a par with the statesmanship of Charles DeGaulle in France during the Algerian War. To be sure, the subsequent backlash against Rabin's murder put the Israeli religious right on the defensive and provided Peres with some leeway in Israel's policy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. However, Peres mismanaged - if not squandered - the domestic political capital in a number of decisions which proved later to be counterproductive to the peace process.¹⁶⁰ Thus, he lost the 1996 elections to Benjamin Netanyahu by only a slim majority.

The Netanyahu premiership (1996-99) was a serious setback to the Palestinian-Israeli peace process for two reasons. First, he came from the Likud party which was historically less accommodative to the Palestinians and ideologically opposed to parting with any portion of the West Bank and Gaza territories. Although sobering comparisons were being made to Begin's Likud government (which signed the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty), Palestinian concern soon seemed to be justified as Netanyahu declared his

¹⁶⁰ Shimon Peres ordered the assassination of Yehia Ayash (Hamas' top bombmaker) causing a spate of retaliatory suicide bombings in Israeli urban centers. Peres was also blamed for the Qana massacre in South Lebanon which alienated the Arab-Israeli constituency. The latter abstained from voting for Labour in the 1996 elections costing Peres the premiership.

unwillingness to implement the Israeli commitments to the Oslo and Cairo accords. In fact, he spoke about his desire to change many of the fundamental principles of the accords already agreed upon by Rabin. Moreover, he expanded settlement activity in the Occupied Territories and sped up the annual rate of constructing houses from 1,000 in 1996-97 to 2,025 in 1998.¹⁶¹ Secondly, Netanyahu exploited the Israeli sense of personal insecurity caused by Hamas' campaign of suicide bombings to stop implementing the peace process. Thus, he began undermining the nascent Confidence Building Measures (CBM) which were already in place between the Palestinians and Israelis. He linked any Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories to Palestinian guarantees of strengthening anti-terrorist measures against Islamic groups. Little wonder then that Arafat became increasingly wary and his calls on Netanyahu to fulfill the obligations of the Oslo Accords were falling on deaf ears.

In contrast to the active accommodation process manifested in the number of interim agreements reached and implemented during the Labor government (1992-96), there were only two agreements reached / implemented during the Netanyahu Likud government (1996-99). These were the much-delayed 1994 Hebron Protocol (implemented in January 1997) and the October 1998 Wye River Memorandum where Netanyahu refused to implement Israel's earlier obligations. Despite the setbacks, support for Oslo among the Palestinian population did not drop below 60 percent during this period.¹⁶² The 1999 elections brought another hope to the Palestinians as Ehud Barak's Labour government won running on a platform of advancing the peace process. Indeed, Barak's campaign was centered around Rabin's peace legacy and promised that – being

¹⁶¹ Muna Muhaisen, "More Facts on the Ground", *Middle East International*, (2 October 1998) : p.8.

¹⁶² Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided", *Foreign Affairs*, volume 81 no.1, January / February 2002: p.91.

his protégé - he would finish what Rabin had begun. While Barak strongly modeled himself on Rabin's statesmanship,¹⁶³ he was really more concerned with Israel's Northern border than with the Palestinian track. In fact, he wanted to put an end to the mounting Israeli military casualties in South Lebanon by reaching an agreement with Syria (i.e. the main power broker in Lebanon) as soon as possible. Indeed, an unsuccessful meeting between Arafat and Barak in Gaza on February 6th 2000 brought home to the Palestinians that reality. Put differently, it was quite obvious that securing Israel's external borders greatly overrode reaching a mere 'framework agreement' with the Palestinians.¹⁶⁴ In fact, even Egypt – the main supporter of the Palestinian track – began to adhere in early 2000 to the 'Syria first' approach.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, the reluctance to implement earlier agreed-upon agreements under Netanyahu continued under Barak as well, further eroding the trust between the two sides. However, Barak's justification was his desire to skip lengthy interim agreements in favour of final settlements. An example of this is the Palestinian-Israeli 'Wye agreement' which was later revised at Sharm El-Sheikh on September 5th 1999 to become known as the Wye II agreement. It stated that Israel should withdraw its troops from another 18.1 percent of the West Bank in 3 stages by January 20th 2000 and release 350 Palestinian political prisoners. Moreover, it committed the two parties to negotiate a framework agreement on permanent status by February 2000.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Barak emphasized in his 1999 political campaign being the most decorated soldier in the history of Israel.

¹⁶⁴ Graham Usher, "Hard Road Ahead", *Middle East International*, (11 February 2000): p.10.

¹⁶⁵ Graham Usher, "Another Climb-down", *Middle East International*, (24 March 2000): pp. 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ Leslie Susser and Elie Rekhess, "Israel", in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XXIII, 1999 (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 2000) : p.297.

With regard to procedural policy, the PA – for the 1996-2000 period - continued to soften its pre-negotiation positions. However, whenever the negotiations stalled, the PA would threaten Israel with the prospect of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. For instance, Arafat - in a radio address on November 15th 1998 - stated that it was his “right to unilaterally declare an independent state”.¹⁶⁷ This was quite successful in getting the peace process on track again in the form of the Wye talks.¹⁶⁸ However, he back pedaled later on such statements and was obviously deterred by Netanyahu’s warnings - on April 29th 1999 - that any unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would lead to automatic Israeli annexation of most, if not all, the Occupied Territories. Indeed, the PA deferred any decision on the issue until well after the Israeli elections. During the early months of 1999, Arafat embarked on a tour of 56 countries in an effort to win support for a Palestinian declaration of statehood. His decision to postpone any unilateral declaration of statehood clearly boosted his stature in the eyes of the international community.¹⁶⁹ The PA further softened its procedural stand by agreeing to remove articles from the Palestinian Charter that Israel deemed as offensive.¹⁷⁰ The latter was one of the main provisions of the Wye interim agreement demanded by Netanyahu.¹⁷¹ The changes were made during an historical visit by Clinton to the Occupied Territories – regarded in itself as a procedural victory - on December 15th 1998.

¹⁶⁷ Kenneth W. Stein, “The Arab-Israeli Peace Process”, in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XXII, 1998 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1999) : p.72.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p.69.

¹⁶⁹ Graham Usher, “Arafat Evades the Issue”, *Middle East International*, (7 May 1999) : pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁰ The Oslo II 1995 agreement stipulated the revision of the PLO’s covenant within two months. On April 24th 1996, the PNC voted 504 to 54 with 14 abstentions and 97 absentees to cancel these clauses which contradict the letters exchanged between the PLO and the Israeli government. Abu Mazin worked to secure a two-thirds majority, although only a simple majority was required. At the end, no specific change to the covenant was actually made. See *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XX, 1996.

¹⁷¹ Elie Rekhess and Meir Litvak, “The Palestinian Authority”, *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XXII, 1998: p.490.

Indeed, some 1000 Palestinian figures (including 450 of the 700 PNC members) in the presence of the US President voted unanimously in a public show of hands for the nullification of the articles.¹⁷²

Among the cancelled articles were the following: "Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine"(Article 7); "The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the State of Israel are entirely illegal"(Article 19) ; "Zionism is a political movement organically associated with international imperialism...It is racist and fanatic in its nature, aggressive, expansionist, colonialist in its aims and fascist in its methods" (Article 22).¹⁷³

With regard to behavioural policy, while the PA for the 1996-2000 period continued to emphasise negotiations as its means to achieve Palestinian statehood, Arafat – from time to time - threatened Israel with rekindling the *Intifada* if the peace process were to stall.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, he hinted that - this time around – the uprising would be an armed one. A case-in-point is the clashes that erupted in the wake of Israel's opening of a tunnel stretching under Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1996.

THE 1996 TUNNEL CLASHES

The clashes - which became known in some circles as the Tunnel Intifada – epitomized the PA's low-intensity conflict. Netanyahu's decision on September 24th 1996 to open a controversial 500 yard tunnel stretching under the Haram Al-Sharif site sparked Palestinian outrage. Consequently, Arafat called on the Palestinians to organize mass protests and demonstrations all over the Occupied Territories against the Israeli decision. Soon these gatherings turned violent and many protestors were either killed or injured as Israeli soldiers and anti-riot police fired upon them. In an unprecedented move,

¹⁷² Ibid. p.75.

¹⁷³ Ibid. p.490.

¹⁷⁴ Arafat in a radio address on November 15th 1998 stated that he maintained his right to unilaterally declare an independent state. He also spoke about the Intifada option if Israel were to block the Palestinian

Palestinian police opened fire on their Israeli counterparts killing and injuring a number of them. This serious violation of the rules of engagement was not regarded as a lack of discipline (i.e. mutiny) or even a lone act by some members of the Palestinian police. Instead, it is widely believed that Arafat himself had ordered the shootings. The violence which left 15 Israelis and 60 Palestinians dead demonstrated that the Palestinians could bloody Israel's nose if they wanted to.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the tunnel clashes were presented by the PA as a preview of an armed *Intifada* and of things to come if the peace process were to stall or collapse altogether:

According to Israel's chief of military intelligence, Moshe Ya'alon, there were 11 reasons for Palestinian frustration which caused the outbreak of violence following the tunnel's opening: (1) the freeze in the peace process; (2) Israel's refusal to continue final-status talks; (3) a humiliating attitude exhibited by Israel toward the Palestinian leadership; (4) the closures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; (5) new Israeli initiatives to enlarge settlements; (6) Israeli expropriation of land in the West Bank; (7) Israeli refusal to settle the Gaza airport issue; (8) Israeli refusal to release more Palestinian prisoners; (9) corruption in the Palestinian administration; (10) economic problems of the PA; and (11) the struggle within the Palestinian community which led to Arafat's diminishing status.¹⁷⁶

While the tunnel clashes stand out as the highest point or extreme form of violence during the 1996-2000 period, there are other examples of non-violent protests. For instance, the PA organized on May 14th 1998 (i.e. the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel) a mass protest modeled on the million man march organized in the USA by Louis Farrakhan.¹⁷⁷ While the PA's show of force sparked some clashes with the IDF and fatalities, it was planned to be a peaceful event.¹⁷⁸

access to Jerusalem. See Kenneth W. Stein "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", *MECS* volume XXII, 1998 : p.72

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth W. Stein, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process" in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, ed., *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, volume XX, 1996 (Oxford: Westview Press, 1997) : p.49.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Rekhess and Litvak, "The PA" *MECS*, volume XXII, 1998 : p.487.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Ten Palestinians were killed and 400 wounded in the clashes.

Another example is the June 3rd 1999 'day of anger' which Arafat authorized in order to protest the settlement construction in the West Bank. A general strike was observed in East Jerusalem and several small but highly controlled demonstrations took place throughout the Occupied Territories.

The July 2000 Camp David Summit

Initiation and Dynamics of Accommodation

In the summer of 2000, President Clinton invited both Israel and the PA to a summit at Camp David to reach a comprehensive peace agreement with the aim of finally settling the century-old Palestinian Israeli conflict. The US – like the 1991 Madrid peace conference but unlike the 1993 Oslo framework agreement - was the initiator of this round of talks. The PA's response to the US invitation was not rejection but was somewhat reluctant. Indeed, Arafat - unlike the 1991 Madrid peace conference or the interim agreements - slightly hardened his pre-negotiation position. In fact, he demanded three conditions to be met for attending the Camp David Summit: (1) Preparatory talks. (2) A US guarantee that the third promised Israeli withdrawal would be implemented before Camp David. (3) The US would remain neutral in the event of a summit failure and would not blame the Palestinians.¹⁷⁹ However, none of these conditions were met. First, the contacts and public and private understandings between the Palestinian and Israeli sides were not sufficient before the Camp David summit to reach a comprehensive settlement in one round of talks. Indeed, it was argued that some detailed demands suggested by the Israeli side were completely new to the Palestinian negotiators.

¹⁷⁹ Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors", *The New York Review of Books*, 9 August 2001, p.5.

No wonder that they conceded later that attending Camp David was primarily because of the American pressure.¹⁸⁰ Second, the Israeli withdrawal did not take place before the summit, which undermined Arafat's credibility domestically. Finally, when the summit did fail, President Clinton put the blame squarely on Arafat and the Palestinian negotiators.¹⁸¹ The Israeli response to US invitation - unlike in the 1991 Madrid peace conference - was favourable especially after the stalemate in the Syrian-Israeli track and the death of President Hafez Al-Assad in June 2000 which meant that no progress would be achieved there for a while. Moreover, US-Israeli relations were - unlike the situation in 1991 - relatively good. Therefore, Israel was under no pressure to participate in the summit.

