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Mediation and the Transformation of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict*

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During the 1990s, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict underwent a profound transformation, which has proceeded slowly and sometimes with severe disruptions and retrogressions. This article examines the diverse contributions of different kinds of mediators to the transformation at various stages of the process. Particular attention is given to the Oslo negotiations, their forerunners, and subsequent negotiations. Comparisons are made regarding the different kinds of contributions made by different kinds of mediators. Mediators include intermediaries with leverage, such as a United States President, and mediators with few material resources, such as unofficial facilitators. At various stages of a conflict's escalation and de-escalation, different kinds of mediators can make appropriate and effective contributions. Making and building peace in protracted conflicts requires a wide variety of complementary actions by diverse actors, including persons within the adversary sides as well as by intermediaries. Mediating effectiveness is constrained by the circumstances of each adversary, the adversary relations, and the historical context.

Even a seemingly intractable, destructive conflict becomes transformed eventually. Many of the antagonists and outside observers come to regard the conflict as resolved, perhaps changed into a normal and perhaps constructively waged contest. The processes of such resolutions vary from unilateral imposition to a mutually agreed-upon accommodation. External intervenors, including mediators, sometimes play important roles at various

stages of a conflict's transformation. Who plays which mediator roles with what consequences for different kinds of conflicts are matters of theoretical and practical debate (Bercovitch, 1996; Kolb, 1994; Princen, 1992).

Here, I focus on the roles mediators played in the transformation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, particularly in the early 1990s. Diverse persons and groups provided many kinds of mediation services at different stages of this particular conflict, within a changing historical context. Recognizing such conditions helps to generalize assessments of mediators' contributions to reaching accommodations.

The struggle between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East has always consisted of many interlocked conflicts contributing to its seeming intractability. Yet, as some of those conflicts have changed in salience, others

* In addition to the publications cited in the text, my analysis is derived from many interviews and conversations with persons engaged in Israeli–Palestinian and Israeli–Arab relations. I also have benefited from my participation in the Syracuse Area Middle East Dialogue group (SAMED), consisting of US citizens from the Jewish, Palestinian, and 'other' communities. I have made numerous visits to the region, including a December 1993 trip to Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel, and the then Occupied Territories with a group organized by the US Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East. For comments and suggestions about this article, I thank Fred Pearson, John Murray, Raymond Cohen, and the anonymous *JPR* readers. E-mail address: lkriesbe@maxwell.syr.edu

have become more tractable and have been transformed. The conflicts in the Middle East entail struggles between many pairs of antagonists, such as: Arabs and Israelis, Jews and Palestinians, Jews and Muslims, Western imperialism and the Arab world, Zionists and Palestinian nationalists, and the governments of Israel and Egypt. These conflicts have been overlaid by the Cold War and by major ideological and civilizational differences. The antagonists vary depending upon the issues in contention, whether cultural matters, relative power, control of water and of land, or ethnic survival.

Mediation has sometimes helped significantly to de-escalate one or more of these particular conflicts. Thus, the US government's mediation is generally believed to have contributed crucially to the transformation of the Egyptian–Israeli conflict in the 1970s, culminating in the 1979 peace treaty between the Israeli and Egyptian governments (Quandt, 1986). This was made possible by the primacy given to that conflict by the Egyptian President, Anwar el-Sadat, and his conviction that the road to Jerusalem was through Washington. That settlement and other developments further increased the centrality of the conflict between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians.

This analysis focuses on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and its profound transformation, marked in 1993, by the mutual recognition between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and by the Israeli turnover of the administration of the Gaza Strip and Jericho to the Palestine Authority (PA). Several additional steps were taken as part of what is known as the Oslo peace process, including the staged extension of the PA's jurisdiction. That process was slowed and regressed in some ways while Benjamin Netanyahu was Prime Minister of Israel, but was renewed with the return of a Labor-led government headed by Ehud Barak.

Various mediating efforts contributed to that transformation, but also may have failed to prevent the subsequent regressions. Before examining those efforts, certain basic ideas about the nature of large-scale social conflicts should be noted. This will help to assess the varying mediation contributions in different circumstances.

A conflict exists when two or more persons or groups manifest the belief that they have incompatible goals (Kriesberg, 1998a). A conflict arises when members of one or more of the adversaries minimally combine four qualities: a sense of collective identity, a grievance, the belief that the other side is responsible for their grievance, and the conviction that they can affect the other side so as to lessen their grievance.

According to this view, social conflicts always involve one or more groups who see themselves as distinct and therefore have different collective identities (Coy & Woehrle, 2000). The content of each group's identity varies greatly, affecting the emergence and course of a conflict. Insofar as one group's sense of identity seems to deny the reality or legitimacy of the other group's identity, an 'identity-based conflict' is sometimes said to exist. I think it is more useful to regard such denials as grievances if they are experienced that way by one or more parties. Similarly, values and ways of living that one group tries to impose on another are likely to be regarded as grievances by one or both sides. These are matters of dissensus between the adversaries (Aubert, 1963). The grievance may also refer to matters of consensus, for example land, wealth, political control, or other matters desired by the contending groups. Conflicts about such consensual matters are often considered to be 'interest'-based. Grievances exist in all conflicts, generally involving both dissensual and consensual matters, but in varying degrees.

The concept of identity-based conflicts has additional connotations. It generally

refers to collective identities based on ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other communal characteristics. Furthermore, these tend to be ascribed status characteristics, regarded as determined by parentage and hence immutable. These identities are often viewed, by members and non-members alike, as shared by every member of the community. Such qualities tend to perpetuate the differences between communal groups and to make combatants regard everyone in each group as engaged in the conflict. Consequently, such collective identities may lead to particularly destructive conflicts involving genocide.

Three other analytic features of conflicts should be noted. First, every conflict has a course of development: it emerges, escalates, de-escalates, and is settled; each phase may vary in length, and a conflict can regress to a previous stage. Thus, the transformation of a protracted large-scale conflict usually is the result of cumulative changes, often with some regressions as well as dramatic forward steps. Sometimes, one side is able to impose a fundamental and enduring shift in its relationship with an adversary by the application of intense and overwhelming coercion.

