

The Middle East between War and Peace

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The ups and downs of the Middle East peace process during the last decade, and its alternating cycles of dialogue and violence during its diverse stages have led to a crisis in expectations and diagnosis. The nature of the conflict, its historical roots, its permanence and multiple dimensions—ethnic, religious, national and political—has bred skepticism. Not only borders and territories are in dispute, but also rights and memories.

For a century, the different regional actors lived in a permanent state of mutual estrangement. Rooted in conflictive social and economic relations between Jews and Arabs that go back to the Ottoman period, as well as antagonistic political relations defined during the English mandate, two nationalisms were developed. The foundation of the State of Israel caused further extremity in the relationship. Moreover, from a historical perspective, Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a secular national movement became the "Other" for Islam and the Arab world (Almog; Bankier).

Different dimensions were conjugated from the beginning of the conflict: the interstate, between the State of Israel and the Arab countries; the inter-communal, between the State of Israel and the Palestinians, and the inter-Arab rivalries among different states in the Arab world. A fourth dimension, the international, would play a determinant role in politics, beginning with the Madrid Peace Conference and the Oslo Accords, up to the Route Map. The geopolitical reconfiguration that the world has undergone has been determinant in the close nexus between internal and international politics (Bokser).

Even though these diverse dimensions contributed to the development of a process in which stereotypes and prejudices have fed suspicions and mutual distrust, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process initiated in the early 1990s, signified a turning point and cast a new light on the relation between primordial identities and politics as well as between national aspirations and functional interdependencies. While transformations in the international

sphere have improved the structural conditions for negotiation—enabling the initial stage of the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 and impacting successive phases thereof—the changes within the region and its own internal dynamics have nourished a new political resolve.

However, in the face of recurrent interruptions in the dialogue and the irruption of violence, one of the main challenges the region faces is the ability of this political will to influence the continued reshaping of ethnic and cultural identities. In other words, the question is to what extent the parties can distinguish between grandiose intentions and viable political projects, in order to commit themselves realistically to the latter, and to what extent they can defend a political space in which the culture of negotiation conceives the Other in ways that go beyond the binomial friend or enemy and its logic of ultimate winners and losers.

Along this long decade, Israeli-Palestinian relations have shown contrary signs, in a difficult oscillation between dialogue and violence, between war and peace. In light of the transformations in the international political configuration, it is worth exploring some of their implications in the region as well as their interactions with the internal changes the region went through during this period.

In the international sphere, the consolidation of the role played by the United States went hand in hand with the exercise of unipolarity and the search for new alliances. The various initiatives that the United States offered to find a solution to the region combine firm principles with pragmatic adjustment to changing circumstances. Thus, the tension between initial preferences and concrete scenarios has ultimately been resolved in favor of the latter. For its part, the region's own internal changes can account for the recurrences, continuities and ruptures in the peace process. The failure to achieve its main assumption—as a gradual, accumulative and incremental process—has affected the construction of trust between the actors and reinforced the lack of credibility in the peace process itself.

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At the beginning of the decade, the end of bipolarity, the Gulf war and the new world order led to a political *rapprochement* in the region. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the USSR, it became possible to put an end to the historical pattern of subsuming regional politics in

imperial interests. The conflicts in the region seemed no longer to depend on rival orbits which blocked autonomous initiatives raised by the main actors. New avenues for alliances were opened. Despite the uncertainty associated with the definition of what President George Bush called then the 'New International Order,' the outlines of the central role that the United States would assume were sketched (Klieman).

The Gulf War amplified the structural conditions for a negotiated solution to the conflict by shedding light on the limits of a Pan-Arabic alignment. Israel's interests coincided with those of the majority of Arab countries—with the exception of Libya, Mauritania, Yemen, Sudan, Tunisia, Jordan, Iran, as well as the PLO and Hamas—in the need to restrain the hegemonic pretensions of Iraq (Bercovich and Mandell). Iraq's invasion of Kuwait modified the equilibrium of the Arab world, affecting vital interests in the region. Simultaneously, it underscored the limits of the region's main organisms in finding new solutions and bolstered the role played by the more moderate and pragmatic countries (Kam).

Despite the division of the Arab world over the Gulf War, a strong anti-Western feeling developed among the majority of the Arab and Muslim populations. On his part, in what was defined as one of the "paradoxes of democracy," Saddam Hussein received his "most fervent and generalized" support precisely from those Arab countries where freedom of speech was less restricted (Lewis). Still another paradox was the fact that it was Hussein's secular regime that had the greatest impact in mobilizing Islam. Certainly, President Bush's frequent invocation of God reinforced the image that this was a religious war, thus underscoring the arguments beyond *Jihad* that claimed a Western and Zionist conspiracy.

The changes in the international scene brought by the war and the new hegemony of the United States allowed the rise of a novel methodology for conflict resolution, opening the way to the Madrid Peace Conference both in its bilateral and multilateral circuits. While the multilateral dimension sought the building of interdependent functional spheres in areas such as the economy, health, technology and education, the bilateral dimension, essentially political, was meant to lay the ground for facilitating such interaction. The new diplomacy promoted a double circuit of negotiations, encouraging the dialogue between Israel and its Arab neighbors in parallel with the opening of Israeli-Palestinian conversations.

One must emphasize that the United States' involvement was built on the interests and weaknesses of the regional actors. In this perspective, aware

of the fading of the previous Russian support, Syria's motivation was to capitalize upon its participation in the war and become part of the new international order. The renewal of Syria's relations with Egypt in December 1989 and its approach towards the US since 1990 can be seen as part of this strategy which was further reinforced by its questioning of the wager for "strategic equilibrium" with Israel.