With regard to substantive policy, the 2000 Camp David summit - in contrast to Oslo's mixed procedural / substantive accommodation - represented attempted substantive accommodation par excellence as it finally addressed the core issues: the status of Jerusalem, the borders of the Palestinian state, the status of the settlements and the status of the refugees. Indeed, Camp David II was widely perceived by analysts to be the 'grande finale' of the peace process between the PLO and Israel.

Some ten agreements have been concluded between Israel and the Palestinians since 1993. Each was proclaimed as a step forward on the road to peace, some were celebrated with pomp and pageantry. But this record of diplomatic "success" was interrupted at Camp David, where the mother of all agreements was anxiously awaited.¹⁸²

The summit at Camp David was held from July 11th to 25th 2000 under close media attention. It is believed that most of its 14 days duration was consumed in lengthy

¹⁸⁰ Wahid Abdel-Megid, ed., *The Arab Strategic Yearbook*, 2000 (Cairo: The Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 2001) : p.246.

¹⁸¹ Clinton blamed Arafat twice for the failure of the summit. First on July 26th, then on July 26th in an interview with Israeli television. Moreover, he went as far as threatening to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. See Donald Neff "The US Piles on the Pressure" *MEI* (18 August 2000): p.4.

¹⁸² Naseer Aruri, "Failure at Camp David", *Middle East International*, (18 August 2000): p.18.

discussions about the sensitive issue of Jerusalem. At the end, failure to reach agreement on this issue (and to a lesser extent on the right of return) led to the summit's collapse.

Although the Camp David II summit collapsed over substantive accommodation, it is important to note that part of the root cause was procedural. First, there was the timing of the summit which Arafat saw as chosen more to suit Barak's and Clinton's precarious domestic political positions than to address Palestinian legitimate grievances and aspirations for statehood.¹⁸³ Arafat's request for preparatory talks – which was denied – would have probably given the PA enough time to prepare the Palestinian street for accepting the concessions in Camp David.¹⁸⁴ Secondly, there was a clash of negotiation styles / approaches between the PA and Israel. In other words, the single round “take-it-or-leave-it” approach by Barak (advocated indirectly by Clinton) seemed too aggressive for Arafat, especially since Barak had already failed him in not implementing earlier much simpler interim agreements.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, Barak – wanting to keep all options open – made only verbal proposals which increased Arafat's suspicions.¹⁸⁶ Thirdly, the negotiations were not conducted in the regular segment-by-segment approach, rather in a lump sum approach.¹⁸⁷ This departure from Oslo put the specialized Palestinian negotiators (seeking a political future back home) in a very unfavourable position.¹⁸⁸ Finally, during the course of the negotiations there was also a suspicion among the PA's leadership that the US was nurturing young Palestinian

¹⁸³ Deborah Sontag, “Quest for Mideast Peace: How and Why It Failed”, *New York Times*, (26 July 2001) : p.7.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (While the lack of preparatory talks did not help Camp David II, it was not a decisive factor in the summit's failure)

¹⁸⁵ Malley and Agha, “Camp David: The tragedy of Errors”, p.4.

¹⁸⁶ Jerome Slater, “What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 116 No. 2, (2001): p.182.

¹⁸⁷ Aruri, “Failure at Camp David”: pp. 20-21.

¹⁸⁸ Malley and Agha, p.4.

negotiators (e.g. Mohamed Dahlan and Mohamed Rashid) at the expense of the senior colleagues in order to “divide and weaken them.”¹⁸⁹

Camp David seemed to Arafat to encapsulate his worst nightmares. It was high-wire summitry, designed to increase the pressures on the Palestinians to reach a quick agreement while heightening the political and symbolic costs if they did not. And it clearly was a Clinton/Barak idea both in concept and timing, and for that reason alone highly suspect. That the US issued the invitations despite Israel's refusal to carry out its earlier commitments and despite Arafat's plea for additional time to prepare only reinforced in his mind the sense of a US-Israeli conspiracy.¹⁹⁰

In short , the summit – in contrast to Madrid and Oslo's secret talks - was a procedural nightmare for the Palestinian team. The following is an outline of what was proposed, agreed to in whole or in part, or rejected by the parties, especially the Palestinians.

Palestinian Statehood : Barak offered a demilitarized Palestinian state in Gaza encompassing 82 to 88 percent of the West Bank. In other words, Israel would return to its pre-1967 borders but with some exceptions such as areas located near Jerusalem and near the green line where some 80 percent of the Israeli settlers were located (these would be exchanged for some territory in the Negev desert).¹⁹¹ Moreover, Israel would retain early warning stations in the Jordan valley.¹⁹² These Israeli demands were only partly accepted by the PA.

Jerusalem: Barak wanted to incorporate the nearby Jewish settlements into Greater Jerusalem. In exchange, the Palestinians would be given sovereignty over the non-contiguous Arab neighbourhoods and the Muslim quarter in the Old city of

¹⁸⁹ Sontag, “Quest for Mideast Peace” : p.7.

¹⁹⁰ Malley and Agha, p.4.

¹⁹¹ Slater, “What Went Wrong ?”, : p.182.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Jerusalem where they could establish their capital.¹⁹³ That was accepted by the Palestinians. With regard to Haram Al-Sharif / Temple Mount, Barak talked about mutual sovereignty over the site: This meant that the PA would exercise “sovereignty from above” whereas Israel would retain “sovereignty from underneath” (i.e. excavations under Haram-Al-Sharif). However, Arafat – supported by Mubarak and Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah – rejected any agreement that would jeopardize Arab sovereignty over Haram Al-Sharif.¹⁹⁴

Settlements: Barak was vague on the issue and there is nothing to suggest that he offered any concessions with regard to removing Israeli settlements.¹⁹⁵ According to other sources, he demanded “free movement” on bypass roads for Jewish settlers living in the 183 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁹⁶

Refugees: Barak refused to bear any Israeli moral or historic responsibility for the refugee problem. Instead, he offered to allow some 10,000 refugees to return to Israel as part of a family reunification program (i.e. an Israeli gesture as opposed to a Palestinian right).¹⁹⁷ This was rejected by the Palestinians who sought to differentiate between legal and practical implementation of the right of return to what is Israel today.

THE JANUARY 2001 TABA SUMMIT

Not long after the failure of Camp David II, the Taba summit was held in this Egypt border town in late January 2001. Taba, unlike its predecessor, had no Americans and there were no leaders from either side.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p.183.

¹⁹⁴ “Egypt Incurs Ire of US Media”, *Middle East Reporter*, volume 96 no 1110, (12 August 2000): p.13.

¹⁹⁵ Slater, “What Went Wrong?”.

¹⁹⁶ Graham Usher, “Camp David: The American Bridge”, *Middle East International*, (28 July 2000):p.5.

¹⁹⁷ Slater, “What Went Wrong?” p.183.

Here, Israel agreed to improve the offer suggested in Camp David II : for instance; the surface of the Palestinian state would increase by 10 percent to 97 percent of the West Bank.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the Palestinians were given air rights over their land. However, there was still a wide gap between the two sides on other issues, notably sovereignty over Jerusalem and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Procedurally, while Barak was not present at the talks, his weakening domestic political position did not entice the Palestinians to take his offer seriously. Nevertheless, they did not reject it.¹⁹⁹

Thus, in terms of substantive accommodation, there were important breakthroughs on the part of Israel in Camp David II, most notably regarding the status of Jerusalem as Barak broke a long-held Israeli taboo on sharing sovereignty of the Old city. Indeed, Israel – throughout the Oslo peace process – has maintained that Jerusalem was its “eternal, undivided capital of Israel”. In fact, Camp David II and Taba represented near agreements on conflict resolution. It is noteworthy that the Palestinian track - unlike the Syrian-Israeli track - dealt with more sensitive issues with religious / historical value rather than sheer interests like strategic locations or water.

With regard to behavioural policy, as early as March 2000 there were reports circulating that Arafat would use his security forces and Fatah to “heat up the Palestinian street” in order to improve the Palestinian negotiating position.²⁰⁰ In fact, even usually mild-mannered PLO senior officials such as the Legislative Council Speaker Ahmed Quray had warned that “ Should the negotiations remain frozen for too long, the PA would unilaterally proclaim sovereign control.”²⁰¹ However, there was no violence

¹⁹⁸ Sontag, “Quest for Mideast Peace”: p.2.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Graham Usher, “Another Climb-Down”, *Middle East International*, (24 March 2000): pp. 9-10.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

whatsoever. Quite the contrary, the PA Preventive Security Force alerted the Israelis to a potential attack by Hamas operatives.²⁰² On May 10th 2000, spontaneous demonstrations erupted in the Occupied Territories in support of a hunger strike by Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. This agitation did not amount to any serious confrontation between the two sides.²⁰³ However, Arafat saw the unrest as strengthening his negotiating position by demonstrating to the Israeli side that “ He too has domestic problems and cannot accept a deal that would be unacceptable to his people.”²⁰⁴

While Palestinian statehood was not declared, the PA started - from September 2000 onward - resorting to violence in the form of the second *Intifada* to supplement its accommodative policy.

Intifada Al-Aqsa

On September 28th 2000, not long after the unsuccessful conclusion of the Camp David talks, a visit by Ariel Sharon to the Muslim site of Haram Al-Sharif (known to Israel as the Temple Mount) in the Holy city of Jerusalem sparked the second uprising. *Intifada Al-Aqsa* - as it soon became known - turned violent early on with scores of attacks, fatalities and casualties on both sides. To be sure, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) was a sufficient cause for provoking mass Palestinian protest and to some extent igniting riots. However, the visit in itself - even when combined with the killing of four Palestinians at the same site the following day - does not explain the intensity, the length and momentum of *Intifada Al-Aqsa*.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Khaled Amyreh, “The Territories Erupt”, *Middle East International*, (19 May 2000): p.4.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Mouin Rabbani, “A Smorgasbord of Failure: Oslo and the Al-Aqsa Intifada” in Roane Carey, ed. *The New Intifada*. (New York: Verso, 2001), p.70. It is noteworthy that Barak facilitated Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa mosque as evidenced by approving a police escort.

In other words, there were earlier affronts to national and religious sensibilities - which in fact were much more serious than Sharon's visit - such as the 1990 Al-Aqsa massacre,²⁰⁶ the 1994 Hebron massacre,²⁰⁷ and the 1996 tunnel clashes.²⁰⁸ Yet, none of these provoked such a wide scale uprising as witnessed by the current *Intifada Al-Aqsa*. In fact, Israeli military planners - who did anticipate a general Palestinian armed uprising - were nonetheless caught off guard by both the intensity and the length of the new Intifada. Indeed, according to the Israeli military scenario "Field of Thorns" planned in September 1996, a conflict orchestrated by the PA would only last for a few weeks.²⁰⁹ This opinion was vindicated shortly after in the form of the *Tunnel Intifada* and stipulated that any new conflicts would not "go beyond an extended replay of the Israeli-Palestinian clashes that engulfed the West Bank and Gaza Strip."²¹⁰ The prospect of another *Intifada* on a par with the first one (1987-1993) was downplayed simply because it would lead to the weakening of both the PA and the Barak government, and hence the collapse of the Oslo peace process.²¹¹ However, not only did a new *Intifada* take place against Israeli expectations, but it soon developed into armed resistance. The following is an overview of its modus operandi.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. In the 1990 Aqsa massacre there were 14 killed and more than a hundred wounded.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. The 1994 massacre of twenty nine Muslim worshipers at Hebron's Ibrahimi mosque by Baruch Goldstein during the month of Ramadan.