Second, every conflict is intertwined with many others over time and social space; thus, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict encompasses fights between leaders and challengers on each side and is overlaid by conflicts between regional, ethnic, and religious communities. The changing salience of one conflict affects the salience of the others. Each conflict has its own course of development, but none is wholly independent of the others. Mediators can sometimes help redefine a conflict by reducing its salience relative to other conflicts in which the adversaries are engaged.

Third, conflicts are waged using a variety of methods combining persuasion and positive sanctions as well as coercion. External actors and potential intervenors, in addition

to factors internal to each side and the interaction between the antagonistic parties, shape the choice of methods used. The methods change as the course of the conflict moves from one stage to another. At some point in a de-escalating conflict, negotiations may come to be regarded as an attractive way to conduct and to conclude a conflict.

These features have implications for the characterization and management of any social conflict. Many conflicts become destructive and seemingly intractable; but whether or not they do so is not inherent in the issue in contention. Issues about ethnicity, ideology, or control of resources can become so bitter and appear so threatening to the adversaries' survival that they are waged destructively. But many such conflicts do not take that path. Furthermore, even conflicts that have become very destructive may become transformed so that movement toward a peaceful accommodation can still be made constructively (Kriesberg, 1998b).

Background and Transformation of the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict

Some observers regard the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as emerging in the late 1800s, when Jewish immigration to the Palestinian portion of the Ottoman Empire began to increase. Others date its start with the establishment of the British mandate for Palestine after World War I. It is most often dated from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (Khouri, 1985). Formed as a Jewish state, Israel was attacked by the armies of the surrounding Arab countries and its acceptance in the region resisted for decades. For the Arab Palestinians, the establishment of Israel was a disaster: 80% of the Palestinians living in what became Israel fled or were driven out, many to live in refugee camps thereafter (Arzt, 1997; Morris, 1987). Between 1949 and 1967, Palestine was effectively divided between Israel and Jordan, as

the West Bank was incorporated into Jordan (Shlaim, 1992). After the 1967 war, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were ruled by Israel as occupied territories.

In each of these periods, many ideas were voiced about how the Jews and Arabs of Palestine might find a mutually acceptable accommodation (Kriesberg, 2000). The conflict was not inherently a destructive one, but it certainly became destructive. Relations between Jews and Arabs living in the region became subject to recurrent wars, terrorism, and the flight of many people. For decades, the conflict was exacerbated by the Cold War that was superimposed upon it. Other divisions continue to be superimposed, such as religious differences, civilizational cleavages, and economic and military power inequalities. Consequently, the conflict became self-perpetuating. Some people on each side developed a vested interest in the struggle; furthermore, many people on each side were socialized to regard those on the other side as eternal enemies and, in some instances, lesser humans, and they interacted accordingly.

A central feature of the conflict has been the struggle between two peoples, Jews and Arab Palestinians, over their claims to the same land. This struggle is often regarded as an identity-based conflict. Indeed, the formulations of the collective identities constructed by leaders of the two peoples and the high degree to which members of each nation share the formulations contributed to the intractability of the conflict (Agnew, 1989). Jewish leaders have urged different strategies to respond to anti-Semitic persecution, including emigrating from countries where persecution was severe, changing the political system in the countries in which they were persecuted, and establishing a national home for Jews in Palestine. This last strategy, Zionism, took a variety of forms, but the dominant ones were variations on an ethno-nationalist ideology. Palestinian leaders have also urged various strategies to gain control

over their collective lives as Arabs and Palestinians and in response to the influx of Jews to Palestine (Kimmerling & Migdal, 1993). For the PLO, the goal of ending the Zionist intrusion gradually changed to become the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state alongside Israel.

These ethno-nationalist formulations were not inherent in the collective identifications of Jews or of Arab Palestinians. They were constructed in the course of the conflict between them and against other adversaries. In contrast, consider the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The system of apartheid was racist, imposing a complex system of discrimination according to racial classifications imposed by the government controlled by an ethnic minority. The resistance to apartheid, as led by the African National Congress (ANC), however, was not racist and its leadership was not exclusionary, recognizing the people who came from Europe as another African tribe.

In actuality, the complex Arab–Israeli conflict has undergone a profound de-escalation, and many partial settlements have been reached, as noted in Table I. These settlements mark the transformation of two related struggles: Israel's conflicts with Egypt and with Jordan. As a result, the Palestinian–Israeli struggle emerged as the central conflict, and even it was profoundly transformed in 1993. Iraq and Iran, however, remain antagonists of Israel.

Recent and Current Situation

The transformation of the conflict between Jewish Israelis and Arab Palestinians occurred gradually, but is highlighted by the mutual recognition of the PLO and the Israeli State and the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) on 13 September 1993 (Aggestam, 1999; Kelman, 1997; Watkins & Lundberg, 1998). The DOP was the culmination of secret, back-channel

Table I. Events in Israeli–Palestinian Conflict Transformation, 1974–2000

1974, Nov.	The Arab states at Rabat declare that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people.
1976, April	Palestinian nationalists win municipal elections on West Bank.
1978, Sept.	A Framework for Peace in the Middle East signed at Camp David.
1985, Feb.	Jordanian–PLO accord on negotiations with Israel.
1987, Dec.	Palestinian uprising (<i>Intifada</i>) begins.
1988, July.	King Hussein announces Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank.
1988, Dec.	USA and PLO enter into direct communications.
1991, Oct.	Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid.
1993, Jan.	Start of secret meetings in Oslo, Norway, between PLO officials and unofficial Israeli representatives.
1993, Sept.	The PLO and the Israeli government sign the Declaration of Principles; Arafat and Rabin shake hands.
1994, May	Cairo Agreement for 'self-rule' in Gaza and Jericho.
1994, Aug.	PLO and Israeli government sign 'Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in the West Bank'.
1994, Oct.	Israeli–Jordanian peace treaty signed.
1995, Sept.	Israel and PLO sign interim agreement to transfer control of major Palestinian-populated areas in the occupied territories.
1998, Oct.	Wye River Memorandum signed by Netanyahu and Arafat.
1999, Sept.	Barak and Arafat agree to revision of Wye Memorandum and its implementation and to resume Permanent Status negotiations in an accelerated manner.
2000, July	Camp David II negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian delegations, mediated by Clinton.

negotiations by high officials of the PLO and by Israeli officials after the initial meetings conducted by private Israeli citizens with PLO representatives (Elon, 1993; Makovsky, 1996). The 1993 DOP and the 1995 interim agreement that followed led to the establishment of a PA and Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza. The PA gained civic control first of the Gaza Strip and Jericho and then of all the centers of Arab Palestinian life in the West Bank.¹

¹ In the 1995 Interim Accord, how and when the redeployment of Israeli military forces and the transfer of Israeli control to the PA would be implemented were set forth in great detail. Three areas were distinguished. Area 'A' comprised six cities (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarem, Kalkilya, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, with special security arrangements in Hebron). The Palestinian Council has full responsibility for civil matters and for internal security and public order. Area 'B' comprised the towns and villages of the West Bank. The Palestinian Council was granted full civil authority, and Israel would have overall security authority. In area 'C', comprising the unpopulated areas, areas of strategic importance to Israel, and Jewish settlements, Israel would retain full responsibility for security and public order.