Jordan's motives should also be seen in light of the need to restore its position *vis-à-vis* the US and its wish to improve its position in the Arab world. Thus, Jordan joined the negotiation table in order to formalize the tacit security system with Israel while seeking to be perceived distant from the Palestinian cause. The fear of being banished from the new international order led the Palestinians to accept the initial structure of the joint delegation with Jordan. The difficulties surrounding the representative nature of this structure would reappear in subsequent negotiations and the character of the Palestinian leadership would influence future agreements and limit the institutionalization of their political project of state building (Bokser). Even though the representatives of the territories were not democratically elected, and despite their connections to the PLO in Tunis, their legitimacy in the region underscored the existence of more than one center of power.

For Israel, the end of bi-polarity signified the possible erosion of its position as a strategic ally of the West; moreover, during the *Scuds* threat it discovered the insufficiency of territorially based defense (Bercovich and Mandel).

What each part sought, both in economic and in strategic territorial terms resulted as contradictory as in the past. Thus, the position of the US and the security guarantees it offered worked as the required incentive for the negotiation process. The search for a new positioning of the region in the global economy was a further incentive. The awareness that global politics is intertwined with global markets encouraged peace making in order to create those conditions that would attract the flow of capital to the zone. The option of a regional market opened the possibility of overcoming former antagonisms on the basis of convergent interests: elevating standards of living and reducing existing inequalities in the different populations (Peres). It was thought that a common market, based on functional interdependence, would minimize other conflicts. However, this vision prompted critical voices that underscored the risk of generating new forms of dependency or paternalism, whether real or imaginary (Avineri; Tsiddon Chatto).

The search for a new position in the global economy certainly stood behind the process that began in October 1991. It played an even greater role in the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles in September 1993. The transition from a discourse based on national and religious referents to a political discourse which stresses economic development as the source of legitimatization was indeed a radical change (Bill and Springborg).

The profound challenges facing this assumption, however, since then, have led to basic questions. To what extent could the logic of the market impose its own dynamics on the construction of new political platforms? Could the imperative of widening the market become a resource for bringing forth a new dynamics to national claims? How could the global economy interact with political sovereignty? Could the new paradigm of global order enhance group cohesion while encouraging inter-group cooperation?

A determinant factor to take into account was the fatigue of the actors. They entered the negotiation process without knowing in advance the outline of the final agreement, as if they were boarding a train without knowing what their final destination would be. Along the way, even though they discovered that the price they would have to pay was very high, they knew that maintaining existing conditions would be catastrophic (Harcavi). Thus, while the links between politics and market acquired new meanings in the international realm, at the regional level the possibility of a new relation between politics, society and culture played a determinant role in enhancing the will for peace.

From the Israeli perspective, the fatigue derived from the fact that the conflict with the Arab world and with the Palestinians was not just another conflict but rather the decisive one, which affected central aspects of its political, ideological, social and cultural life. The original rejection by the Arab world of Israel's right to exist marked the logic of the main wars that surrounded the national project. Premises such as linguistic and cultural rebirth, human and economic renaissance through "Hebrew work" and territorial concentration in the land of Israel, among others, led to the construction of a national society. Its rejection by the Arab world shaped the intensity of the antagonism.

The Lebanese war and the first *Intifada* left their imprints on various dimensions of the individual and collective life in Israeli society. One of the most notorious ones was the loss of consensus regarding the national

security question—central to collective self perception and reflexive consciousness—which became an issue of public debate. Thus viewed, although the Arab-Israeli conflict had various dimensions, it was the inter-communitarian one between Palestinians and Israelis that became the most relevant and visible, directly affecting the perception of Israeli society. Paradoxically, coupled with increased feelings of insecurity, the use of military force amid the civilian population became controversial. Toward the end of 1980s, the weakening of the conviction in the necessity of war as means for survival paved the way for its definition as optional and avoidable (Bokser).

Moreover, the presence of the Arab population amid the Israeli society has confronted it with a basic dilemma of political and cultural identity. This quandary has been formulated in terms of the challenge to maintain the dual character of the state, as both Jewish and democratic. If on the one hand, in the name of democracy, the Arab minority (and eventual majority) were granted equal rights, then the Jewish character would be lost. On the other hand, if rights for Arabs were denied in the name of maintaining a Jewish State, it would be a threat to its democratic character. Thus, another related element which fostered peace negotiations was the awareness of the demographic growth of the Arab population in Israel as well as the Palestinian population in the territories (Ben Meir). Considering the changing inflows of Jewish immigration as well as the dynamics of emigration, demographic projections pointed to the fact that by 2010 Arabs would constitute the majority of the population in Israel.

The first *Intifada* reinforced the basic dilemmas of identity in the Israeli Arab population; it prompted political alignment and identification with the Palestinian population and a growing perception of a common shared destiny. Even though it did not drag this Arab population to the confrontation—limiting its support to the economic and spiritual realms—it fostered the development of radical and Islamic movements (Rekhess). The second *Intifada* would reinforce the prevalence of ethnic over civic identity.

When approaching the factors unfolded in the Palestinian side, one may first refer to the predicament which the Arab world faced, according to Ajami, stemming from its history as a long chronicle of illusions and despair in which politics had repeatedly been substituted with violence; a world that had assisted the failure of its social and cultural renaissance as well as its unification (Ajami). The Palestinian question was dependent on the Arab societies and their interstate rivalries. One should remember that Black

September in Jordan, marked by the killing of Palestinians in 1970, and later, the fall of the district of Beirut where the PLO headquarters stood, are signals of the systematic marginalization of the Palestinian position in the Arab world.