²⁰⁸ It is noteworthy that Ariel Sharon has earlier provoked the Palestinians by his purchase of a house in the Old City in November 1987 on the eve of the first Intifada. However, Israel has linked Palestinian emboldment in both uprisings with the Lebanese front. A hang-glider raid carried out by the PFLP killing six Israeli soldiers boosted their morale, while the 2000 Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon led them to entertain the military struggle. See Rabbani "A Smorgasbord of Failure" in *The New Intifada*.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

THE PA STRATEGY IN *INTIFADA AL-AQSA*

At first, the uprising had all the familiar characteristics of the earlier *Intifada*. However, as it progressed, Palestinian tactics started to shift from unarmed demonstrations and rock-throwing to an armed guerrilla campaign targeting Israeli settlements and army positions.²¹² Indeed, it soon turned out that – even when the uprising erupted spontaneously – the PA / Fatah was waging a low-intensity war of attrition against the settlers – using the Hezbollah tactics of hit and run – aiming at improving the Palestinian position at the negotiation table, if not to chase Israel out of the 1967 borders altogether.

Instead of the armed *Intifada* containing the popular one they reinforced each other, repeatedly being driven to new heights by each new Israeli outrage. Instead of the leadership intervening to impose order and put an end to the unrest, it withdrew the security forces and sent mixed messages to the street. Instead of the clashes being limited to the boundaries between Area A and territory under Israeli control, they spread throughout the occupied territories and subsequently across the Green Line as Palestinians within Israel rose up in a deliberate act of national solidarity. Perhaps most important, instead of the PA acting like Israel's gendarme, the South Lebanon Army, Fatah began acting like Hezbollah.²¹³

In theory, the PA did not actively participate in the uprising. However, it is safe to say that some PA security personnel were either involved themselves in planning or/and executing attacks against Israel, or at least turned a blind eye when militants (from different Palestinian factions) carried out these attacks.²¹⁴ On the ground, Fatah's tactic was mainly to "turn the tables on Israel's infrastructure of control."²¹⁵ For instance, the West Bank settlements (especially the isolated ones) which serve essentially in Israel's

²¹² Ibid. pp. 78-79.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ It is widely believed that *Intifada Al-Aqsa* – not unlike the first *Intifada* – was a spontaneous uprising that, though not initiated by Fatah, was sustained and managed by Fatah rank-and-file. See Yezid Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt", *Survival*, volume 43, issue 3 (Autumn 2001) : pp.47-60.

²¹⁵ Rabbani, "A Smorgasbord of Failure", pp. 81-82.

security doctrine as advanced outposts guarding against an Arab invasion across the Jordan River became themselves targets of Palestinian guerrilla attacks.

Moreover, the IDF – wanting to protect the settlers - deployed more troops around the settlements which proved to be counterproductive as it only multiplied the number of potential targets. In other words, Fatah challenged the validity of Israel's premise that its settlements and the network of bypass roads (which interrupt Palestinian territorial continuity) were assets to Israel's security. Quite the contrary, Palestinian daily attacks exposed them as liabilities.²¹⁶ Another example is “measures of collective punishment” such as sieges and curfews. The more Israel resorts to these measures, the more it pushes the Palestinian population toward supporting and actively participating in armed resistance. Indeed, if Israel - after everything else fails – resorts to aerial and naval bombardment and the assassination of Palestinian militants to stop the *Intifada*, it only exposes itself to international criticism, regional isolation, and ferments the atmosphere for more revenge attacks.²¹⁷

Finally, if Israel decides to terminate the PA or substantially weaken its security apparatus (whose very existence – unlike that of the PLO – is of great importance to the West), it will face the prospect of having the unaccommodative Hamas as the main Palestinian faction. After all, Hezbollah's rise in South Lebanon came as result of the power vacuum resulting from Israel's expulsion of the PLO in 1982.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid. In other words, Hezbollah – unlike the PLO – could not be uprooted from Southern Lebanon simply because it is Lebanese.

Explanations of Palestinian Mixed Moves

What factors best explain the PA's resort to a mixed policy of accommodation and confrontation toward Israel at this point ? What is the relative importance and role of these various factors in the PA's mixed moves ? What is the change that occurred in these factors from before ?

OBJECTIVE FACTORS

Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions, notably bilateral conditions (the state of relations with Israel) and the activities of the powerful third party played the most important roles in the PLO's involvement in a mixed accommodative - confrontational process. The following factors – at various points – largely contributed to a pull back from accommodation, hence leading to the PA's mixed policy.

External Politico-Military Conditions

Bilateral Relations (with Israel)

This was arguably the most important set of factors shaping Palestinian mixed moves. Here, the PA was caught in a hurting stalemate but reviewed its perception of an irreversible decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel that had characterized the 1991 and 1993 periods. Furthermore, the Palestinian perception of potential reciprocity from both the powerful third party (US) and the opponent (that was the building bloc for the accommodation process in 1991 and 1993-95 respectively) was beginning to diminish significantly.

Changing Power Relations The PA's position – compared to 1991 and 1993 – was perceived to be strengthening vis-à-vis Israel.

Politically, the notion of Palestinian statehood – thanks to the Oslo peace process – was now a given instead of “ an unimaginable taboo two decades earlier.”²¹⁹ Indeed, the question on everyone’s mind (the international community, the US and even Israel itself) was ‘when’ not ‘ if’ the Palestinian state would be ultimately realized.²²⁰ Hence, the PA felt relatively empowered at Camp David 2000 and demonstrated this new acquired strength by its reluctance to accept anything significantly less than UN resolutions have stipulated. Indeed, Israel’s literal implementation of UN resolution 425 by its unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon two months prior to the Palestinian-Israeli summit justified the Palestinian position. In other words, Arafat argued that full withdrawal (which Egypt got and Syria was basically being offered) was now being granted freely to Lebanon. Furthermore, if Hezbollah (an armed militia on the US list of terrorist organizations) had achieved such an outcome as a result of a ‘holy war’, surely the PA, which had sought peaceful negotiations with Israel, should expect a similar deal.²²¹ Furthermore, if conflicts such as the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights or South Lebanon could be pending for long years in a no-peace/no-war situation, the same could not be said about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Why ? The daily close contacts between the two populations could not sustain an interim / frozen situation for a long period. Hence, if no real progress – albeit slow and gradual - was achieved, then the prospect of a confrontation seemed more probable.²²²

²¹⁹ Stein, “The Arab-Israeli Peace Process”, *MECS*, volume XXII, 1998 : p.63.

²²⁰ It is noteworthy that AIPAC – the 55,000 member Jewish lobby – released a statement on May 24th 1999 in which it dropped its long standing opposition to a Palestinian state, but stopped short of endorsing it. See Donald Neff, “AIPAC Adapts”, *Middle East International*, (4 June 1999) : p.8.

²²¹ Manley and Agha: p.9

²²² *The Arab Strategic Yearbook*, 2000 : p.253.

Militarily, the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 signalled a turning point in Palestinian politics, namely the emergence of the military option as a viable means. While, the PA's 40,000 strong paramilitary force – set up as a result of the Oslo agreements – could hardly match the potent Israeli military machine, the Palestinian leadership nevertheless saw its position as relatively stronger than in 1991 or 1993 vis-à-vis Israel. This sense of military empowerment could be attributed to four reasons.

First, the PLO had pioneered guerrilla warfare long before the nascent Hezbollah militia. In other words, not only did the latter's success in driving the Israelis out of South Lebanon recall the PLO's old line of thinking, but it even challenged its claim of leadership in this domain. After all, it was in the Occupied Territories – as earlier explained in Chapter II – that the term 'fedayeen' was coined. Throughout the 1950s, 60s, and 70s Palestinian raids from the Gaza Strip, the Jordan valley, and FatahLand in Lebanon respectively had always constituted a security problem / threat to Israel. Moreover, the 1982 Beirut siege proved to the PLO that urban warfare was costly to the IDF. To be sure, Arafat and the Fatah leadership (who rose from the ranks of the Fedayeen) are no strangers to guerrilla warfare. Hence, there was a dominant belief among them that 'if Hezbollah could do it, then we certainly could it'.

Secondly, the PLO saw the failure of its past strategy of guerrilla warfare stemming primarily from the lack of friendly territory from which it could operate and conduct raids against Israel. In other words, the PLO's true fighting capabilities were often "leashed" by the reluctant regimes of Arab ring-states who feared massive Israeli reprisals against their inferior militaries and infrastructure. However, the Oslo peace process turned around that

unfavorable situation. Indeed, the PA had now – for the first time ever in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict – a legitimate paramilitary presence inside the Occupied Territories. Hence, Arafat – unlike the 1960s, 70s and 80s – could fight under the Palestinian flag from inside the Occupied Territories (i.e. Ramallah) rather than from outside (i.e. Amman and Beirut) under another Arab flag and be at the mercy of another government.

Thirdly, the Palestinian police had proved in the recent – albeit brief – encounter with Israeli soldiers (i.e. the *Tunnel Intifada*) that they could engage with the IDF if they wanted to. Indeed, in these firefights the PA's security force – despite being greatly outnumbered and outgunned – still managed to inflict some punishment on the Israeli side.

Finally, the emergence of the 'suicide attack' phenomenon has shifted the Palestinian-Israeli balance of power. In fact, the use of 'human bombs' by both Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the 1990s against Israeli urban centers proved to be a potent weapon with devastating psychological effects on the Israeli public. Indeed, it was perceived as the Palestinian ultimate weapon which Israel – despite its high-tech US weaponry – could not stop. Put differently, if Israel was deterred by Hezbollah's threats to strike its northern urban centers with Katyusha rockets, then Israel should be deterred – the reasoning went – by Palestinian threats to unleash waves of suicide bombers against its civilians all over Israel. It is noteworthy that while the first *Intifada* took pride in the Palestinian teenager throwing stones at Israeli soldiers as its role model, the new *Intifada* took pride – by contrast – in the suicide bomber as its role model (albeit strengthening Israel's right wing).

A brief comparison is imperative here to explain the situation in September 2000. First, not unlike the eve of the 1991 Madrid peace conference, and the subsequent 1993

Oslo Accords, there was a stalemate created by the deadlock reached in the Camp David II summit between the PA and Israel. Secondly, the stalemate situation had a hurting effect solely on the PA. In other words, while the deadlock in the negotiations was not running at a high human cost (such as during the *Intifada*), it still meant the expropriation of more Palestinian land. The stalemate – unlike in 1991 and 1993 – did not hurt Israel as well. Thirdly, the latter realization led in turn to a sense of serious irreversible decline in the PA's power position vis-à-vis Israel - which if no action was taken – would cause permanent losses. Therefore, the PA thought it could no longer opt for negotiations alone and hurting Israel was needed to create the mutually hurting stalemate situation which would kick start a new process / round of accommodation. To be sure, the failure of prior confrontational strategies (i.e. guerrilla warfare) was being revisited, propelled largely by Hezbollah's victory in liberating South Lebanon from Israeli occupation. These removed not only an important constraint (permissive cause) on the pursuit of a policy of confrontation with Israel, but also constituted a powerful stimulus (stimulus cause) to improve the PA's negotiating position at any future talks.

Opponent's (Israel's) Policies

In July 2000, the PA's perception of Israeli flexibility and reciprocity was greatly compromised by Israel's previous broken promises. Indeed, for the better part of the second half of the 1990s, Israel – for one reason or another – delayed, partially implemented or refused altogether to implement its obligations in the interim agreements.

The Palestinian claim that Israel refuses to implement signed agreements and violates its commitments in various other ways is beyond dispute. A simple comparison of the September 1993 Declaration of Principles (Oslo), the September 1995 Interim Agreement (Oslo II), the January 1997 Hebron Protocol, the October 1998 Wye River Memorandum, and the September 1999 Sharm El Sheikh agreement reveals a clear pattern in which Israel first refuses to implement its own commitments, seeks and obtains their dilution in a new agreement,

subsequently engages in systemic prevarication, and finally demands additional negotiations, leading to a yet further diluted agreement.²²³

Not only did the PA perceive Israel as reneging on implementing part or all of its obligations in the interim agreements but it also saw this behaviour as 'playing for time' in which Israel could expropriate more Arab land, expand its settlements, and create new facts on the ground to weaken the Palestinian position even further.