These agreements were reached while Yitzhak Rabin, who headed the Labor Party, was Prime Minister of Israel. The implementation was slow and often behind the schedule set to spur movement; but it proceeded despite violence. The 4 November 1995 assassination of Rabin and the suicide bombing of buses in Israel resulted in a change of government in Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu was elected Prime Minister and a Likud-led government coalition was formed in 1996, greatly slowing the peace process. The peace process was renewed after the election of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister in 1999.

Varieties of Mediation

Many different actors have carried out diverse intermediary activities to help de-escalate and settle conflicts in the Middle East. This great variety of mediating efforts

should help assess which kinds of mediation are more effective in different circumstances. Distinguishing between the intermediary social role being played and the services being provided will prove useful. Mediator roles vary in the degree to which they are institutionalized and have agreed-upon expectations. Mediator roles also range from the mediator with leverage, usually a big power, to the problem-solving facilitator, often a non-official intermediary.

Mediating services are diverse, and some may be incompatible for a particular mediator at a specific time. They include: helping to arrange the agenda and to select the negotiating partners, providing a safe space to meet, conveying information from one side to another, increasing resources, suggesting options, helping the negotiators discover new options, and helping to implement agreements. Various sets of these diverse activities are combined and carried out by particular persons or groups playing different mediator roles. Interestingly, even persons who are not playing a recognized social role as a mediator sometimes carry out certain of these activities. I call them quasi mediators (Kriesberg, 1996).

Traditional official mediation tends to include a somewhat different set of activities than problem-solving mediation. Governments conducting traditional international mediation often have a significant stake in the conflict and its outcome. As principal mediators, they often actively suggest, promote, and help sustain a settlement (Princen, 1992). Much problem-solving mediation, however, is largely facilitative, and many different unofficial as well as official mediators and quasi mediators provide some elements of problem-solving mediation.

Traditional Mediation

Big powers playing traditional roles as mediators, with leverage, often have undertaken

intermediary efforts in Middle East conflicts. The US government is a frequent mediator, providing various combinations of mediating services. For example, after the October 1973 war, US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger mediated by shuttling between capitals to reach partial settlements between the Israeli and Egyptian governments and between the Israeli and Syrian governments. Kissinger, anticipating that no comprehensive settlement was possible at that time, pursued a step-by-step peacemaking strategy. The adversaries negotiated the disengagement of their military forces, and Israel withdrew from some of the territory it occupied as a result of the war (Rubin, 1981). Kissinger helped construct the formulas for aspects of the settlements and offered to provide US resources that would help ensure their implementation and minimize the risks if an opposing side violated the agreement.

Even powerful intermediaries rarely can impose a settlement; their mediation efforts are constrained by circumstances. President Jimmy Carter failed in his attempts to convene a multilateral peace conference in the Middle East to establish a comprehensive peace. Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat doubted the feasibility of a comprehensive peace conference, and went to Jerusalem in November 1977 intending to break through the barriers preventing peace (el-Sadat, 1978). The negotiations that followed floundered, and in 1978 President Carter invited President el-Sadat and a small Egyptian delegation and Prime Minister Begin and a small Israeli delegation to Camp David. Working in seclusion for 13 days, President Carter with a few Americans mediated two agreements (Quandt, 1986). One was the basis for the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the other the basis for the failed negotiations about the political status and authority of the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories. The mediation blended traditional principal methods with problem-solving

methods and that worked for Egypt and Israel but not for the Palestinians, who did not participate in the Camp David negotiations.

In the mid-1980s, King Hussein of Jordan and US Secretary of State George P. Schultz attempted another kind of mediation. At that time, neither the United States nor the Israeli government would recognize and negotiate directly with the PLO, and in the absence of peace between Jordan and Israel their officials would not meet publicly. In February 1985, a Jordanian–PLO statement proposed a Jordanian–Palestinian confederation to be negotiated within the framework of an international conference (Quandt, 1992: 350–356). The Palestinians would be represented within the Jordanian delegation. Clearly, Jordan was a principal party in the negotiations, but it also was a kind of mediator in trying to find a way for Israelis, the PLO, and the United States to meet and negotiate a resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian–Jordanian conflict. The extended efforts by the United States, Jordan, and the other interested parties to find an acceptable formula for direct negotiations, however, floundered. In February 1986, the King graphically described the breakdown in coordination with the PLO.

Conditions affecting Israelis and Palestinians would have to significantly change for any mediating activity to be effective. Several changes occurred in Israeli–Palestinian relations prior to the transforming Oslo process (Kriesberg, 1992). At the Middle East Peace Conference, held in Madrid in October 1991, Israeli and Syrian officials met face-to-face, and Israeli officials met with Palestinians approved by the PLO, albeit indirectly and within parameters set by Israel. That conference was made possible, most immediately, by the new circumstances resulting from the Iraqi military invasion of Kuwait and the consequent military action by the US-led coalition to drive the Iraqi

forces from Kuwait. Following the war, the US government sought to initiate comprehensive peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the neighboring Arab governments and the Palestinians. This was honoring a commitment made in mobilizing Arab support in the coalition against Iraq. Furthermore, the PLO was weakened and isolated by the Palestinian failure to join the coalition opposing President Saddam Hussein's actions.