The changing dynamics of its political organization and action have been closely linked to the socio-economic and cultural development in the territories occupied by Israel. Economic growth during the 1970s in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip halted towards the middle of the 1980s, precisely when population growth accelerated. These critical conditions brought changes in the cultural profile of the population, since unemployment induced the youth to stay in the educational framework up to higher education, thus creating a new and qualified sector with no occupational opportunities (Gilbar; Frisch). Professionalization without occupational opportunities together with political dissatisfaction interacted in a complex way to detonate the *Intifada*.

However, proliferation of educational institutions and their impact on the consolidation of secular life went hand in hand with Islamic fundamentalist movements. Contrary to the prevailing vision that explains the rise of fundamentalism as a result of economic impairment *vis-à-vis* increased needs, it is mainly linked to accelerated processes of social change. It brings differentiation in prevailing life styles, leading to a loss of economic cultural and political centers and frameworks of reference (Eisenstadt). While on the cultural level the impact of external factors leading to social change was experienced as a threat of "contamination" of religious or basic civilizational premises, the social groups that adopted fundamentalism came from sectors—old or new—that felt they had been, or in effect had been, dispossessed in their access to social, political or cultural centers. As it affected the entire Arab world, the increase of fundamentalism among the Palestinian population brought new tensions between political actors, magnified by the impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran which served both as a model and as a source of financing (Menashri). Islamic fundamentalism assumed greater centrality as a political actor in the territories rivaling with the nationalist character which, until then, had been dominant in the movement for Palestinian liberation (Kurz; Shadid).

The degree of autonomy with which the Palestinian population acted during the *Intifada* reflected the search for identity of the new generation and became a threat not only for Israel but also for the PLO. It prompted the PLO into an ongoing contradictory process of radicalization and moderation with

a profound ambiguity between the idea and its institutional existence. The former refers to the notion of the Palestinian people as a national collective, and from it the latter gained strength. The proliferation of radical and fundamentalist groups questioned the PLO's hegemony and its role as partner in the process of negotiation.

As seen by the inner transformations that the Israeli and Palestinian societies went through in the new international scenario, the mutual recognition led to the peace process and the formulation of the Oslo accords. These, as well as the subsequent agreements signed in Cairo on May 1994, for the rapid concretion of the Declaration of Principles for Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho first, proved that political will could predominate over the diverse obstacles. The main achievements of Oslo included: the withdrawal of the military forces and Israeli civilians from the above mentioned cities; the transfer of authority to the local government and internal security; and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority, whose designation, even though it depended on Arafat, opened the debate about the democratization of the Palestinian government. The agreements also included the establishment of joint institutions for civil and regional cooperation; the question of Palestinian jurisdiction over the land and the sub-soil, leaving aerial control in Israeli hands, as well as the establishment of Palestinian security forces. These along with other topics ranging from the question of prisoners to economic cooperation, needed to be enforced by the negotiation of specific commitments, otherwise they could disrupt the entire process. The flexibility of the PLO delegation at Oslo led it to abandon traditional Palestinian conditions such as Israel's recognition of the Palestinian right to self determination. There was no linkage between the interim and the final agreement, a central Palestinian claim in the past.

The speed as well as the relatively successful implementation of the accords led to the incorporation of Jordan in the peace scene. Together with Jordan's political motives regarding the construction of a Palestinian State, the possibility that Washington would satisfy Jordan's urgent economic needs (allowing the canceling of its debt and the renewal of its military arsenal) played a central role. Both factors reinforced the role of the United States as mediator; and the Clinton administration offered support in exchange for entering the peace process. In this sense, the dynamics of the process seemed to reinforce the US approach toward the pragmatic Arab block, initiated with the collapse of the main components of Syria's strategic parity concept—the USSR and Iraq.

Thus, the first half of the 1990s was no longer thought of as another period in the recurrent conflict but was rather conceived in terms of the peace process. Dialogue and negotiation, despite their slow progress towards peace are an essential part of any solution to the conflict first and foremost because they exclude violence (Sznajder, 2002). Thus, success depended not only on the scope of the agreement negotiated but on its capacity to neutralize those elements opposed to peace. As Hana Siniara affirmed, "constructive ambiguity" was strategically positive. However, violence still existed and could effectively interrupt negotiations.

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The fluctuations in the peace process, during the decade were associated with the changing dynamics on both sides. The peace agreement was pushed ahead by Prime Minister Rabin. Elected in 1992, he executed the Oslo accords with the retreat from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. However, considerable difficulties both structural and conjunctural among Palestinians and Israelis led to the delay in the implementation of the accords first and to its interruption, later.

Opposition to the constitution of the Palestinian Authority, as well as to the peace process, stemming from the fundamentalist groups—Islamic Jihad and Hamas—expressed itself in a call to boycott Arafat's election as President of the Palestinian Authority in January 1996. Even though it failed, a wave of terrorist attacks was launched in subsequent months against Israel, undermining the basic premises of the peace process. This chain of violent events gave way to the elections that brought Benjamin Netanyahu to power after Rabin's assassination in November 1995. This change in the Israeli government was the tragic ultimate result of a campaign to de-legitimize Prime Minister Rabin, orchestrated by Israeli settlers and by groups from nationalist religious sectors. Despite having complied already with the first phase of the Oslo accords, the issue of vacating the biblical cities unleashed strong opposition among these sectors. Their resistance became a pressure strong enough to interrupt subsequent phases in the implementation of the accords. The inversion of the Peace-Security binomial was consummated by Israel's new government which emphasized the Security-Peace formula.

Later on, new elections in Israel were carried out due, among other reasons, to the deteriorating economic conditions of the war-ridden region and the instability along the northern border with Lebanon. In the elections,

held in May 1999, the Labour Party won, bringing Prime Minister Barak into power.