Between 1994 and 2000, the Israeli government confiscated approximately 35,000 acres of Arab land in the West Bank, much of it agricultural and worth more than \$1 billion, for the construction of bypass roads and settlement expansion. Ironically, Yasir Arafat agreed to this confiscation as part of the Oslo II Interim Agreement. Similarly, in 1999, after the Barak government was installed, Israeli authorities confiscated some 10,000 acres of Arab land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for Israeli settler use.²²⁴

Arguably, this was a departure from the situation in 1993-95 when Palestinian-Israeli mutual trust (i.e. Confidence Building Measures) was at its best, leading to substantial progress in the peace process. Indeed, this was more of a replay of the 1991 Madrid peace conference situation. However, the PLO at that point saw signs of potential reciprocity from the powerful third party (US) which encouraged it to seek accommodation. By contrast, the PA in 2000 saw that its perception of reciprocity from the US was not sufficient to pursue accommodation with Israel.

One additional major problem was that even though there was a significant reduction in the differences on substantive issues at Camp David, the very fact that these were negotiations about a final settlement (not interim arrangements) meant that even

²²³ Rabbani, "A Smorgasbord of Failure" p.72.

²²⁴ Sara Roy, "Decline and Disfigurement: The Palestinian Economy After Oslo" in Roane Carey, ed., *The New Intifada* (New York: Verso, 2001) p.95.

modest differences loomed large because they threatened to turn into permanent losses for the Palestinians.

While prime minister Ehud Barak ultimately pursued a more flexible policy toward the Palestinians than his predecessors, there were still limits to this flexibility regarding key issues in any final status talks (i.e. settlements, territorial changes, Jerusalem, strategic roads, the Palestinian 'right of return'). Thus despite the significant narrowing of differences regarding the terms of a final settlement, the highlighting of those differences at Camp David and the painful permanent losses that a settlement would entail heightened the perceived threat to fundamental 'Palestinian interests' ²²⁵

These various considerations pulled the PA away from adhering solely to the policy of accommodation and served as a stimulus to seek confrontation.

Powerful Third Parties

The US tilt toward Israel in 2000 - in contrast to a more even-handed role in 1991 - was the second most important factor in the PLO's decision to resort to a mixed policy of accommodation and confrontation toward Israel rather than simply accommodation as in the previous phase.

As explained in chapter I, powerful third parties can facilitate accommodation between lesser powers by fulfilling the following roles: creating constraints on the use of coercive measures, providing assurances regarding their support for an honorable settlement, offering material incentives, and acting as go-betweens / mediators.

Yet the US role in the advanced stages of the Palestinian-Israeli accommodation process - namely the Camp David II summit - failed miserably in all of the above. Indeed, when Arafat threatened in late 1998 to declare Palestinian statehood unilaterally in protest of Netanyahu's expanded settlement activity in the Occupied Territories,

²²⁵ Paul Noble "From Arab System to Middle Eastern System ? Regional Pressures and Constraints" in Bahgat Korany, ed., *The Foreign Policies of Arab States* 3rd Edition (Manuscript).

the US dissuaded Arafat from making such declarations. This was an implicit US support of Netanyahu's counter-threat of annexing Palestinian territory by force if the PA were to make good on its threat to unilaterally declare Palestinian statehood. Moreover, the earlier US assurances of an honorable peace with Israel were wearing thin with every Israeli delay – not to mention refusal - in implementing the interim agreements. As for material incentives, the US directly supported Israel generously, whereas the Palestinian Authority (PA) was helped through the EU. Finally, the US failed in acting as the honest go-between between the two sides.

US-PA

To be sure, there was an active US role in attempting to reach an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Indeed, the Clinton administration in general and President Clinton in particular had dedicated a great deal of time, effort and personal involvement to the process. However, Clinton - unlike the situation in Madrid 1991 - was perceived by the Palestinians as more supportive of Barak rather than Arafat. For starters, the mere fact that Clinton invited both Arafat and Barak to a peace summit at Camp David – on a par with the 1978 Begin-Sadat historical summit - illustrates that either Clinton was unaware of Palestinian misgivings about the name 'Camp David' (almost synonymous for selling-out)²²⁶ or - worse yet - he was simply insensitive to Palestinian feelings. Moreover, Clinton - at the summit - passed off some Israeli 'ideas' regarding the status of Jerusalem as his own.²²⁷ Indeed, he suggested that the Palestinians would get some form of autonomy for the Arab neighborhoods in return for Israeli sovereignty over the whole city.²²⁸

²²⁶ "In Search of a Fix?" main editorial in *MEI*, (14 July 2000): p.3.

²²⁷ Main editorial in *Middle East International*, (18 August 2000): p.3.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Little wonder that the Palestinians saw the American role as interpreting the Israeli position for the Arabs; more like a “ messenger boy “ rather than an arbitrator.²²⁹

Moreover, contrary to the promise “ volunteered by Clinton ”²³⁰, the US president came down particularly hard on the Palestinian side on the same day that the summit collapsed (July 25th 2000) and again on Israel Radio on July 28th. He placed the blame for the failure of Camp David II squarely on Arafat without even the slightest disguise of impartiality. Moreover, he sided with Israel’s claim that Jerusalem was its ‘united, eternal capital ‘ by threatening to move the US embassy there.²³¹

US-Israel

In contrast to the pressure applied by the Bush administration on Israel prior to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference in the areas of economic aid and sale of US military technology, the Clinton administration put no pressure whatsoever on Israel. In fact, it was the other way around as Barak wanted to reach a deal with Syria in the spring of 2000 and hence wanted to extract the maximum of economic and military aid from the US before Clinton’s presidency lapsed. Moreover, the US did not threaten to penalize Israel before the Camp David Summit for the alleged sale of US military technology to China. Indeed, Israel’s sale of an early warning plane to China based on US military know-how (known as the Falcon deal) did not stir as much controversy in Washington as was the case in the early 1990s. Hence, Clinton and Barak initiated the Camp David II summit when relations with each other were very favourable.

They could both « cook » Arafat into signing an agreement that would end the 100-year old conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. It took the derailment of the Syrian track of the peace process, the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian

²²⁹ Graham Usher, “A Map Or A Concept”, *Middle East International*, (19 May 2000): p.5.

²³⁰ Manley and Agha, p.5.

²³¹ Donald Netton, “The US Piles On the Pressure”, *Middle East International*, (18 August 2000): p.4.

negotiations, and Arafat's threat of a unilateral declaration of statehood in September or soon thereafter to persuade Clinton, on July 5th, to roll with Barak's desperate gamble.²³²

To be sure, the US was overwhelmingly supportive of Israel on many thorny issues. Of these, the status of Jerusalem stands out. Indeed, under the Clinton administration, the Congress issued a bill to transfer the US embassy to Jerusalem by 1999 but Clinton used his power to delay its implementation until the Camp David summit. When it did fail, he threatened the Palestinians to activate that bill when it clearly contravened international laws.

These factors somewhat pushed the PA away from accommodation and functioned as a permissive cause for re-incorporating confrontation with accommodation.

Regional Environment

Conditions in the regional environment were less important than the role of bilateral relations or powerful third parties but were still a factor nevertheless. Indeed, they gained more importance in 2000 than in 1991 or 1993-95. Regional factors contributed to the mixed policy in four ways.

1- Regional Developments As Catalyst

The Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 was the catalyst for the new *Intifada*. Even before the long overdue implementation of UN resolution 425 calling on Israel to withdraw, there was a special importance attached to the Syrian-Israeli track which was largely attributed to the constant harassing by Hezbollah of IDF troops and positions in South Lebanon. Indeed, the use of Hezbollah by Syrian President Hafez Assad aimed to exert pressure on Barak to 'sweeten the deal.' No wonder then that Barak

²³² Usher, "Camp David : the American Bridge", *MEI* : p.4.

prioritized the Syrian track over the Palestinian track as exemplified by the Shepherdstown summit in December 1999.

Damascus started using the 'Lebanese Card' through Hezbollah to pressure Israel without directly engaging in a military confrontation that would exhaust Syria both militarily and financially. In fact, on many occasions Syria would use its leverage over Hezbollah to flare up the Lebanese-Israeli border as a way of proving its key role in any resolution of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict.²³³

However, when the withdrawal did take place on May 25th 2000 it was a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as it was the first time ever that Israel unilaterally withdrew from Arab territories . In other words, this act opened the door for comparisons with other Arab fronts in which signing a peace treaty with Israel became an option rather than a necessary condition to return occupied lands.

2- The Regional Climate

The earlier accommodative atmosphere predominant in the region in the early 1990s was starting to give way to a more confrontational attitude prompted by the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000. Indeed, the consciousness of the limitations of the Arab military option - as witnessed by the humiliation of Iraq's defeat at the hands of the US in the Kuwait war (1991) - was beginning to fade away from the collective memory in favour of a Hezbollah-like armed resistance. There was henceforth a strong momentum towards confrontation with Israel, especially since the IDF's rushed withdrawal was interpreted as a vindication for those who preached that 'violence is the only language which Israel understands'. In fact, all over the region the concept of Jihad (as opposed to Arab nationalism or socialism) was credited for the Israeli pullout ;

²³³ Dayana Eddé, *Choosing Accommodation Over Confrontation: Syrian Policy Towards Israel 1991-2000*, MA Thesis, McGill University, 2003, p.104

a milestone event in the annals of the Arab-Israeli conflict that the IDF withdrew from territories it occupied without signing a peace treaty with the Arab government to which these territories belong.

3- The PA's Regaining of Regional Support

The PA in 2000 - unlike the situation in 1991 and 1993 – had regained regional support from the Gulf States, Syria and Egypt. The US support of the Oslo peace process and active PA diplomacy were successful in mending fences with and winning back the financial support of the Gulf states. Furthermore, Arafat's stand at Camp David II was supported by Mubarak of Egypt and Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Indeed, when the *Intifada* broke out, the PA gained regional support at both the governmental and popular level.

If the frustration prior to 1987 was lack of interest and involvement by outside parties, the anger in 2000 was at the effort of the United States and Israel to force an unjust solution on the Palestinians. Contrary to 1987, this frustration was directly addressed to the Arab masses; the result was widespread demonstrations that forced an Arab summit to convene. That summit backed the Palestinian struggle, promised considerable financial support for the Intifada, and, more important, stressed the fact that Palestinians are the key to stability in the Middle East. While the commitment made at the summit might not be totally fulfilled, the Intifada managed to force a process of gradual reform on the official Arab world. These achievements in the early weeks of the Intifada encouraged both the PA and ordinary Palestinians to continue and intensify the uprising.²³⁴

This served as permissive to confrontation and a stimulus to pursue a mixed policy.

4- The Lack of Prisoner's Dilemma of Frontline Arab Parties

Unlike the situation in 1991 and 1993, when the PLO along with other frontline Arab parties in conflict found themselves in a prisoner's dilemma situation, the PA had no competition with other Arab parties to reach an agreement first with Israel.

²³⁴ Ghassan Andoni, "A Comparative Study of Intifada 1987 and Intifada 2000" in Roane Carey, ed., *The New Intifada*, p.216.

Lack of PA-Syria Dilemma: Had Israel and Syria reached an agreement over the Golan Heights in 2000, then prospects – inside Israel - of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians would have been seriously curtailed. Why? Because many Israelis would have felt an emotional loss after giving back the Golan and revived their old deep-seated doubts and fears about a Palestinian state. In other words, Israeli public opinion was not ready to give up so much land in such a short amount of time even when the accommodative mood was prevailing in the whole Middle East region.

The date set for the agreement in the east has been overridden by the agreement in the north. In the past, any idea of both happening simultaneously had always been rejected. The danger no one talks about is that we shall bid farewell not only to the Golan Heights, but also to peace with the Palestinians until further notice. Yet as some of Barak's advisers see it, talking to Syrian President Assad could somehow help the other negotiations. It could put pressure on the Palestinians and so make them more flexible. According to the optimistic thesis of a double peace, moreover, it is impossible to stop the progress we have made with Yasser Arafat. He himself, so it is argued, has been delaying the talks in the hope that a failure of the negotiations with Syria would bring the Israelis back to the negotiating table in a less arrogant mood.²³⁵

In sum, there were very few advocates for a 'double peace thesis' among Israelis. However, now that the Syrian-Israeli track had reached a deadlock, combined with the sudden death of President Hafez Assad (the only political heavyweight in Syria who had enough stature to make peace with Israel) both meant that the heated competition between the two tracks had significantly cooled, at least for the time being.