After much shuttle diplomacy, US Secretary of State James A. Baker and his associates constructed a complex negotiation formula (Baker & DeFrank, 1995). It established three arenas for negotiation: a general conference, bilateral meetings between Israel and each neighboring Arab government, and regional meetings on issues of common concern: water, refugees, environment, economic development, and regional security.² The regional meetings were to provide a wider mix of countries and matters of possible mutual benefit. Palestinians would be represented within the Jordanian delegation, and their relationship to the PLO veiled. The general conference was held briefly in October 1991; bilateral negotiations followed, as did the regional meetings later. Bilateral meetings between Palestinians and Israelis were held, marking an important breakthrough, but progress then languished.

In addition to the US government, Arab governments at peace with Israel at times have played important mediating roles. This has been true of the Egyptian government since 1979 and the Jordanian government since 1994. For example, in 1992 the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amr Moussa, conveyed questions and responses between the head of

² Arab governments had generally preferred multilateral conferences, so they would more likely be unified and relatively stronger; while the Israeli government had long sought direct bilateral meetings with each Arab government, believing their relative position would be enhanced. The regional meetings reflected a more problem-solving conflict resolution approach, appreciated by US mediators.

the PLO's Department for National and International Relations, Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres (Abbas, 1995: 67–72). Even earlier, when the US government and the Israeli government would not deal directly with the PLO, and Arab governments would not deal directly with Israel, some Arab governments provided go-between services between the PLO and the US government and indirectly with the Israeli government. For example, in 1991 the Jordanian government gave legal cover to PLO engagement in negotiations with Israel by including Palestinians approved by the PLO and by Israel in the Jordanian delegation at the Madrid conference.

These official mediating efforts tended to concentrate on negotiating agreements, generally involving compromises and trade-offs between the positions staked out by the opposing sides. On the whole, traditional mediating methods were used.

Problem-Solving Mediation

A different kind of mediator role is usually played by convenors and facilitators of interactive problem-solving workshops, dialogue groups, back-channel meetings between adversaries, and other official and non-official meetings. These settings tend to be particularly useful in preparing the ground for official negotiations, invigorating stalled negotiations, and developing support for negotiated agreements. Preparation is particularly important for conflicts involving communal groups, especially if ethno-nationalist goals are matters of contention. For an interactive problem-solving workshop, a convenor, often academically based, brings together a few members of the opposing sides and guides or facilitates their discussions about the conflict in which they are engaged. The participants are frequently persons with ties to the leadership of their respective parties, or have the potentiality to

become leaders in the future. A workshop usually goes on for several days, moving through a few stages of discussion. Workshop members generally do not attempt to negotiate agreements.

Such workshops have evolved through the experience of John Burton, Herbert Kelman, Edward Azar, Ronald Fisher, Jay Rothman, and others (Fisher, 1997). Workshops often have been held in connection with protracted international and intranational struggles, such as those in Northern Ireland and in Cyprus, as well as between Israelis and Palestinians.

In addition, Jews and Palestinians in Israel and in the Diaspora have engaged in ongoing dialogue groups, workshops, and encounter groups. For example, in Syracuse, New York, a small dialogue group consisting, in equal numbers, of US citizens of Palestinian, Jewish, and 'other' communities has met since 1981 (Schwartz, 1989). Many of these groups, such as Neve Shalom/Wahat El Salam and Giva't Haviva, function within Israel and participants are Israeli Palestinians and Israeli Jews, but such groups also influence relations between Palestinians outside of Israel and Jews in Israel. The Israeli government fosters many workshops and encounter groups between Israeli Arabs and Jews. A general problem that often affects such encounters is the asymmetry of the participants' views. For example, the Arabs see themselves as Palestinians and facing discrimination in a Jewish state, and the Jews view the Palestinians as Israelis in a country with a Jewish majority.³

By balancing the numbers of each side in the group and balancing the members' presentations, workshop facilitators attempt to address the problem of power asymmetry

³ Consequently, Arab participants tend to try changing the political attitudes of Jewish participants and are disappointed when they fail, while Jewish participants tend to be more concerned with enjoying and surviving the contact (Abu-Nimer, 1999: 126).

in Israeli–Palestinian relations. But, generally, for participants these efforts do not overcome the differences in resources between the collectivities from which they come and with which they identify. For example, the Palestinians often view the encounter groups as denying the asymmetries.⁴

Representatives of elite and sub-elite groups from opposing camps sometimes undertake joint meetings and open channels of communication for their constituencies and allies. Particular persons from one or more sides often play critical quasi-mediating roles in developing these meetings (van der Merwe, 1989). In relations between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians, some religious leaders from each side hold particularly hostile views of the other side. But, even in this case, some Jewish and Islamic religious leaders have engaged in dialogue and in developing shared ideas (Gopin, 2001). The 'Jerusalem Religious Peace Agreement', for example, was drafted by such a group; it concludes, 'We also express our wish for greater harmony and understanding between the believers – Muslims and Jews. We the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac, the children of Abraham, are united today to offer our prayers from the heart to G-d. We pray for the end of all enmity and for the beginning of an era of peace, love and compassion' (Gopin, 2001).

Officials playing a mediator role sometimes also contribute services that are part of a problem-solving approach. Such officials typically are representatives of small countries or of international governmental organizations that do not have the leverage of a big power. The role played by Norwegian

⁴ See Abu-Nimer (1999). Of course, power differences vary along many dimensions, including economic, military, normative, demographic, and status dimensions. Members of each group may vary in many of these dimensions; in addition, each collectivity may appear relatively strong along one dimension and not another. These variations can contribute to reframing an encounter in which members of each side view themselves as the weaker and threatened group.

government officials during the negotiations leading to the DOP is illustrative. By acting as facilitating mediators, they gave standing to the Israeli private citizens representing Israel, and they arranged for a secret informal setting encouraging open-ended exploration of options.

Major powers also can take a relatively problem-solving, even facilitative, approach. This is more likely to occur when lower-level officials act as mediators. Such officials sometimes make numerous suggestions about small details of a possible settlement, but they are less likely than high-ranking officials to apply coercive pressure or promise great rewards. A problem-solving approach also tends to occur when high-level officials delegate unofficial emissaries to engage in exploratory discussions with one or more of the parties in the conflict to be mediated. This occurred, for example, through indirect US governmental contacts with the PLO before open dialogue was regarded as permissible.