Both the Israeli political juncture as well as the international expectations may explain the new efforts to accelerate the peace process, going beyond the gradualist methodology established in Oslo. Prime Minister Barak, pressured by the need to obtain plebiscitary approval for his peace proposal, promoted the boldest initiative, up to that point, for a comprehensive solution of the conflict, leading to Camp David II in July 2000. The renewed role that the United States wanted to play and its active initiative based on both global and regional considerations led to the meeting.

Once again the US government had to move away from its initial position to adjust itself to more pragmatic conditions. In this sense, Camp David II can be compared to the 1978 Camp David, where President Carter moved from his initial stand on a comprehensive peace plan to be accomplished in an international conference to a bilateral Israeli/Egyptian peace, the very logic of which was incompatible with the administration's initial concept (Ben-Zvi).

The actual proposal included giving back more than 92% of the territories of the West Bank and Gaza, the rest remaining in Israeli hands in order to concentrate there all the settlements that would be dismantled as the territories were given back. At the same time, it included annexation of zones near Jerusalem and between Hebron and Jerusalem, in which settlements preceded the existence of the state of Israel, and it included a block of settlements to the north of Jerusalem. The proposal also contemplated the refugee issue, with several quantitative options for return as well as international arrangements for compensation. The question of Jerusalem was also included, with proposals for partial Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighborhoods and for Israeli sovereignty over the Mountain Temple-Harm al Sharif.

The possibility to move from an existential confrontation to a political conflict management solution seemed to be a tangible possibility. The global character of the proposal sought the construction of mutual trust among the parties. Arafat's rejection of the proposal has been explained in terms of his mistrust of the shift from the gradualism of Oslo to the definition of a final agreement. It certainly was supported by the perception that tremendous sacrifices had already been made in Oslo and that any further step would not only be counterproductive but also unsustainable.

It also reflected the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict differed fundamentally from the inter-state Arab-Israeli conflict due, among other reasons, to the profound significance of collective memory and identity. Palestinian identity was molded in the struggle over the fate of the country and issues such as the refugees question and Jerusalem were not approached as political but rather as meta-political matters. Thus, while Israelis went to Camp David to solve the problems created by the Six Days War, Palestinians carried with them previous existential issues. Therefore, while peace with Arab States has been a strictly political undertaking, peacemaking with Palestinians touches religious and historical roots (Ben Ami, "So Close").

Facing the end of his mandate, President Clinton was interested in accelerating the negotiations of peace in order to promote the US's renewed interest in repositioning itself in the region. Consequently, he summoned new efforts such as the meeting in Sharm al Sheik where the Mitchell Commission was created in December 2000, and the reunion in Taba in January 2001. Neither of these efforts prospered. Violence as an autonomous expression of frustration amongst Palestinian population and as a political tool in Arafat's hands, on the one hand, and the growing deterioration of security in Israel and Israeli settlements on the other, impeded a cease-fire and successively aggravated the region's condition.

The Palestinian Authority's lack of political institutionalization, its inability to neutralize oppositional demands and its unwillingness to pay the price of political alternation, were factors that largely explain the rejection Arafat manifested towards politics as a means of conflict management. While acting as the President of the Palestinian Authority, responsible for state building, Arafat continued to hold the roles of chief of the PLO's Executive Committee, leader of the *Fatah* Central Committee (the PLO's main political faction), and President of the Palestinian state in exile, declared in 1988. The latter three roles acted in detriment of the former, impeding his transition from leader of a terrorist organization for national liberation to a statesman committed to democracy and modernization (Robinson). On the contrary, his leadership reinforced the centrality of the destruction of Israel as a referent for the articulation of Palestinian identity.

Fragmentation on the Palestinian side took place not only among the political and military organizations but also between the leadership that was forged in the region and the one which came from exile. The great irony of the 1987-1993 *Intifada* was that the signer of the Oslo Accords was the PLO group from Tunis, which had lost its prestige after the Gulf War, instead of

being the group that fought in the territories (Robinson). Leadership coming from exile assumed top directive positions in the Palestinian Authority, displacing local leadership and exhibiting a limited capacity to construct civic links. This failure is essential for understanding the growing frustration and loss of confidence in their representative character that led to the second *Intifada*, beginning in September 2000.

The second *Intifada* ended with the coexistence of violent opposition and negotiations, evidencing not only that Arafat was unable to neutralize violent opposition but also that he saw it as a strategic resource. This popular revolt expanded progressively until it managed to drag along with it both official and non-official armed Palestinian elements. Israel responded with successive reprisals. As Sznajder appropriately affirmed, each part acted within the framework of their respective structures, levels of institutionalization and degrees of legality (Sznajder). In Israel, the *Intifada* was behind the electoral success Sharon had in 2001. The establishment of a national unity government opened a period of fragile political equilibrium. The increase in violence and insecurity would progressively define the direction it took.

Arafat's decision to liberate activists from the Jihad and Hamas terrorist groups, with its related increase in violence, led to the weakening of negotiation as the route for statehood. Politics lost its place. Thus, there was neither time nor occasion to reconstitute mutual trust. The internal transformations in both societies influenced once again, in a contradictory way, the oscillations between violence and peace.

In the case of the Palestinian society, economic stagnation brought growing unemployment. Young generations gained a far more professional profile of a low lucrative nature, which in turn paved the way for political radicalization. Perhaps an extreme way of exemplifying this situation can be found in the figure of the suicide attacker in whom youth and high levels of education converge. Many of them had been recruited by the Islamic Block of the University of Al Najah, in Nablus, and by activists from the Islamic University of Gaza (Tal). This self-image, built on the basis of the negation of the Other, was radicalized through its intellectualization.