Lack of PA-Jordan Dilemma: Equally important, unlike the situation in 1991 and 1993, the competition between the Palestinian and Jordanian tracks had withered much earlier as Jordan reached its own separate peace treaty in 1994 (the Wadi Araba agreement).

²³⁵ "Don't Forget The Palestinians", editorial in *Ha'aretz* (5 January 2000) translated in *MEI* (14 January 2000): p.25.

In fact, the Jordanians – while worried of its consequences domestically – were generally supportive of both the new *Intifada* and the Palestinian Authority.

With both Syria and Jordan now out of the competition in reaching a peace agreement with Israel, the prisoner's dilemma situation disappeared altogether, creating hence a permissive causality for pulling away from accommodation.

Economic Conditions

By 2000, the Palestinian economy - despite the constant Israeli closures in the West Bank and Gaza - was somewhat more sustainable because of the massive aid it received during the Oslo process. Economic conditions were slightly better than the dire conditions in 1991 and 1993 as the fragile economy began to recover slowly in the interim period 1995-2000. Indeed, the Palestinian economy - according to the IMF - recorded a surprising 6 percent in growth in GDP and 7 percent in GNP in 1999.²³⁶ However, the modest growth in business which was recorded with outside markets (as a result of the trade agreements integrating the Palestinian economy into the international economy) was always a hostage to the closure policy.²³⁷ With regard to PA finances, it had relatively more financial leeway by 2000 than the PLO did in the aftermath of the Kuwait War (1990-91). Even when donor countries pledging aid did not make good on their promises (only \$2.5 billion of the \$4.2 billion pledged for the 1993 – 1998 period was actually received by the PA)²³⁸, the PA still had better finances than in earlier phases.

²³⁶ Reckhess and Litvak, "The PA" *MECS*, volume XXIII, 1999 : p.470.

²³⁷ It is noteworthy that during the 1996-99 there was a dramatic decline in closures. These went from 92 days in 1996, 63 days in 1997, 5 days in 1998 to 16 days in 1999 reflecting the PA's successful crackdown on Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups. See Reckhess and Litvak "The PA" *MECS*, volume XXIII, 1999 : p.470.

²³⁸ Stein, "The Arab-Israeli Peace Process", *MECS*, volume XXII, 1998 : p.74.

Thus the economic conditions facing both the PA and Palestinian society in 2000 were less serious than in earlier phases and consequently had less impact on PA policy than external politico-military conditions. The (limited) improvement in economic conditions served as a permissive factor in the PA's decision to seek confrontation as well as accommodation.

Domestic Political Conditions

In contrast to 1991 and 1993, Arafat and the PA leadership's political position in 2000 was fairly robust vis-à-vis the Islamic movement Hamas. Despite some dissatisfaction with the PA's governance (i.e. corruption and mismanagement), Arafat still commanded the political scene. This was evident in the strange alliance during the Oslo years between Hamas and the PFLP / DFLP Marxist-oriented groups, reflecting the declining stature of both the Islamists (as a result of the relative success of the PA) and the leftist opposition in the Occupied Territories (as a result of the collapse of the USSR and the ideological bankruptcy of communism).²³⁹ In other words, the mere fact that Hamas was willing to cooperate with these dissident groups indicated that the organization was confused and considerably worried about the prospects of the PA's success in administering the Occupied Territories.

The opposition began deflating immediately after the establishment of the PA in Gaza. Early that year, the mainstream had an average support of about 38 percent. The leftist opposition had an average support of about 10 percent in early 1994; it was cut to half to about 5 percent by early 1998. The Islamists, who had an average support of about 23 percent in 1994, dropped to about 15 percent in early 1998. In other words, while the mainstream has been able to maintain its popular support, the opposition – both leftist and Islamist – lost about 40 percent of its strength in the Palestinian street, dropping from 33 percent to 20 percent.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Reckhess, "The West Bank and the Gaza Strip" *MECS*, volume XVII, 1993 : p.221.

²⁴⁰ Khalil Shikaki, "Peace Now or Hamas Later", *Foreign Affairs*, volume 77 no. 4, July / August 1998: p.33.

This trend continued in the running up to the Camp David II summit. Indeed, Palestinian support for Oslo between 1993 - 2001 (with the sole exception of 1994) never dropped below 60 percent.²⁴¹ Interestingly, those who deserted Arafat and Fatah did not join the Islamists but remained on the sidelines which checked the Islamists' support levels consistently at around the mid-teens.²⁴² Furthermore, the PA's strong police force enabled it to assert its authority in the Occupied Territories and secure its political hegemony throughout the Oslo years.²⁴³ In fact, the PA cracked down hard on Hamas and effectively neutralized it, wreaking havoc with its organizational and military structure. The PA - which had the greatest interest in safeguarding the peace process - even received technical help from Israel and the CIA toward that end.²⁴⁴ The security force also served to provide jobs to unemployed youth, hence co-opting them into supporting Arafat and the PA rather than Hamas.

A clear majority of Palestinians not only rejected terrorism against Israelis but also backed the March 1996 PA crackdown against the Islamists after the bus bombings the month before, knowing full well that the raids sought to prevent further attacks on Israelis. Only 32 percent opposed the reprisals against Hamas. To most Palestinians, Islamist terrorism slows the return of the West Bank land, undermines the Palestinian economy, boosts the Likud, and pushes the PA to focus on Israeli security at the expense of Palestinian democracy and civil liberties.²⁴⁵

The PA's capacity to subdue Hamas' militant activities continued up until 2000. A case-in-point was the Taiba cell of March 2nd 2000: Israel - acting on a PA tip - apprehended a Hamas cell in the Israeli-Arab town of Taiba planning to carry out a number

²⁴¹ Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided", *Foreign Affairs* : p.91.

²⁴² Ibid. p.92.

²⁴³ For more information on the role of Palestinian security forces see Graham Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, volume XXV no. 2 (Winter 1996) : pp. 21-34.

²⁴⁴ Rabbani, "A Smorgasbord of Failure", p.70.

²⁴⁵ Shikaki, "Peace Now or Hamas Later": p.35.

of suicide bombings inside Israel to scuttle the forthcoming peace agreement.²⁴⁶

Moreover, the Palestinian Preventive Security Force - in the following days - arrested two Hamas activists after besieging the village of Kafr Khali (near Nablus), uncovered a Hamas bomb factory in Tulkarm and seized a stash of explosives in Gaza.²⁴⁷

Taken together, these operations rank as the biggest blow to Hamas' military wing and its infrastructure since the Israeli army shot dead Hamas leaders Imad and Adel Awadallah in September 1998. All this was achieved inside Palestinian-controlled areas and by the PA, winning it accolades not only from such Israeli "doves" as Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and Internal Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, but also from "hawks" like Barak and Sneh.²⁴⁸

Fatah – which provided the backbone support for the peace process- based its allegiance on two key factors: on the one hand, Arafat's leadership and a lack of initiative by the Islamist opposition²⁴⁹, on the other hand, the backing of a wide Palestinian political spectrum - the intellectuals, media, business community, state bureaucrats, and political activists.²⁵⁰ Hence, it is safe to say that the Palestinian street was behind the peace process. However, this perception soon changed after the collapse of the Assad-Clinton summit (Geneva) in early 2000. Moreover, the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon complicated things even more for Arafat, who was not expected by his constituency to accept at Camp David II less than Assad. Indeed, Arafat's resistance to combined US-Israeli pressures at the summit raised his popularity and he returned to a hero's welcome in the West Bank and Gaza. In fact, 68 percent of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories - according to surveys of public opinion conducted in the wake of the

²⁴⁶ Usher, "Another Climb-down" : p.10.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. p.29.

²⁵⁰ Malley and Agha, p.3

Camp David summit- supported the overall position taken by Arafat at Camp David.²⁵¹ Furthermore, 63 percent of Palestinians thought that armed resistance à la Hezbollah in South Lebanon would likely achieve more political gains if no agreement were to be reached soon.²⁵² In other words, the general perception of the Palestinian population was that what could not be achieved at the negotiation table could be achieved by a low intensity conflict. Indeed, the Palestinian street - whose support was vital for any uprising against Israel - was disillusioned with the results of the peace process.

Much has to do with the political climate that prevailed within Palestinian society. Unlike the situation during and after Oslo, there was no coalition of powerful Palestinian constituencies committed to the success of Camp David. Groups whose support was necessary to sell any agreement had become disbelievers, convinced that Israel would neither sign a fair agreement nor implement what it signed.²⁵³

In sum, while Arafat and Fatah in 2000 enjoyed both a high level of support vis-à-vis Hamas and the capacity to clamp down on its military wing, the domestic political climate regarding Israel created serious constraints (permissive causality) on the pursuit of a purely accommodative policy. In fact, it also served as an important stimulus for the pursuit of confrontation along with accommodation. Therefore, domestic political conditions are more important than economic conditions, but not quite as significant as external politico-military conditions (from which they derive) in shaping Arafat and the PA leadership's mixed policy of confrontation along with accommodation at this stage.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Jamil Hilal, "Polls Apart: Israeli and Palestinian public opinion after Camp David", *MEI*, (1 September 2000): pp. 20-21.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Malley and Agha, : p.8.

²⁵⁴ Some analysts argued that the "young guard" (i.e. the local PLO leaders during the first Intifada) are behind sustaining the armed uprising whereas the "old guard" (i.e. the founders of the PLO) were more reluctant to resort to violence doubting its efficacy. These are unsatisfied with the PA's governance and use the Intifada to draw strength and legitimacy. For more details see Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided", *Foreign Affairs*, volume 81 no. 1, (January / February 2002): pp. 89-105.

As soon as *Intifada Al-Aqsa* started, Fatah established the secret militant group Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades with the declared objective of liberating the pre-June 5th 1967 borders. It is widely believed that the group received its orders directly from Arafat. The group coordinated its operations against Israel with the Islamic opposition - which in contrast - call for the destruction of Israel and the establishment of a Palestinian Islamic state on the land extending 'from the river to the sea'.

SUBJECTIVE FACTORS (Psychological environment)

The examination of the objective factors facing the Palestinian leadership in 2000 has revealed the pressures, both external and internal, that were encouraging the revisiting of the confrontation option and incorporating it with accommodation to form a mixed Palestinian policy toward Israel (stimulus / efficient causality). It also provided us with a sense of the factors, both external and internal, facilitating the Palestinian leadership's decision to resort to violence (permissive causality – opportunities).

We will now explore the subjective factors influencing Palestinian policy, notably the concerns (in light of the objective conditions) about likely losses or gains to important state, regime, or societal interests. These helped shape the basic motives for which the Palestinian leadership acted in 2000 (motivating causality).

External Politico-Military Concerns

The most pressing concern for Arafat and the PA in 2000 (as in 1991 and in the 1993-95 period) remained the threat of potential permanent loss of vital Palestinian national interests (i.e. national existence, statehood, and a viable territory) unless some serious steps were taken, since more and more land was taken over by Israel.

Between September 1993, when the Declaration of Principles was signed, and April 2000, the numbers of settlers in the West Bank grew by 85 percent, from 100,000 to 185,000 people, and the number of settlements increased by thirty.

In addition, 250 miles of settler bypass roads had been built on expropriated lands. These roads run like a grid throughout the West Bank, encircling and truncating Palestinian enclaves.²⁵⁵

Arguably, this was the strongest motive for introducing confrontation along with accommodation (i.e. the mixed policy). However, Arafat was - unlike previous occasions - in a relatively stronger position. Indeed, the feared Soviet Jewish immigration did not materialize in as great numbers as was expected.²⁵⁶ Moreover, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 boosted his position. He wanted more reward for his peaceful conduct with Israel, otherwise he would resort to violence to achieve this goal. Hence, Arafat's strategy became maximizing gains rather than minimizing losses. In fact, this went contrary to his aide's strategy (Abu Mazen's motto is "Take what are you offered and ask for more").²⁵⁷

This change of calculation was driven by a new perception of the conflict with Israel at the end of the final talks. Indeed, a succession of interim agreements ending up in that at Sharm El-Sheikh witnessed a decline of the centrality of UN resolutions to the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.²⁵⁸ In other words, while Oslo's Declaration of Principles clearly states that the final status negotiations will lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, these were largely ignored at the 2000 Camp David summit in favour of reaching a 'framework agreement'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Sara Roy, "The Palestinian Economy After Oslo" in *The New Intifada*, p.95.