Finally, officials from adversarial parties also engage in direct exchanges of views with each other, without any mediating presence. This occurs at various stages of conflict de-escalation, including pre-negotiation explorations of the possible utility of negotiating. Such conversations went on secretly for years between King Hussein of Jordan and Israeli government leaders (Lukacs, 1997). Then, when the time was opportune to reach an agreement, the negotiations were completed quickly.

Many Combinations

In major movements toward de-escalation, many kinds of intermediary work are combined, as exemplified in the Oslo peace process. The process began with the secret meetings that were undertaken when the bilateral negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, opened by the Madrid conference, stagnated. Israel's government,

controlled by the Likud Party led by Yitzhak Shamir, stalled the negotiations. However, even when a Labor government replaced Likud, negotiations did not progress, partly because the Palestinian delegation was unable to negotiate a settlement unless Yasser Arafat and the PLO openly directed it (Makovsky, 1996). Moreover, the positions staked out by the Israelis and Palestinians seemed irreconcilable, with the Palestinians insisting on statehood and the Israelis offering autonomy. Furthermore, the US involvement was seen by PLO leaders to exclude the PLO and oppose Palestinian statehood.⁵ Finally, the publicity associated with the negotiations, with news leaks and press conferences, lessened whatever chance of flexibility there may have been.

In these circumstances, a back channel for negotiations was secretly opened. The negotiations were initiated in unofficial conversations between an Israeli Jewish academic, Yair Hirschfeld, and a prominent PLO official, Ahmad Qurai (also known as Abu Alaa), Arafat's director of finances. Their first secret meeting was in London, in December 1992, arranged by the Norwegian sociologist Terje Rød-Larsen. Hirschfeld's previous contacts with Palestinians and with Israeli government officials made the meeting possible and hopeful. Soon the Norwegian government was supporting small regular meetings between Hirschfeld and the historian Ron Pundik, with Ahmad Qurai and two aides, Hassan Asfour and Maher al Kurd. Rød-Larsen's research institute served as host and provided cover. The Israelis sent reports of their meetings to Yossi Beilin, the newly elected

Deputy Foreign Minister, who read them but offered no advice.

The small group engaged each other in informal but intensive discussions, using a problem-solving approach (Holst, 1994).⁶ That approach was fostered by the Norwegians, who facilitated the meetings, made logistical arrangements, and assisted in communications between negotiating rounds (Savir, 1998). They also listened to the concerns of each side and could provide assurances that the people with whom they were negotiating were doing so in good faith (Aggestam, 1999: 183). At times, the Norwegians provided other mediating services, such as suggesting compromise formulas. Unlike some interactive conflict resolution workshops, both sides agreed to avoid delving into old grievances (Rothman, 1997; Rouhana, 1995).

The participants developed the idea of a joint Declaration of Principles (DOP) envisaging free elections in the occupied territories and the gradual establishment of Palestinian authority within borders to be determined later. Beilin informed Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin; Peres was enthusiastic and Rabin skeptical but open to new suggestions. Hirschfeld and Pundik functioned as quasi mediators; they did not represent the Israeli government and were free to work out a formula that showed enough promise that the Israeli government would accept it as a basis for negotiations.

In May, Uri Savir, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, joined the talks and with Yoel Singer official negotiations, ensued. Intense negotiations in a more traditional give-and-take kind of bargaining

⁵ See interview with Nabil Shaath, a close adviser to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and head of the coordinating committee of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks in Washington, following from the Madrid Peace Conference (Shaath, 1993). Also see Aggestam (1999: 147–150) and Ashrawi (1995).

⁶ Yair Hirschfeld himself, however, is reported to disclaim any familiarity with these and other conflict resolution methods, saying he employed common sense and decency (from a personal communication by Raymond Cohen, 9 March 2000, on the basis of a conversation with Yair Hirschfeld).

were combined with collaborative negotiation (Savir, 1998).⁷ The resulting DOP was initiated on 20 August 1993. By using this facilitated secret back channel for negotiations, both the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships were able to explore possible options and construct a formula for a major peacemaking move without arousing internal resistance until a deal had been struck.

In letters dated 9 September 1993, Rabin recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and Arafat recognized Israel's right to exist in peace and security. The Norwegian Foreign Minister, Johan Jørgen Holst, helped in the final negotiations about these letters (Abbas, 1995). The DOP was signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington, DC, by Shimon Peres for the Government of Israel and by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) for the PLO. Warren Christopher witnessed it for the United States of America and Andrei Kozyrev for the Russian Federation. In a carefully choreographed display, Rabin and Arafat shook hands before a wide television audience (Blumenthal, 1993).

The mutual recognition demonstrated by the signing of the DOP and the handshaking in some ways dissolved a fundamental grievance on each side. The Palestinians could feel that Israeli Jews finally recognized their existence as a people, and the Israeli Jews could feel that the Palestinians at last accepted their Jewish State. Many other dissensual and consensual issues remained in contention, but they could be fought about in a very different context, one in which neither side's collective existence would be threatened.

The DOP was greeted with strong emotions from all sides. Some Jews and Palestini-

ans at the signing were tearfully joyous and embraced each other. Arafat's subsequent appearance in Gaza was greeted enthusiastically, and he and the policy won wide support among Palestinians in the occupied territories. But many Palestinians, especially those in the region outside the occupied territories, regarded the deal as a sellout to the Israelis and denounced it.⁸ They believed that Arafat got recognition as the leader of the Palestinians but he would become an Israeli agent to suppress Palestinian opposition and would not gain what the Palestinians in the Diaspora needed. Some of those who rejected the deal sought to undermine it by acts of violence, often targeting Israeli citizens. The Jews of Israel and elsewhere generally supported the agreement. However, some Jews rejected it for giving away too much and threatening to give up even more; their vilification of Rabin grew and culminated in his assassination in November 1995.⁹

The very secrecy that made the agreement possible also undercut its acceptance. Participation in the process was narrow and some Palestinians felt excluded, generating distrust of the agreement. The Palestinian election, held in accord with the agreement, however, provided important legitimacy to the DOP and to its initial implementation.