Violence strengthened even more Islamic fundamentalism at the expense of Arafat's leadership. Even though Islamic fundamentalism is no different, at its core, from any other kind of religious fundamentalism—in so far as it is derived from disenchantment with Modernity—in the Muslim

world this notion acquired growing social and religious relevance. Profoundly anti-secular, this vision of the world not only condemned the Western regimes as unfaithful but also other Muslim governments that relegated Islam to a marginal role. Both were considered 'yahili,' barbarians, and thereby should be combated through *jihad*.

The initial rise of fundamentalism within the Palestinian population was now enhanced by the absence of public and social policies as well as by the corruption of the Palestinian Authority, opening the door for fundamentalist groups that filled the vacuum, permeating the social fabric and gaining its social support.

During the second *Intifada*, Fatah openly supported and even participated in more than a few acts of terrorism against the Israeli civilian population, acting through their 'military arms': the Force 17 (Arafat's bodyguards); the Tanzim (the military wing of the Fatah, led by Marwan Barghouti); and the Martyrs' Brigade of Al-Aksa. Among the main movements with an Islamic fundamentalist character, the most important was Hamas (an acronym of Harakat al-Mukawamat al-Islamiya, Islamic Resistance Movement). Founded in 1988 by the sheikh Ahmad Yassin, it opposed the existence of Israel. Its platform declares that, 'There is no other solution to the Palestinian question except the holy war,' and its stated purpose is to install an Islamic state instead of the 'Zionist entity.' Its military branch, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, has been responsible for the intense terrorist campaign against Israel. The second most important fundamentalist organization is the al-Yihad al-Islami, the Islamic Jihad, (founded in 1979-80 by the sheikh Abed el-Aziz Ouda, Dr. Fathi Shekaki and Bashir Musa) whose objective is also the destruction of Israel and the creation of a new pan-Islamic empire in the Middle East. The liberation of Palestine is seen as the key to the unification of the Arab and Muslim world. The active role of these organizations showed the tension between the religious and the nationalist perspectives of the Palestinian statehood projects, reinforced by political distress.

From a long term perspective, the breadth of the crisis limited the possibility of overcoming the historical Arab rejection of a Jewish state, and of political animosity combined with deep anti-Semitic sentiments. After Oslo a narrative of a peaceful past and coexistence between Muslims and Jewish prevailed, emphasizing thus the Western origin of anti-Semitism. However, already during the British mandate, both Muslim and Christian Arab nationalists supported regimes and ideologies of a profoundly

anti-Jewish character. Nationalist youth movements in Egypt and Iraq, as well as Palestinian leaders like as Haj Amin al Husseini established links with Nazi Germany. Hence, the coexistence of anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist sentiments with an anti-Jewish or anti-Semite discourse made it difficult to distinguish between the two parts of the national Arab rhetoric. It also made it difficult to distinguish between the use of propaganda for mobilization purposes and the depth of anti-Semitic feelings (Ofer).

The conflictive interaction between anti-Western and anti-Jewish ideological and discursive elements acquired a new intensity after 9/11. Even though cultures are never homogeneous, unitary, nor indivisible but rather the sum of ideas, elements and behaviors, this ideological confrontation threatened to widen the rivalries. In the Arab world, Zionism operated as a substitute for the Arab encounter with the West; and the origins of this encounter can be traced to even before the establishment of the state of Israel. If, from its beginnings, the Zionist project was seen by the Arab world as a test of their capacity to survive alongside Western modernity, the wars with Israel were experienced as a confirmation of the difficulties of that encounter (Rabinovich). 9/11 added new elements to this dimension of antagonism by using arguments such as the imputed centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the United States support for Israel as causes of the aggression.

On the internal level, while the first *Intifada* reinforced the basic dilemmas of identity for the Arab population of Israel, the second one aggravated even more the fissures between populations. Israeli Arabs' backing for the Palestinian revolt was a central element in the tragic events of October 2000, when the Israeli police shot Arabs protesting in the Galilee: thirteen of them died and others were wounded. The rupture in the mutual trust between Jews and Israeli Arabs created tensions that have not diminished, in spite of the instauration of an independent Commission for the investigation of these events (Sznajder). The expressions of Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause increased the fear of a possible Fifth column, composed of Arab Israelis who see the Jewish state as illegitimate (Feldman).

From the Israeli perspective, the new *Intifada* reinforced the growing worries of demographic developments. The increase in Palestinian violence against Israeli civilian population heightened the perception that, in the long run, Arab-Palestinian population growth could result in the annihilation of Israel as a Jewish State.

It became clear that reoccupation of the territories would not resolve the problem. Prolonged occupation posed a threat to Israel's commitment to guarantee a Jewish majority because it would add 3 million Palestinians (Susser). For the Palestinians, on the contrary, this demographic trend slowed down the sense of urgency in the search for a solution.

The escalation of violence led public opinion in Israel to the right (Arian). In this way, moderation between Israelis and Palestinians was substituted by the threat of war and violence. The will to reach an agreement seemed more likely to be the result of the correlation of force rather than of negotiation and reconciliation.

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Changes in the international arena broadened once again the structural condition for peace, yielding new positive signs for political *rapprochement*. 9/11 generated a radical change in the international order as well as in the very concept of what war and terrorism meant (Beck). Undoubtedly, it directly affected the United States' foreign policy and its involvement in the region. Initially, George W. Bush's administration had distanced itself from the engagement the previous one had, pursuing unilateralist, largely exclusionist foreign and defense policies. Based on skepticism towards international organizations, it sought to minimize the risk of military entanglements in third-world areas, the Middle East included, preferring instead the tools of deterrence and coercive diplomacy (Ben Zvi). This strategy was seen as a less costly alternative to Clinton's active diplomatic and military engagement.