²⁵⁶ Between 1989-1996 Israel adopted some 800,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants. However, there was a major decline in their numbers in the 1996-2000 period despite the improved political and economic conditions in Israel. See Shmel Adler, "The Wave of Immigration to Israel in the 1990s" in Daniel Elazar and Morton Weinfeld, eds., *Still Moving: Recent Migration in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2000)

²⁵⁷ Lamis Andoni, "The American-Israeli Gameplan", *MEI*, (21 April 2000): p. 4.

²⁵⁸ Naseer Aruri, "Failure at Camp David", *MEI*, (18 August 2000): pp. 18-20.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Perhaps most disturbing was Barak's early decision to concentrate on reaching a deal with Syria rather than with the Palestinians, a decision that Arafat experienced as a triple blow. The Palestinians saw it as an instrument of pressure, designed to isolate them; as a delaying tactic that would waste precious months; and as public humiliation, intended to put them in place. Over the years, Syria had done nothing to address Israeli concerns. There was no recognition, no bilateral contacts, not even a suspension of assistance to groups intent on fighting Israel. During that time, the PLO had recognized Israel, countless face-to-face negotiations had taken place, and Israeli and Palestinian security services had worked hand in hand. In spite of all this, Hafez al-Assad – not Arafat – was the first leader to be courted by the new Israeli government.²⁶⁰

Economic Concerns

Economic concerns in 2000 were relatively marginal as the economic situation in the Occupied Territories was better off than from the 1990-91 Kuwait War until the Oslo Accords in 1993. Indeed, the Palestinian economy had partially recovered during the second half of the 1990s and was doing relatively well in contrast to the dire conditions that were the hallmarks of 1991 and 1993-95. In other words, the economic welfare of the population (i.e. societal or human insecurity) was faring better. The PA's finances also improved as a result of foreign economic aid flowing. To the PA's leadership, increased budget security allowed it to strengthen its capacity to co-opt key elites and interest groups and employ a large number of Palestinian youth mainly in the ranks of its security forces. In short, both the economic and financial situation of the Palestinian economy and the Palestinian Authority had improved. Economic considerations were secondary therefore to external political consideration as achieving Palestinian statehood took precedence.

Domestic Political Concerns

As we saw earlier, despite allegations of mismanagement and corruption, the PA had a relatively robust political position vis-à-vis Hamas in 2000 in contrast to its weak

²⁶⁰ Malley and Agha, p.3.

situation in both 1991 and 1993. Indeed, before the Camp David II summit Arafat attempted to build consensus among various Palestinian political factions. The PLO's Central Council met in Gaza on July 2nd - 3rd 2000. The final communiqué stated the Palestinian consensus on the outlines of a just solution to the conflict with Israel, which became the opening position of the Palestinian negotiators at the Camp David summit.

In the order appearing in the communiqué, these are the right of return or "adequate compensation" for Palestinian refugees in line with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194; Israel's complete withdrawal to the 1967 borders in line with Security Resolutions 242 and 338; the removal of Israeli settlements from all Palestinian occupied territory; and the establishment of East Jerusalem as the future capital of an independent Palestinian state.²⁶¹

This position was adopted unanimously by the Palestinian factions though the Leftists had some reservations about the current peace process. Interestingly, Hamas – which refused to participate in the meeting even as an observer – quietly praised the communiqué for its stand regarding the issues.²⁶² Another sign of consensus-building was a rare move by Arafat in which he took to Washington not just his usual hand-picked negotiators but also a 50-strong Palestinian delegation. The latter represented factions from across the Palestinian political spectrum including dissidents such as the DFLP (Hamas and PFLP quietly declined the invitation). In short, there was no serious domestic political challenges from the Leftist-Islamic alliance to pose major threats to Arafat and Fatah's dominance in the Palestinian street.

By contrast, domestic political concerns were arising from a general political climate that had become strongly mistrustful and suspicious of Israel. Indeed, this hostile

²⁶¹ Graham Usher, "The Make or Break Summit ?", *MEI*, (14 July 2000):p.4.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

climate contributed to a Palestinian rejection of anything less than a fully honorable settlement and to the use of confrontation – if necessary – to achieve Palestinian statehood.

With the outbreak of the *Intifada Al-Aqsa*, the PA pursued a policy – described as ‘riding the tiger’²⁶³ - that is basically providing blessing to armed operations that it feels powerless to prevent in the first place, while maintaining the minimum necessary political credibility with the Palestinian street. The PA hence prompts Israel with the almost daily reminder of its invisible military capacity.²⁶⁴

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The 1993 Oslo peace process called for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict during an interim period of five years. The process - which began successfully- soon lapsed into delays and a gradual erosion of trust between the PA and Israel during the Netanyahu premiership (1996-99) as the latter delayed or refused altogether to implement some of its obligations. The US gradually involved itself in the Palestinian –Israeli peace process through a series of US-sponsored interim agreements. The height of US involvement came when the Clinton administration turned its attention to the Palestinian track after the stalemate of the Syrian-Israeli track in early 2000.

The July 2000 Camp David summit initiated by the US was hastily prepared and therefore the PA was reluctant - in contrast to Madrid in 1991 - to attend it. Israel was in favour of the summit since US-Israeli relations were close and cordial, in contrast to Madrid 1991. The summit failure was caused by many factors ; the lack of perception of reciprocity from Israel, the biased role of the US against the PA and regionally the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 which reopened the guerrilla war

²⁶³ Mouin, “ A Smorgasbord of Failure” , p.70

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

option. By 2000, the Oslo peace process in the Palestinian view had degenerated into an unconditional guarantee of security from the PA to Israel which meanwhile exploited the interim period to expropriate more West Bank land and expand its settlement population. In other words, the 'peace for land' formula lapsed into a 'peace for security' formula instead.

On September 28th 2000 , a controversial visit by Ariel Sharon to the Haram Al-Sharif compound in Jerusalem ignited the second *Intifada*. The aim of the armed uprising was to improve the Palestinian negotiating position at the table, if not to pressure the Israelis to unilaterally pull out from the lands occupied in 1967. There are various factors that led the PA to launch *Intifada Al-Aqsa* . Among the objective factors, external politico-military conditions stand out as the most important. In fact, changing bilateral relations combined with the role of the powerful third party are the reasons that propelled the PA leadership to incorporate confrontation with accommodation. A strong second is the confrontational regional environment which put the PA in justifiable comparisons with the Hezbollah. By contrast, the relatively better economic conditions and the improved domestic political situation served as permissive causes to re-visiting the adversarial policy.

In the course of the current *Intifada Al-Aqsa*, Palestinian security forces practically tolerate Hamas and Islamic Jihad's activities – if not unleash them altogether on Israel - in order to exert maximum pressure on both the Israeli leadership and street. The other card that the PA holds is the regional support it garnered through the *Intifada* which prevents Israel from being integrated into the regional system. The more Israel retaliated against the PA's police station and security apparatus, the more the PA

complained about its weakening and its near collapse which in turn tied its hands in pursuing its security obligations vis-à-vis Israel. This would lead - in turn - to more hatred towards Israel across the Arab world which undermines any prospect of a comprehensive reconciliation between the Arabs and Israelis. The PA attempts - through the armed *Intifada* - to demonstrate to the Israelis that there is no military solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; there is only a political solution.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to examine the initiation and dynamics of processes of accommodation in protracted conflicts in developing regions in the post-Cold War era. The case study here is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in particular Palestinian strategy toward Israel from 1991 to 2000. This study has focused on two main questions. One is the extent and form of accommodation (substantive, behavioural, procedural) which was attempted / achieved at various points during this period. The other is the explanation(s) for the initiation and dynamics of accommodation (e.g. progress, suspension, regression) at any given point. The potential explanatory factors include both objective (operational) conditions (external politico-military, economic, and domestic political) which generate constraints on / opportunities for accommodation (permissive causality) or pressures for accommodation (stimulus and efficient causality) and subjective concerns (external politico-military, economic, domestic political) which provide the motivations for accommodation.

Phase One: 1991 (Madrid Peace Conference)

In the first phase of attempted Palestinian-Israeli accommodation, a superpower (the US) was the main initiator of the process. The PLO responded favourably to this initiative making procedural concessions and also reaffirming its earlier major substantive concession (recognizing the existence of Israel). Israel, by contrast, proved more reluctant, making only a limited procedural concession. Thus this phase was characterized by procedural advances and limited behavioural accommodation as the previous phase

primarily of conflict (*Intifada*) was now replaced by a mixture of limited conflict (subdued *Intifada*) and negotiation.

Palestinian accommodative moves during this phase were driven in the first instance by certain operational conditions which generated pressures toward accommodation (stimulus / efficient causality) or reduced constraints / created opportunities for the pursuit of this type of policy (permissive causality). Among these operational conditions, external politico-military factors, notably the activities of powerful third parties and bilateral relations (conditions prevailing in Palestinian-Israeli relations) stand out. The role of powerful third parties was arguably the most important factor here. Thus the decline and ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union substantially enhanced the constraints on the pursuit by the PLO of a confrontational policy toward Israel and encouraged the pursuit of accommodation. More importantly though, in the wake of the Gulf War, the US (the sole remaining superpower) played a crucial role in pressing the PLO to move in this direction. This was accomplished on the one hand by Washington undertaking a leadership role in initiating / managing the peace process and on the other hand by providing important incentives and constraints that induced the parties to participate in the process and undertake accommodative moves. In particular, the US provided some assurances to the Palestinians that their legitimate interests would be supported, thereby generating on their part the all-important perception of likely reciprocity for any Palestinian accommodative moves. At the same time, the US exerted economic pressures on Israel to ensure that it participated in negotiations.

Bilateral conditions in the Palestinian-Israeli relationship were the next most important set of factors shaping Palestinian accommodative moves. In particular, the Gulf

War (and Palestinian policy therein) had seriously weakened the political and economic position of the Palestinians. At the same time, Israel emerged considerably strengthened from the fall of the Soviet Union (including the resulting migration of large numbers of Soviet Jews to Israel) and the defeat of Iraq. These developments led to the perception among the Palestinian leadership of a continuing significant and irreversible decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel, resulting in the potentially irreversible loss of vital Palestinian interests (national existence, statehood, territory). This served as a powerful stimulus to seek accommodation before it was too late. With respect to Israeli policies, there was little or no Palestinian perception of likely reciprocity from the Israeli government of the period.

The regional environment was less important than other external politico-military factors but it nevertheless contributed to the initiation of accommodation in several ways. To begin with, the Kuwait war of 1991 (which was a partly regional / partly global event) served as a catalyst (stimulus and opportunity) for the US to become actively involved in promoting accommodation and also weakened the regional constraints on accommodation. This in turn contributed to a regional climate more favourable to accommodation. Furthermore, the PLO's loss of regional support (both political and economic) as a result of the Kuwait crisis increased the constraints on any policy of confrontation with Israel and served as a stimulus for the pursuit of accommodation. On the other hand, the potential prisoners' dilemma situation of front-line Arab parties vis-à-vis Israel had only a modest impact in this phase since the Israeli government of the period was relatively inflexible on all fronts.

Economic conditions were relatively serious but still less important than external politico-military conditions in contributing to the PLO's pursuit of accommodation in this phase. By 1991, both living conditions in the Palestinian territories and the financial position of the PLO were very problematic. These developments generated not only serious problems of social / human security for the Palestinian population but also of budget security for the PLO. This in turn gave rise to growing concerns on the part of the PLO about regime security. These difficult economic conditions not only served as a constraint on the pursuit of conflictual policies but also generated pressures on the PLO to adopt a policy of accommodation to encourage the flow of external financial resources necessary to alleviate Palestinian / PLO economic difficulties and related security problems.

Domestic political conditions - while somewhat worrisome in this phase (in the sense of increased political frustrations and the growing strength of Islamist opposition movements) - were not as immediate or acute as economic problems. The PLO remained the pre-eminent – if somewhat challenged – political force in the Palestinian territories and Arafat its unquestioned leader. As a result, Arafat retained a significant degree of autonomy in the Palestinian political arena and a continuing margin of manoeuvre in foreign policy, which allowed him to engage in some accommodative moves vis-à-vis the US and Israel (permissive causality). At the same time, the combined Palestinian economic and political troubles generated incentives to seek (through accommodative moves) progress in the achievement of Palestinian national rights as well as the economic resources that would improve both economic and domestic political conditions.