Implementation, however, dragged on slowly and mutual recriminations grew. The leaders of the PLO and of the Israeli government generally behaved so as to win and keep support from their own constituencies. They gave relatively little regard to the other side's constituency and its concerns. This pattern was greatly heightened by the Israeli

⁸ This observation is supported by many interviews I participated in when visiting the region in December 1993. The major organized opposition came from Hamas, which was formed by the Muslim Brotherhood when the *Intifada* erupted (Kristiansen, 1999). Even some people affiliated with the PLO and the negotiations with the Israelis following the Madrid Peace Conference were critical (Al-Shafi, 1993).

⁹ The vilification was shockingly evident to me in a visit to Israel in March 1995.

7 Ron Pundik described the change in the negotiation approach as a very sharp one, in an oral report of the process at the conference 'The Resolution of Intractable Conflicts: The Israeli–Palestinian and South African Experiences', held at Tel Aviv University, 19–21 March 1995.

leadership when the government changed in 1996 to one controlled by a coalition led by the Likud Party and Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister.

This inward-orientation reflected the way the adversaries' goals were formulated. Most members of both sides sought separation, and therefore the leaders of each side had no direct need to appeal to the other's constituency. This may be contrasted to the situation in South Africa, where the ANC and the National Party leaders wanted a united South Africa (Kriesberg, 1998a). Furthermore, for the Israeli leadership and most Israeli Jews, the paramount goal was security for Jews. Arafat and the PLO leadership presented themselves as able to provide security against terrorism and other kinds of attacks against Israel and Jews; Rabin argued that the Oslo Accord would enhance Jewish security. This framing, however, made the Oslo process vulnerable to disruption.

Other Jews and Palestinians framed the conflict in such a way that they categorically rejected the Oslo agreement and 'the peace process'. Jewish extremists viewed the conflict in terms of religious nationalism; all the land of Israel had been given to them irrevocably by God. Islamic activists and ethno-nationalist Palestinians regarded the existence of a Jewish state on their ancestral land as an unacceptable Western intrusion. Some rejectionists resorted to violence to disrupt and perhaps scuttle the peace process.

Assessment

To assess the contribution of mediation in the transformation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, it is important to recognize the conflict's peculiar features. Some of these features constitute obstacles to a mutually acceptable resolution. One feature creating difficulties is the character of the adversaries' collective identities. Each side sees itself as a people, and each has formulated goals based on

ethno-nationalist thinking; this is particularly marked by the Zionist ideology. Furthermore, the identity of the people on each side is tied closely to the same land. Another feature that poses difficulties is the high degree to which the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been intertwined with many other conflicts in the region and in the world as a whole. This was particularly evident during the Cold War, which was superimposed on the Israeli-Arab conflict. Many other difficulties arise from the asymmetries of the conflict in military capabilities, moral claims, economic resources, allies, and legal claims. The character of the inequalities in the relations between Israelis and Palestinians has undergone many changes in the course of their struggle with each other. The asymmetries are important to the adversaries, but their views of them are not the same. With these features of the conflict in mind, we can consider the success and the failures of traditional and problem-solving mediation approaches. Specific mediation cases discussed in this article, omitting workshops and dialogue groups, are summarized in Table II.

Traditional Big-Power Mediation

Traditional big-power mediation has significantly contributed to peacebuilding in the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. But many limitations are also evident, so both should be examined.

Contributions Big-power mediators have made important, sometimes essential, contributions in bringing adversaries to the negotiating table, as US Secretary of State Baker did for the Madrid Conference. After the Oslo agreements were reached, President Clinton and the US government played an important mediating role in helping to implement and to sustain the Oslo peace process. The prospect of US, European, and other international assistance, particularly

Table II. Selected Mediating Efforts in Israeli–Arab Conflicts, 1974–2000

<i>Date</i>	<i>Parties</i>	<i>Mediator and setting</i>	<i>Mediator role</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Nov. 1973– Jan. 1974	Israel and Egypt	Kissinger (shuttle)	Very active, with leverage	Separation of forces in Sinai
Feb.–May 1974	Israel and Syria	Kissinger (shuttle)	Very active, with leverage	Disengagement on Golan Heights
Summer 1974	Israel and Jordan	Kissinger (shuttle)	Very active, with leverage	No agreement
March–Aug. 1975	Israel and Egypt	Kissinger (shuttle)	Very active, with leverage	Second accord on Sinai
1977	Israel, Arab countries	Carter	Very active	No comprehensive Peace conference
Sept. 1978	Israel and Egypt	Carter (Camp David)	Very active, with leverage and problem-solving	Terms for Israel–Egypt Peace Treaty but not for Palestinians
Feb. 1985– Feb. 1986	Jordan, PLO, and Israel	King Hussein, Schultz	Active, with principal interests	No substantial negotiations
Oct. 1991– Sept. 1993	Israeli and Palestinians	US officials	Varyingly active	Negotiations stalled
Jan.–Sept. 1993	Israel and Palestinians	Norwegians (near Oslo)	Facilitator (problem-solving)	Declaration of Principles agreement
Jan. 1997	Israel and PA	US officials	Assistance in crafting agreement	Agreement about Hebron
Oct. 1998	Israel and PA	Clinton et al. (Wye Plantation)	Active, with strong leverage	Wye River Memorandum
Sept. 1999	Israel and PA	US and Egypt	Low-profile encouragement	Wye II agreement implementation begins
July 2000	Israel and PA	Clinton (Camp David)	Active, with strong leverage	Progress, but no agreement

for the Palestinians, was essential for an agreement to be reached, implemented, and expanded.

In many ways, the active mediator role played by the US government may be surprising and may seem contrary to widespread views about mediation in the conflict resolution literature. The US government is generally seen as having its own interests to be served by any agreements reached in the region, and it is not seen as neutral in its intentions. Yet it is the mediator of choice for the primary adversaries in the region. One reason the US government is an attractive mediator is that it controls many resources that can be used to expand the pie to be

divided among the adversaries. It has resources to compensate for losses that may be experienced. Also, it has so many interests that each side can make strong appeals for support. The USA's long history of involvement has established the expectation that the US government will be engaged in any major peacemaking development. Finally, Americans are generally regarded as competent and trustworthy mediators.