However, increased violence in the zone led to a stepping up of US intervention since April 2001, even before the September incidents. Fearful that the US policy of "benign neglect" could be interpreted by the Arab world as a *de facto* support for Israel, the Bush administration moved away from its low profile on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and embarked in a renewed effort to assure a stable cease-fire. Its principal instruments were the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Plan. Although the former was a product of the Clinton administration, it was adopted by the Bush administration. The report conceived an incremental and phased-in process of conflict reduction, which was predicated upon symmetry and reciprocity between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Part of the measures for the trust building needed for a cease-fire called on Israel to freeze all new settlement activities in the West

Bank, including the natural growth of the existing settlements. On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority was required to state in unequivocal terms that terrorism is unacceptable and to demonstrate its commitment by taking concrete measures to prevent acts of terrorism and to punish its perpetrators. Only after these measures were implemented, the report further stated, could diplomatic negotiations between the parties be reassumed (Mitchell Report, 2001).

In contrast to the Mitchell Report, the Tenet Plan of June 2001, concentrated exclusively on the first phase of the former report, defining modalities for a cease-fire. Hence, its sole function was to define the ways by which a viable and stable cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority could be reached. It required the Palestinian side to apprehend and jail terrorists, to collect illegal arms and to provide Israel with information on terrorist acts. As for Israel, the demands were to avoid attacks on civilian and military institutions in 'A' areas (those under complete control of the Palestinian Authority), to redeploy its military forces to positions held prior to the eruption of the second *Intifada*, and to lift the closure imposed upon Palestinian territories and cities. Colin Powell used both sides of the agreement during his visit in June 2001 to accelerate the operative conditions of cease-fire. However, his decision to accept Prime Minister Sharon's prerequisites, demanding seven days of tranquility followed by a six week cooling down period before applying the lines of action established in the Mitchell Report, limited the capacity of US diplomacy to maneuver amid the Palestinians.

American policy in the Palestinian sphere continued to be based on the premises of the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Plan. However, the search for a broad allied front against terrorism led to a *rapprochement* with Arab countries and to a new accommodative stance towards the Palestinians. Incorporating countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia into the broad front was part of this new strategy, outlined in the speeches made by President Bush and Secretary of State Collin Powell in October and November, pointing to the establishment of a Palestinian state, which would coexist with the Jewish State, as a viable permanent arrangement between Israel and Palestine (UN Resolution 1397). Simultaneously, the demand on Israel to put an end to the settlement activities continued, as well as the condemnation of Palestinian acts of terror. The scope of the international front in the war against terrorism limited the possibility of distinguishing between types of terrorism.

In fact, the increase in violence impeded later peacemaking efforts like General Anthony Zinni's visit and led to the North American critique of Arafat's capacity to respond properly. Points of tension with the Israeli government also continued, mostly about the settlements, the use of F-16 planes against the civilian population and the repeated Israeli incursions.

Seeking to strengthen US position, Vice President Richard Cheney visited the region as a gesture of interest in overcoming the conflict. A scenario for the wide-ranged participation of the Arab world emerged to complement and compensate Arafat's leadership. This conception borrowed from the methodology of the Madrid Peace Conference its double multilateral and bilateral circuit: on one hand, constructing interdependencies in the functional spheres, while on the other, in an essentially political bilateral circuit, trying to lay the basis for this interaction. However, the limits were set by the inability to advance in the political accords, which in turn affected the sphere of functional interaction and regional integration.

Within the framework of an overall fight against terror, first Afghanistan and then Iraq appeared. Truly, September 11 signified a watershed in the history of international terrorism as well as in the strategy adopted to combat it (Schweitzer and Shay). The role of the US was consolidated, coupled with the redefinition of the actors and the growing importance of the region. The invasion of Afghanistan was relatively rapid and successful in the configuration of an international coalition; it defined with greater precision the objective of combating countries associated with terrorism.

The war on Iraq and its impact on the Middle East must be seen as inscribed in this logic. Previously, in January 2002, President Bush had affirmed that Iraq continued to boast of its animosity towards the United States and to support terrorism, generating varied responses among Arab countries, especially in the 'axis of evil.' In this line, one has to remember that following the Gulf War, part of the mystery of the US policy towards Iraq was surprisingly manifested in the interruption of military activity and the withdrawal of support for the Shiites and Kurds, thus revealing that the US conceived the defense of Iraq's integrity as a condition for stability in the region (Kedourie). However, after the war, Iraq did not satisfy this expectation. It did implement a policy of conciliation with its neighbors, recuperating its place as a factor of influence in the zone (Baram). In spite of the fact that Iraq's ascendancy has not been homogeneous over all the

countries in the zone, the 'Oriental front' was reinforced. The most notorious change took place in its relationship with Syria. In spite of mutual suspicion and distrust, once Iraq was authorized to sell its petroleum under UN supervision, this income was channeled to the purchase of Syrian agricultural products which became an important source of income for the latter.

Relations with Egypt reached levels of interaction previously nonexistent. Commercial relations were intensified. Like Damascus, Cairo also benefited from the sale of products as part of the Food for Oil program. Although Syria and Egypt were cautious in their diplomatic relations with Iraq, and on occasions critical of Hussein's regime, since the end of 1999 both countries ousted the demand to put an end to the petroleum embargo. Possibly knowing in advance that the United States and Great Britain would be opposed to it, this demand allowed both regimes to adopt a popular cause in the Arab world without risking consequences that would alter the inter-Arab equilibrium (Baram). Jordan, on the other hand, with an economy that was dependent on Iraq, sustained a more prudent attitude. From an equally regional optic, while Iraq's relations with the Arab Emirates also improved during the second half of the nineties, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia relations remained tense, contrasting with the tendency of the majority of the Arab nations, including North Africa and Yemen, which were normalizing their relationships with Iraq. The links with Turkey maintained a stable character. Since 1991, Turkey permitted the Anglo-North American Air Force to use its Incirlik base to supervise the Northern No-Fly Zone, and it was repeatedly opposed to putting an end to the oil embargo.