In addition to the operational conditions which generated pressures for accommodation and reduced constraints / enhanced opportunities for the pursuit of such a policy, certain motivating factors also played a prominent role in the PLO's adoption of a policy of accommodation in this phase. The most pressing concerns for Arafat and the PLO in 1991 were external politico-military in nature. Given the ongoing Israeli encroachment / expansion into the Palestinian territories and the potentially irreversible decline of Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel, the Palestinian leadership were seriously worried about the permanent loss of Palestinian national territory, of the basis for a viable national society, and ultimately the chance for national existence / statehood. As a result, there developed a strong motivation to halt / reverse the process by taking advantage of a favourable shift in US policy to undertake accommodative moves that would win support from the US and lead to negotiations with Israel.

Apart from the acute external politico-military concerns, the difficult economic / financial conditions facing Palestinians were the next most immediate concern for both the PLO leadership and Palestinian population. However, while for the Palestinian population these difficulties were also the main underlying concern, for the PLO leadership the most important underlying concern was - at least in the medium term - their impact on PLO regime security (domestic political concerns). This was due to the fact that persistent economic and financial difficulties not only generated popular and elite dissatisfaction but also seriously undermined the ability of Arafat and the PLO to co-opt key elites and interest groups. In terms of motivating factors therefore, while economic conditions were a more immediate concern than domestic political conditions the latter were arguably a more important underlying concern.

Phase Two: 1993-95 (The Oslo Process)

During this second phase, the initiative for accommodation shifted from the superpower (US) to the parties themselves. With the help of a relatively uninvolved small power (Norway) secret talks were initiated by the new Israeli government and the PLO parallel to the official public talks in Washington. These talks resulted in a landmark framework agreement between Israel and the PLO. This second phase was more far-reaching than the first in that it involved not only procedural and limited behavioural accommodation but also important elements of substantive accommodation which were reflected in a series of agreements (Oslo I, Gaza-Jericho, Oslo II). These included official PLO recognition of Israel's right to existence and a pledge to amend the PLO Charter to that effect. For its part, Israel recognized the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and initiated direct negotiations with it. Furthermore, it implicitly recognized Palestinian national identity / national rights and agreed to negotiate the withdrawal from a substantial portion of the Occupied Territories as well as the establishment of a Palestinian authority to govern during a five year interim period of autonomy.

Once again, Palestinian accommodative moves were driven first and foremost by external politico-military conditions, most notably bilateral conditions. Here the protracted situation of hurting stalemate and the perception of irreversible decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel leading to potential permanent losses in vital Palestinian national interests continued to play a significant role in shaping Palestinian policy. However, the most important factor in explaining the renewed push for accommodation and the PLO's receptivity to this was undoubtedly the much greater flexibility in Israeli

policy resulting from the election of a new Labour government in June 1992. The assurances of a powerful third party may be useful in initiating a process of negotiation but no real substantive progress is possible without prospects of reciprocity from one's actual opponent.

The role of a powerful third party (the US) was less significant in promoting accommodation during this phase. Nevertheless, it did have an initial indirect role, having provided an important stimulus for the initiation of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations through the convening of the Madrid conference and the overseeing of subsequent bilateral talks in Washington. In so doing, it generated some momentum toward a political settlement. Moreover, in 1991-92 the Bush administration had clearly signalled its unhappiness at the rigidity of the Shamir government's policies toward the Palestinians (and other frontline Arab parties) and had exerted pressures to bring about a change in Israeli policies. This US pressure took its toll on the Shamir government and was a contributing factor to the election of a Labour government (1992), which pursued a much more accommodative policy toward the Palestinians and other frontline actors. Clearly, without US pressure and the resulting change in the Israeli government, the measures of substantive accommodation achieved during this phase would not have been possible. The US also played a more direct role later on as it helped to facilitate the last stages of the Oslo Agreement, to bless it, and to provide material support (both incentives and side payments) for its implementation.

The regional environment was also less important than in 1991 although it still had a role to play. The regional climate continued to be favourable toward accommodation, thereby limiting a potentially important constraint on a smaller Arab actor like the PLO.

Also the prisoners' dilemma situation of frontline Arab actors intensified as Israeli policy became more flexible, thereby creating some hope for honourable settlements. This generated a keen interest among all Arab frontline actors in pursuing a settlement and increased competition not to be left behind or be the last to negotiate a settlement for fear of being offered the least favourable terms as well as the smallest economic and other side payments.

The conditions of both the Palestinian economy and the PLO's finances also clearly worsened by 1993. This factor grew somewhat in importance but was still less decisive than external politico-military factors in shaping Palestinian accommodative moves. The difficult economic conditions served not only as a constraint on the pursuit of conflictual policies but also, more importantly, intensified the pressure for the PLO to encourage the flow of external financial resources necessary to alleviate Palestinian economic difficulties as well as to improve PLO regime security. Subsequent to the Oslo I agreement, as foreign aid began to flow to Palestine, economic conditions in the territories and the Palestinian Authority's finances began to improve albeit slowly. This served to underscore the importance of a sustained flow of external aid and thus the need to maintain a policy of accommodation.

With respect to domestic political conditions, Arafat and Fatah's situation worsened by 1993. Failure to achieve progress regarding external politico-military conditions combined with deteriorating economic conditions had eroded their political position. The growing strength of Islamic opposition movements, notably Hamas, and the resulting intensified political competition could have served as a constraint on accommodation. However, Arafat still enjoyed sufficient autonomy to pursue a major

accommodative initiative and was motivated to do so in part by the expectation that success would undercut the domestic opposition. In fact, the rise of Hamas (along with the election of a new Israeli government) helped to bring the PLO and Israel closer together, generating as it did a common fear of the impact of any further growth in Hamas strength. Thus domestic political conditions, while still less important than external politico-military conditions in shaping Palestinian accommodative moves, were arguably as important, if not more so, than economic conditions. By contrast, after the breakthrough Oslo I framework agreement (late 1993-95) domestic political conditions significantly improved for Arafat and Fatah. Their strengthened political position not only reduced constraints but also generated increased opportunity for the pursuit of further accommodation with Israel (Oslo II). Domestic political conditions thus remained as important as economic conditions in shaping Palestinian accommodative moves during the latter part of this phase.

In terms of motivating factors, external politico-military concerns (i.e. the urge to save what could be saved in terms of Palestinian nationhood and territory) were the strongest motive for accommodation. Economic and financial difficulties were more serious in 1993 than in 1991. In the short term, economic concerns were arguably more immediate and pressing than domestic political concerns for both the Palestinian community and the leadership. Indeed, they not only immediately threatened the economic welfare of the population (human security) and the financial situation of the PLO (budget security) but also in the medium term they endangered the domestic political position of the PLO (regime security). Economic concerns thus provided an additional motive for Arafat to seek accommodation with Israel (i.e. to seek a flow of economic resources that

would help resolve these problems). Domestic political concerns were also more serious than before at least in the pre-Oslo phase (1993). These were almost as immediate and pressing as economic concerns since the rise of Hamas was becoming more and more of an immediate problem. It was also arguably a more fundamental concern for the PLO since regime security was threatened. Nevertheless, increased opposition and political competition did not lead to rigidity in policy towards a traditional opponent (Israel) as it often does. Rather, heightened domestic political concerns seem to have contributed to accommodation as Arafat sought to achieve a major breakthrough with Israel not only to promote vital national interests but also to bring about a significant improvement in domestic economic / financial conditions. Resolving these two major concerns would in turn be the means to dramatically reduce domestic political opposition and strengthen the position of Arafat / the PLO in the Palestinian political arena.

By contrast, in the post Oslo I phase (late 1993-1995), domestic political conditions were much more favourable for Arafat and Fatah. Domestic political concerns were thus less immediate / pressing and reduced in salience. Still, given the recent intensified experience of domestic political competition and opposition, such concerns continued to provide a motive for Arafat to work for further accommodation with Israel to undercut political challengers. At the same time, lessened domestic political concerns also served to enhance Arafat's room for manoeuvre in pursuing further accommodation. Economic conditions also began to improve following Oslo I albeit more slowly. Even though the growing flow of foreign aid did not bring about an immediate economic recovery, it raised the expectations of both Palestinian society and the Palestinian Authority for a better economic future. Economic concerns thus eased, although the desire to maintain, if not

increase, the flow of aid / investment certainly motivated Arafat and the PLO to continue along the path of accommodation.

Phase Three: 2000 (Camp David)

In the summer of 2000, a powerful third party (the US) was the initiator of a renewed attempt at accommodation – similar to the situation in 1991 (Madrid) but unlike that in 1993 (Oslo). The Palestinian Authority's response to the US invitation was reluctant while Israel's response was favourable. In contrast to Oslo's breakthrough but partial and phased substantive accommodation, the 2000 Camp David summit attempted substantive accommodation par excellence as it sought to resolve all the remaining core issues: the status of Jerusalem, the borders of the Palestinian state, the status of the settlements and the status of Palestinian refugees. While important progress on these issues was made at Camp David (and later in the Taba talks), negotiations collapsed over the Jerusalem issue and to a lesser extent the question of a Palestinian right to return. Part of the problem was that even though there was a very significant reduction of the differences on core issues, the very fact that these were negotiations about a final settlement (not interim arrangements) meant that even modest differences loomed larger because they threatened to turn into permanent losses for Palestinians. The breakdown in negotiations was followed by a resurgence of the *Intifada* as Chairman Arafat and the PA switched from a purely accommodative policy to a mixed accommodative – confrontational strategy intended to improve the Palestinian position at the negotiating table and to force Israel to give more ground on the unresolved substantive issues and conclude a fully honourable settlement. Instead, as the spiral of violence deepened, the process of accommodation not only faltered but regressed significantly, leaving the two sides further apart.

What explains the initial progress toward full substantive accommodation / conflict resolution (at least in terms of changes in Israeli policy) followed quickly by the breakdown of negotiations and outbreak of low intensity conflict ? Or, from another perspective, the shift by the Palestinians from a strategy of negotiations / accommodation to a mixed confrontational –accommodative strategy ? Once again, as far as stimulus, efficient, and permissive causes are concerned, external politico-military factors bear the prime responsibility, notably bilateral relations and the activities of powerful third parties. Renewed US pressure for a settlement and developments in Israeli policy were the main contributing factors to the apparent substantially greater flexibility of Israeli policy as reflected in proposals made at Camp David and later Taba. The Palestinian reluctance to accept the full package of US-Israeli proposals (presented on a take it or leave it basis) and the decision to shift to a mixed confrontational –accommodative strategy were also shaped largely by the same sets of factors.

In the sphere of bilateral relations, earlier (1993-95) Palestinian perceptions of Israeli flexibility and reciprocity were greatly compromised by Israel's subsequent broken promises. Indeed, for the better part of the second half of the 1990s, Israel – for one reason or another – delayed, partially implemented, or refused to implement its obligations under the interim agreements. Not only did the PA perceive Israel as reneging on implementing part or all of its earlier obligations but it also saw this behaviour as playing for time in which Israel could expropriate more land, expand its settlements, and create new facts on the ground to weaken the Palestinian position even further. Hence, even though there appeared to be definite movement in Israeli policy, the presentation of the proposals by the US instead of Israel and as an overall package on a 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis aroused

suspicion and mistrust on the part of Palestinians. Moreover, although there was a significant reduction in differences on substantive issues, the very fact that these were negotiations about a final settlement (not interim arrangements) meant that even modest differences loomed large because they threatened to turn into permanent losses for the Palestinians.

Bilateral conditions (along with regional factors) help explain not just the Palestinian refusal to conclude a substantive settlement at Camp David but also the shift to a mixed confrontational –accommodative strategy as reflected in the renewal of the *Intifada*. Whereas previously the Palestinian leadership perceived the likelihood of an irreversible decline in Palestinian capabilities vis-à-vis Israel leading to the permanent loss of vital Palestinian national interests, the view now was less pessimistic both politically and militarily. Politically, a Palestinian Authority now existed in the Occupied Territories and the idea of a Palestinian state was becoming more and more widely accepted, even in Israel, giving the Palestinians greater confidence. Furthermore, Hezbollah had succeeded by means of guerrilla warfare in forcing Israel to withdraw completely and unconditionally from Lebanon by the spring of 2000, just months before the Camp David summit. This served as an important example and stimulus for the Palestinians themselves to resort to low intensity conflict as a means of re-establishing a mutually hurting situation which would also hopefully oblige the Israelis to think seriously about full withdrawal from the West Bank / Gaza.