The character of the mediator role played by the US government is varied. It includes active intense mediation by the President, employing a wide array of inducements, as illustrated by President Carter in 1978. It also includes a Secretary of State's exploration of

possible formulas for undertaking a new set of negotiations, illustrated by Baker in 1992. And it includes senior State Department officials micro-managing stalled negotiations, illustrated by the work of Dennis Ross and Aaron Miller to reach the Israeli–PLO agreement regarding partial Israeli redeployment from Hebron, signed in January 1997.¹⁰

Limitations Big-powers, even the US government, cannot simply impose an agreement. The extent to which it did so in Dayton for the Bosnian conflict is unusual. In the case of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the adversaries engaged in the negotiations set the parameters for any agreement. This was demonstrated at the July 2000 Camp David II negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian delegations led by Barak and Arafat, respectively, and mediated by the US team led by Clinton.

Officials from large powers tend to do mediation work with the top leaders of the opposing sides, but frequently serious problems arise with agreements made from the top down. The leaders may not be able to implement the agreements reached if they lack the authority to lead or control their constituents. The 1993 settlement was made by the paramount leaders of the Palestinians, as represented by Arafat and his associates in the PLO. The PLO won recognition, but other Palestinian groups, notably Hamas, were not parties to the agreement (Kristiansen, 1999). They had an interest in attacking the settlement and even undermining it. Arafat tried to suppress but also to placate Hamas, satisfying neither the Palestinian opposition nor the Israeli Jews.

The Israeli opposition to the government led by Rabin and the Labor Party rejected the settlement, and some elements acted to undermine it. In 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu

won the election, asserting that he would honor the commitments of the Oslo agreement, but yield little more and achieve peace with security. In office, he conducted new negotiations, making adjustments to the terms previously set, and withdrew Israeli military forces from most of Hebron. In addition, however, Prime Minister Netanyahu took several provocative actions, such as beginning construction of new homes for Israeli Jews on Har Homa in East Jerusalem.

Traditional methods tend to emphasize a top-down approach. It is necessary, however, to also work from the bottom up and laterally as well. Such approaches are important in implementing and sustaining agreements. The opposition among certain sub-elites and grass-roots groups in the Israeli and Palestinian camps undercuts the agreements reached between the PLO and the Labor-led government of Israel in 1993–94.

Powerful intermediaries, acting as principal mediators, are often expected by negotiating parties to play an active role in proposing formulas, but that may hamper the negotiating parties jointly constructing their own formula. During the front-channel Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, following Madrid, the US government first sought to play an honest broker role, but the differences between the parties were too great for this to be effective. The USA then enlarged its mediating role, but Palestinians, hoping the USA would help offset the Israelis' relative strength, viewed the US proposals, instead, as accepting the Israeli perspective (Aggestam, 1999; Shaath, 1993). This contributed to the PLO's decision to move to a back channel for direct negotiations with Israel.

Problem-Solving Mediation

Contributions Intermediaries using the problem-solving approach to mediation also have made important contributions in the

¹⁰ Personal interview with Aaron Miller, in Washington, DC, 23 April 1998, and Schmemmann (1997).

de-escalation and transformation of this conflict. They were particularly helpful at the early stage of the negotiations resulting in the DOP. They allowed adversaries to explore possible formulas for negotiation in terms of process and the substantive content of a deal. Official as well as unofficial mediators used this approach. The Norwegian government officials facilitated the meetings and helped the negotiators hear each other and discuss possible options. However, they did not try to fashion a deal or to add incentives for accepting any particular terms of settlement.

More generally, participation in workshops helped members of each side understand the perspective of the other. This assisted them to accurately hear the other and to avoid using words or making references that would be unintentionally provocative. The transformation of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict can be compared with the Syria–Israel case; although the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is more complicated to resolve, progress toward a peaceful accommodation began earlier than in the Israeli–Syrian conflict.

Problem-solving approaches to the conflict have helped prepare adversaries so that they were able to move toward a peaceful accommodation when the window of opportunity was open. Some of the members of the Palestinian delegation in the bilateral meetings following the Madrid peace conference were former participants in Herbert Kelman's problem-solving workshops (Kelman, 1995). That experience probably contributed to the Palestinians' ability to understand and communicate with their Israeli counterparts, but clearly that was not enough to overcome the constraints of the Madrid follow-on negotiation structure.

Limitations One possible limitation that arises from mediators using the problem-solving approach is associated with the asymmetry of the Israeli–Palestinian relationship.

Such mediators usually lack the resources to help equalize the relationship or tend to avoid introducing them. It might be conjectured that a principal mediator with leverage, such as the US government, would have exercised that leverage and used a more directive mediating approach to produce an agreement more favorable to the PLO, the relatively weaker side. However, the experience in the main-channel negotiations indicates that, under the prevailing circumstances, that would not have been the case (Ashrawi, 1995).

There are other limitations to the problem-solving mediation approach, particularly related to unofficial mediators. High-ranking officials are usually reluctant to participate in endeavors so mediated, since they are inclined to regard such methods as unrealistic.¹¹ People who particularly need the experience are often the ones most difficult to engage. These are the persons who view their opponents as evil, untrustworthy, or otherwise unacceptable negotiating partners. In the interactive problem-solving workshops carried out with Jews and Palestinians, persons antagonistic to an accommodation have tended not to participate.

Large-scale engagement in such efforts is more likely insofar as social movement organizations are formed that function as bridges across the chasms between the opposing sides. This sometimes occurs as a conflict de-escalates, with encouragement by the top as well as middle and grass-roots leadership; this was the case in South Africa's transformation. In the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, this has occurred in the context of groups including Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians protesting or resisting the expansion of Israeli Jewish settlements in the occupied territories or the

¹¹ At times, however, major figures from opposing sides may meet in workshop or dialogue settings with facilitators, as occurred in Tajikistan beginning in 1993, with Harold Saunders and Gennady Chufirin acting as facilitators (Saunders, 1995).

government policies that were viewed as hindering the peace process. Popular participation in the Israeli–Palestinian peace process generally has taken the form of demonstrations and other actions by Palestinians opposing Israeli government policies they regarded as expansionist and by Israeli Jews opposing Israeli government policies they viewed as too accommodating to the Palestinians.

Conclusions

No single mediating method is completely adequate. Combinations of approaches are necessary, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes sequentially. This helps ensure that peacemaking is not done only from the top down, but laterally and from the bottom up as well. All are necessary.