Iraq's position in the region found an additional support in the polarization of interests in the framework of United Nations, directly impeding the possibility of a sole European front. The main obstacle was precisely the lack of a common foreign policy. In this sense, Europe's actions were determined not only by concrete interests in oil but also, in a more general sense, by its aspirations in the Middle East. According to Huntington's reasoning, Europe, and not the United States, is the potentially explosive border where civilizations would "inevitably clash" (Huntington).

Europe has been increasingly interested in participating directly in the Middle East. It sought to strengthen its ties with the Arab world as a countervailing force to the hegemony of the US. In turn, the Arab nations had sought European solidarity in the Middle East conflict (Bat Ye'Or). Its

geopolitical interest was further enhanced by the presence of the Muslim and Arab populations.

Israel has questioned Europe's attitude towards the conflict claiming it has been biased as a result of the historical clash between Judaism and the European civilization and expressed in its ambivalence towards the place of Jews in the construction of European Modernity as well as towards the existence of a national Jewish state (Lilla). Europe has been both a space of human and cultural interactions as well as a territory of persecutions, pogroms and the Holocaust. The irresponsible use of expressions such as genocide, extermination and Holocaust to qualify the Israeli government's response to the second *Intifada* has led to affirm: "it is difficult to elude the conclusion that the *Intifada* served the European conscience as a way to liberate itself from the guilt complex towards 'the people of the Holocaust' by imposing Holocaustic-like responsibilities on its shoulders for the repression of an other people" (Ben Ami).

However, Europe's influence in the region increased through its participation together with the US, Russia and the UN in the Quartet that elaborated the Road Map in December 2002. This proposal was nourished by a long decade of experience. It formulated a solution based on mutual recognition, statehood coexistence, and legitimate leadership capable of negotiating: in the Palestinian case—institutionalization, civil order and democracy, for state building; in the Israeli case—the willingness to take all necessary measures required for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The new plan, characterized as an instrument for the realization of defined purposes, with phases, times and deadlines, sought to orient progressive advance through reciprocal steps to be taken by both parties in the realms of politics, security, economics, humanitarian issues and institution building. It considers that a solution for both states involved could be achieved through three phases based on the end of violence, mutual recognition and negotiation between the parties. It foresaw a role for the Quartet in the implementation of the agreement, starting in the first phase with dialogue between the parts, and then in evaluating the fulfillment of their mutual obligations. The proposed final arrangement will recover advances in the principle of 'land for peace' made at the Madrid Conference; those advances contained in the UN Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, as well as previous accords between the parts in conflict; and in the initiative of Prince Abdullah from Saudi Arabia, which was seconded by the Arab League

Summit in Beirut, calling for acceptance of Israel as a neighbor to live with in peace and security.

In its global dimension, the initiative contemplated an Israeli arrangement with Syria and Lebanon. The first phase of the plan leads to the end of terror and violence, the normalization of life in Palestine and the construction of Palestinian institutions. The second transitional phase (until December 2003), based on a new Palestinian constitution, was to be characterized by efforts to create an independent state, with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty, as a step towards its permanent stature. The third and last phase contemplated a permanent agreement and the end of the conflict (2004-2005), based on the supposition that reforms were consolidated and Palestinian institutions stabilized (Road Map, Draft December 2002). The Road Map incorporated the experiences accumulated along the course of this long decade which began with the end of bipolarity.

Compared to the scenario after the Gulf War, which amplified the structural conditions for a negotiated solution to the conflict, Bush's determination to reaffirm US involvement in the zone has also changed the structural conditions for dialogue. As the Gulf War shed light on the limits of the Arab alignment, the actual international realignment brought about by the war on terrorism has also enhanced the possibility of new alliances. It has also opened the door for a redefinition of the role currently being played by the authors of this proposed solution. The UN's participation should be pondered in light of the critique it suffered following the war. Russia, for its part, had been looking for a new way to insert itself in the region, within the framework of the new international parameters, while Europe has been suffering the consequences of its divided stand.

The United States' hegemonic position has been woven once again around the interests and weaknesses of the regional parties. Thus, the security guarantees the United States offered to the Arab countries that were actively involved acted as the necessary tool for the initial stage in the negotiation process.

The fatigue of the parties led to negotiations, though the approach was closer to conflict management than to conflict resolution. The Palestinian war against Israel resulted in massive Israeli retaliations which have disrupted Palestinian life and crippled the Palestinian Authority. Among the assumptions of the new plan, institutional building and the new leadership profile required was central. This consideration was first met by the

appointment of Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as the Palestinian Authority's Prime Minister thus advancing towards a political reform. Arafat's unchallenged political supremacy was starting to be modified. Convergence between the interests of Israel and the new authority on the issue of fighting terrorism underlined one of the most important features discerned in the new juncture: the growing complexity and differentiation in Palestinian society, which enables the construction of new inner as well as cross border alliances.

The Palestinian Authority was unable to achieve institutional and political pluralism, and was unwilling to pay the price associated with unpopular measures and succession. Thus, Arafat's margin of maneuvering was reduced and Islamic groups gained power, reinforcing the diagnosis that an institutional solution was related to a change in the Palestinian Authority.