The role of a powerful third party (the US) was the next most important factor shaping the mixed outcomes at Camp David and subsequently. The desire of President Clinton to leave his mark on the international diplomatic stage led to intense diplomatic

activity on his part in the course of 2000 to broker a settlement of at least one of the remaining Arab-Israeli conflicts (Palestine or Syria). To this end, he worked closely with the new Israeli Prime Minister (Ehud Barak) to restart negotiations on each front and to generate new proposals that might bridge the gaps between the opposing parties. As previously noted, this intense activity was not only responsible for the convening of US-Israeli-Palestinian summit negotiations (Camp David) but also contributed significantly to the movement in Israeli policy at that meeting. However, the close working relationship with Prime Minister Barak and the perceived US tilt toward Israel also were responsible to some degree for Palestinian suspicions and mistrust of the proposals. As a result, Palestinian perceptions of potential reciprocity from the US that had been present in 1991, and to a lesser extent in 1993-95 now declined noticeably, parallel to Palestinian perceptions of Israel. Together these contributed to the Palestinian switch from negotiations alone to a mixture of confrontation and negotiations as the means to redress the imbalance in positions and bring about a satisfactory settlement.

Conditions in the regional environment were still less important than bilateral conditions and third party activity but played a renewed role in shaping the dynamics of the conflict. As previously noted, the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon (May 2000) as a result of intense armed resistance from Hezbollah was an important catalyst for the new uprising. The PA / PLO had also regained some political (and economic) support from the Gulf States, Egypt and Syria thereby improving their regional position as compared to 1991 or even 1993. This was a permissive factor in the pursuit of a mixed confrontational-accommodative policy. Finally, there was no longer a stimulus to reach a settlement arising from a prisoners' dilemma situation among the frontline states,

since Jordan had already signed a peace treaty while the latter had reached a deadlock with Israel earlier in the year.

For their part, the economic conditions facing both the PA and Palestinian society were better than in 1991 and 1993 as the fragile economy began to recover slowly from 1995 to 2000. Consequently they had less impact on PA policy than previously although they possibly served as a permissive factor in the PA's decision to pursue confrontation (low intensity conflict) along with accommodation. Domestic political conditions were more mixed. On the one hand, on the eve of Camp David, Arafat and Fatah enjoyed both a fairly high level of support vis-à-vis Hamas and a capacity to clamp down on its military wing. This provided some degree of freedom of manoeuvre in foreign policy, even to pursue an accommodative policy. More importantly though, the domestic political climate regarding Israel was increasingly suspicious, mistrustful, and even hostile. This served both to create serious constraints on the pursuit of a purely accommodative policy and also to generate important stimulus for the pursuit of confrontation along with accommodation. Domestic political conditions therefore were more important than economic conditions but not quite as significant as external political conditions (from which they derived) in shaping Arafat's mixed policy of confrontation along with accommodation.

As far as motivating factors are concerned, the most pressing concern for Arafat and the PA in 2000 remained external politico-military problems, namely the threat of the potential permanent loss of vital Palestinian national interests (i.e. national existence, statehood, and a viable territory). Hezbollah's recent success (May 2000) in forcing a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon reinforced Arafat's determination to reject anything short of a similar Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. It also

strengthened his willingness to resort to (limited) force if necessary to achieve this. Domestic political concerns arising from a Palestinian political climate that had become strongly mistrustful and suspicious of Israel were the next most important factor contributing to Palestinian rejection of anything less than a fully honorable settlement and to the use of confrontation if necessary to pursue this. Finally, with the improvement in economic conditions from 1995 to 2000, economic concerns declined in importance relative to other sets of factors as motivations for Palestinian policies at this point.

PLO Strategies Toward Israel 1991 - 2000

Explanatory Factors

	1991	1993 / Late 1993-95	2000
OBJECTIVE FACTORS			
External Politico-Military Conditions	High Difficulty	High Difficulty / Medium Difficulty	Medium Difficulty
<i>Powerful Third Parties</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>Semi-Passive / Semi -Active</i>	<i>Active</i>
<i>Bilateral Relations (with Israel)</i>			
Changing Power Relations	Irreversible Decline	Irreversible Decline	Reversible Decline
Opponent's Policies	No Reciprocity	Reciprocity	Reduced Reciprocity
<i>Regional Environment</i>			
<u>Regional Developments As Catalyst</u>	Yes	Repercussions	Yes
<u>The Regional Climate</u>	Accommodative	Accommodative	Mixed
<u>The PLO / PA's Regional Support</u>	No	No / Yes	Yes
<u>The Prisoner's Dilemma Situation</u>	Yes	Yes	No
Economic Conditions	Medium Difficulty	High Difficulty	Medium Difficulty
Domestic Political Conditions	Low Difficulty	Medium Difficulty / Low Difficulty	Medium Difficulty
SUBJECTIVE FACTORS (Motivations)			
<i>External Politico-Military Concerns</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Economic Concerns</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Medium-high</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Domestic Political Concerns</i>	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium / Medium-low</i>	<i>Medium-low</i>

* * * * *

In short, in all three cases the main factors shaping PLO policy regarding accommodation with Israel were external politico-military conditions / concerns (i.e. realist concerns). This is understandable in cases like these of protracted conflict involving high stakes (national existence, statehood, territory) and major asymmetries (including control of the disputed interests by one party). Among the politico-military factors, as might be expected in conflicts in the developing world, powerful third parties played a significant role in all three cases. This was true both in terms of initiating / managing the process of accommodation and providing assurances as well as incentives / constraints for the parties. Indeed, superpower activity and assurances were arguably decisive in the first case in initiating the process of accommodation. Bilateral condition, however, had the greatest impact on PLO policy, whether positively or negatively, in the other two cases. These conditions included not only a situation of hurting stalemate and perceptions of changing power relations (especially of irreversible decline vis-à-vis one's opponent) but also more importantly, perceptions regarding the probability of reciprocity from one's opponent. In this connection, assurances of a powerful third party may be useful in initiating a process of accommodation but no real substantive progress appears possible without prospects of reciprocity from one's actual opponent. The impact of the regional environment, for its part, is weaker than the other external politico-military factors in all three cases but is by no means insignificant. In particular, the regional (Arab) political climate regarding accommodation with Israel and the presence or not of a prisoners' dilemma situation among frontline Arab parties influenced attempts at accommodation but not in any decisive manner.

While external politico-military considerations were paramount in shaping PLO policy regarding Israel, economic and domestic political factors also played a contributing role. Economic factors were more immediate and pressing than domestic political factors in two of the three cases due to their damaging effect on both the welfare of the population (human security) and the financial resources of the PLO (budget security). In addition, they posed a challenge to the regime security of Arafat and the PLO albeit in the medium term. In the two cases in question (1991 and 1993), these economic factors operated in the expected fashion, reinforcing the pursuit of accommodation in order to encourage the flow of external resources necessary to improve Palestinian economic welfare / PLO financial resources as well as Arafat and the PLO's regime security. In the other case (2000), Arafat and the PA refused to accept the proposed US-Israeli terms for accommodation, largely for external politico-military reasons, despite the potentially significant negative effects on a slowly improving Palestinian economy.

Domestic political concerns were generally not as immediate or acute as economic concerns except possibly in the second case (1993). However, their underlying importance was arguably greater. In fact, economic and financial conditions were a focus of concern not as much for their own sake as for their impact on the political position / regime security of Arafat and the PA. In addition, domestic political concerns did not always operate in the expected fashion, that is to say as a restraint on accommodation towards traditional opponents. Certainly in one case (1991) when domestic political conditions were not too difficult, Arafat enjoyed a sufficient margin of manoeuvre in foreign policy which allowed him to engage in some accommodative moves toward Israel. On the other hand, in the second case (1993), when domestic political conditions were much more

difficult, Arafat was nevertheless able to undertake more far reaching measures of accommodation. In fact, the existence of a growing domestic political challenge probably spurred him on to attempt such accommodation to undercut the domestic challenge before it grew too strong. This challenge also contributed to greater Israeli flexibility toward the Palestinians in order to avoid having to negotiate with harder line forces (Hamas) later on. Finally, in the third case (2000), Arafat and the PA benefited from a fairly strong domestic political position according to some indicators (i.e. degree of political support compared to the opposition and capacity to crack down on the opposition) and therefore presumably enjoyed sufficient room for manoeuvre to undertake significant accommodative moves. Nevertheless, they refused to accept relatively far-reaching US-Israeli proposals for a settlement and embarked instead on measured confrontation that spiralled out of control. This is explicable in large part by another important dimension of domestic political conditions, namely the suspicious and hostile political climate regarding Israel prevailing among Palestinians at this point.

This case study has attempted to shed light on the conditions under which developing countries involved in protracted conflicts participate in processes of accommodation (initiation) and subsequently either press ahead with or pull back from it (dynamics). There are several key findings:

- 1- The primary importance of external politico-military factors as the main source of pressures, constraints / opportunities and motivations for and against accommodation.
- 2- Powerful third parties play a key role in initiating / mediating processes of accommodation within the developing world, in providing assurances / incentives that encourage substantive accommodation, and in generating constraints on confrontation in such cases.
- 3- Bilateral conditions, notably situations of hurting stalemate, perceptions on the part of the weaker party of irreversible decline in capabilities leading to permanent losses of vital national interests, and above all solid expectations of reciprocity from one's opponent constitute the key factors in generating meaningful moves toward substantive accommodation.
- 4- Difficult economic conditions / concerns serve as an additional spur for the pursuit of accommodation, reinforcing the impact of external politico-military conditions / concerns.
- 5- Difficult domestic political conditions (intensifying internal political competition / challenges, climate of hostility toward an opponent) tend to act as a constraint on accommodation. However, an established leader with strong nationalist credentials can still retain significant room for manoeuvre

on foreign policy issues. Such conditions can, on occasion, also serve as a spur for the politically challenged regime and its opponent to seek accommodation in order to undercut the rising challenger.

These tendencies are likely to be found in cases similar to the present one, namely protracted conflicts in the developing world characterized by high stakes (territory, power relations, statehood, national existence) and major asymmetries (in power, backers, control over the disputed stakes). They are likely to be the most pronounced in the case of the weaker party to such conflicts.

The findings would potentially apply not only to inter-state conflicts but also to other conflicts in the developing world, where quasi-states are pitted against states. Examples in this category include the Tamil Tigers vs. Sri Lanka, the SPLA vs. the Sudan, the Polisario in the West Sahara vs. Morocco, the Islamic insurgency vs. the Philippines and the FARC vs. Colombia (although the latter conflict is ideological rather than nationalistic in nature). In the last three cases, there is an additional element of similarity with the PLO-Israel case namely that the governments / states in question are all backed by the world's sole superpower.

It might seem as if there is an inherent contradiction in talking about conflicts which are both strongly asymmetrical and protracted since one might assume that the stronger party (especially if it is backed by the sole superpower) would be capable of a decisive victory. However, if the stronger party is a developing state (as in most of the above-mentioned cases), its overall military, economic, and political weakness usually prevent it from winning a decisive victory over the quasi-state and the protracted conflict intensifies its problems. In fact, whether the stronger party is a developing or a developed

state (like Israel), the quasi-state's resort to low intensity conflict in territory with which it is familiar partially negates its opponent's superiority and contributes over time to an (unevenly) hurting stalemate. If the stronger state, whether developing or developed, is also backed by the sole superpower, the weaker state / quasi-state is at a double disadvantage. In these circumstances, external politico-military conditions / concerns tend to become of crucial importance to the weaker party and sometimes prompt it to seek accommodation at a point of mutually (albeit unevenly) hurting stalemate. At this point, the perception of potential reciprocity from the superpower rather than its opponent could be sufficient to initiate a process of accommodation. This whole relatively uncharted area of international relations is certainly worth increased exploration.

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