In Israel, the growing support for the establishment of a Palestinian state took form in the proposal of a unilateral act of disengagement. Its fear of the possible erosion of its position as the exclusive strategic ally of the West in the region was further reinforced. Hence, Sharon's pragmatism could be explained by the changes that international events brought about and determined the new US strategy for the zone.

Facing the changing conditions of peace, new questions are raised. If, throughout the decade, trust and recognition were not built up, how can the Other become a confident partner for dialogue? How may politics regain a pragmatic tone *vis-à-vis* the primordial character of the prevailing identities and narratives? Elements of the national Jewish narrative about persecution have been incorporated into the Palestinian discourse: exile, dispersion, return, Holocaust. However, unwillingness to recognize them as common dimensions and the disdain for Zionism as a Western colonialist movement led to cancel the possibility of a dialogical interaction between narratives. For national identities, the challenge is how to build and rebuild new referents that may change mutual perceptions. To reconvert images, perceptions and values in order to overcome historical barriers is plausible within the framework of convergent interests. In the short and medium run, this could affect the social and cultural construction of collective identities which, even though nourished from deep cultural roots, are contingent on a continuous elaboration (Anderson).

The recognition of shared needs may enhance pragmatism and political will as resources for practical solutions. In the same line as at the beginning of the decade, the option of a regional market opens the possibility of

modifying former antagonisms on the basis of convergent interests. The region has paid a heavy price for the lack of peace and the failure to build a regional market in the midst of globalization processes: severe economic crisis and lack of growth and pauperization. Although the Israeli and Palestinian economies differ in terms of their structures and capacities, the sustained character of the conflict has affected both sides. Changes in public policies, in one case, and corruption, in the other, have played an important role in the economic recession. But it certainly has been the violence factor which had the most negative impact. Therefore, awareness of the need to overcome it requires the pacification of the zone, as well as the creation of functional interdependence. However, political change and institutional building are basic requisites to meet these goals.

Through continuities and ruptures, a growing awareness of the need to build peace has developed, following Harcavi's metaphor of boarding the train without knowing what the final station of arrival is, yet confident that non-action can only perpetuate the undesirable existing conditions. The Road Map, however, with its precise definition of purposes, phases and times that orient progressive advance through reciprocal steps taken by the parties—while building functional interdependencies—may be seen as a point of departure from previous initiatives. Politics and negotiation, institutional building and pragmatism may be reinforced as factors for peace building that may bring an end to the ups and downs of the peace process and its alternating cycles of dialogue and violence. This long decade not only points to the multi-faceted nature of the conflict insofar as it brings together economic, socio-political and cultural dimensions as well as the interdependence and influences between these realms but it also points to the departure from previous patterns through a complex interaction between local, national, regional and international transformations. Globalization implies today multiple processes that are expressed, among others, in networks of interaction between local actors, national states and transnational institutions that open the possibility to reshape politics in the region and build new linkages among the parties.

Addendum

Arafat's death on November 11, 2004 opened new possibilities for Palestinian political development. While the first signs of violence as a result of the multiplicity of factions within the Palestinian political arena appeared, the initial election of three successors to Arafat's roles and positions took place. Later, in February 2005, the Palestinian people held elections for

President that reflected political maturity despite opposition from radical Islamist groups. Even though Arafat's legacy was meant to be fought over by at least five major factions—three separate institutions and fourteen different security agencies inside Fatah (Rubin)—the capacity and determination of overcoming the expressions of anarchy is showing its own signs.

The new leadership headed by Abu Mazen has still to build his power and legitimacy, a challenge assumed by diverse sectors not only inside the Palestinian realm but also outside it, in the international arena. The need for establishing trust, representation and participation demands a major effort in order to maintain stability and build the institutional dimension that was absent during Arafat's era. It certainly transcends Palestinian society and requires the support of the major partners in the peace effort.

While functional interdependency among Israel and the Palestinians has been built, the interdependency between the leaders, Sharon and Abbas, seems to be more of a political nature. They need each other in order to strengthen their positions and make compatible their demands, which certainly differ regarding the type of political control and alliances needed. The consolidation of the new Palestinian leadership enhances the structural opportunities. However, the commitment made by Abbas to put an end to all attacks on Israelis still requires the consent of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. On the other hand, quitting Gaza is expected to be only a first step.

On its part, America's renewed role in the region is oriented towards economics and politics. The administration of President Bush has been defined not only by the war on terrorism but also by its expectation to be remembered for a "grander and more positive strategy"—the freedom of the greater Middle East (Walker). This strategy seeks to promote free elections, free markets, a free press and free labor unions to advance democracy in 22 Arab countries. As such, it needs a great deal of international support, both political and financial, for which a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians is a central piece. The commitment to democracy—and not only to political liberalization—implies a departure from its former programs in the Middle East, oriented to reassure regimes closely aligned with Washington. The fact that Islamist parties were the first to benefit from democratic openings in the late 1980s and early 1990s reinforced the logic of this *realpolitik* strategy (Brumberg). Therefore, among the queries that emerge today stands the one related to the capacity to strengthen political associations and participation to countervail the presence of Islamist groups.

Their control of urban mosques and charitable institutions gave them a distinct advantage over other sectors and permitted them to overcome the legacy of enforced depoliticization.

This question applies to Palestinian political society as well as to other societies of the Arab world which remain weak and fragmented. The new strategy followed by the United States shows diverse modalities: both direct involvement to promote radical changes and a more gradual approach meant to remain in tune with the region's political, social and cultural realities.

Looking at the new opportunities and threats through the lenses of this long decade, the actual phase of peacemaking combines profound local changes with regional and international transformations. Its rhythm and intensity will have to surpass the perils of concern shown by Oslo as well as the risks of impetuosity shown by Camp David.

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