We need a broad conception of the problem-solving conflict resolution approach. Going beyond negotiation and mediation, it should include constructive ways of waging conflicts (Kriesberg, 1998a). That means giving attention to the ways one or more sides can wage a struggle, even escalate it, yet take into account the other side's humanity and concerns. It is possible to wage such struggles so as to enable the adversaries to create a mutually acceptable accommodation. This approach is especially important for the Palestinians, who lack conventional force and are often isolated. The very process of negotiation has become for them the means to struggle legitimately, as a people with rights. The approach is also relevant for Israelis in reducing the dangers of overreaching.

Unofficial groups using problem-solving conflict resolution methods should include efforts to generate significant social movement action that supports the work needed to construct and sustain a just and abiding mutual accommodation between adversaries (Saunders, 1985). They should include helping sub-elites on each side to recognize

how the other side sees the conflict and consider possible re-conceptualizations of the conflict so that shared gains become feasible. In this view, persons from opposing camps might collaborate in producing study guides, curricular material, films, and videos.

The process of reaching an agreement is important, but that alone does not determine the viability or the fairness of the agreement reached. The content of a peace agreement also requires great attention. Thus, many aspects of the DOP warrant examination, including the diverse needs addressed by it for the many persons and groups with a stake in the outcome.

One important feature of the DOP was its step-by-step and open-ended character. Given the level of mutual mistrust, the signatories constructed a plan to move by incremental steps in order to develop the needed mutual confidence to move further. The nature of the ultimate mutual accommodation was left unstated, although the establishment of a Palestinian state to exist along side Israel was widely anticipated by the Palestinians and expected by most Israeli Jews. A series of mutual steps were taken, and additional agreements were reached. These included the May 1994 Cairo Agreement for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the August 1994 agreement for the 'Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in the West Bank', and in September 1995 the agreement to transfer civil control of the Palestinian population centers.

Although the steps were delayed, they did progress during the period when the Labor Party led the Israeli government. Joint steps were also taken to foster economic development in the areas under the jurisdiction of the PA. Israelis helped in raising funds and many external actors pledged support, but the actual provisions have been small relative to the large needs.

The fundamental difficulty in implementing the DOP and subsequent agreements

arose from the actions of those who endeavored to undermine the agreements. On the one side were the Jewish religious nationalists who provoked and attacked Palestinians, and, in the case of Baruch Goldstein, massacred Muslims at prayer in Hebron. On the other side were the Palestinian groups who committed acts of terrorism, for example by bombing buses.¹² When outrages and atrocities were committed by elements of the other side, the response of the Israeli government and the PLO leadership was to interrupt the peace process, instead of accelerating it.¹³

Arafat made maximalist claims and was reluctant to suppress Hamas. This shored up his base, but hardly won support from Israeli Jews. Rabin insisted that personal security for Israeli Jews was the test of the fulfillment of the Oslo process. This did not help Arafat with his problems, and made his policy a hostage of the Palestinian rejectionists. Jewish opponents who committed provocative actions also undermined Israeli government policy. Consequently, in the May 1996 election, after Rabin's assassination in the fall of 1995, Netanyahu defeated Peres. The Israeli Jewish opposition to the Oslo process was now incorporated within the government of Israel.

¹² Perpetrators justify their actions in part as retribution for what the other side had previously done, in a cycle of mutual destructiveness. For example, on 5 January 1996, Yahyah Ayyash, known as the Engineer, was killed in Gaza; he had been the chief bomb-maker for the Qassam Brigade, the armed wing of Hamas. It is generally believed Israeli Mossad agents killed him. From 25 February to 4 March 1996, four suicide bombings, taking 58 lives in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, were carried out in retaliation. The first three bombings were carried out by a group calling itself Students of Yahyah Ayyash and the fourth by Islamic Jihad (Kristiansen, 1999).

¹³ This can be usefully compared to the actions in South Africa as the end of apartheid was negotiated. A close associate of Nelson Mandela and a leading figure of the ANC, Chris Hani, was assassinated in April 1993 by a white man. President Frederik W. De Klerk and Nelson Mandela discussed how to avoid any disruption of their negotiations. Mandela made a moving address on national television calling for 'all South Africans to stand together', the ANC held nonviolent protest demonstrations, and the government arrested a Conservative Party member in connection with the murder (Mandela, 1994: 530).

This analysis suggests that other policies might have helped to continue the Oslo peace process with less disruption. Speedier implementation after terrorist actions might have been possible if their high likelihood had been stressed and the public assured that not allowing them to disrupt the peace process would hasten their end. In general, if the cooperative character of the negotiations leading to the DOP were better sustained, rather than resorting to more competitive bargaining, both sides could have garnered more support for steady progress (Savir, 1998). Perhaps Shimon Peres would have led the Labor Party to an electoral victory in 1996 had he held elections shortly after Rabin's assassination or had appealed more effectively to the Sephardic Jews and to all Israelis who were concerned about their security. Furthermore, as Yossi Beilin (1999: 3) later observed, the Israeli officials engaged in the peace process should have worked harder to explain to the public what they envisaged at the end of the process. Perhaps a more activist role by the US government, particularly in assisting the Palestinians to develop the territory under their authority, would have helped sustain the implementation. Finally, much denser networks of social links between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians would have helped isolate the rejectionists and reassure the populations in both camps.

In conflicts in which ethnic or other communal groups are engaged, rank-and-file involvement is particularly significant. Mediation between members of the opposing sides at the sub-elite and the public at large levels can help in preparing the adversaries for taking de-escalating steps, making agreements, and implementing them. Non-official dialogue groups and other forms of people-to-people exchanges are likely to be especially important in such conflicts.

In any event, many mediators using various methods helped the government of

Israel and the PLO to construct and agree to the DOP. The mutual recognition of the PLO and the government of Israel was a major step on the slippery path to peace and constituted an irrevocable move towards a mutual accommodation. Even Netanyahu, pressed by active US government mediation, led by President William J. Clinton, signed the Wye River Memorandum. This memorandum set out the procedures for implementing the agreements already signed by Rabin and Arafat. Netanyahu seemed to be signing on to the Oslo peace process, and the Israelis who rejected that process felt betrayed by him. But then by failing to implement the terms of the memorandum, Netanyahu estranged the many Israelis who wanted to proceed. Netanyahu was forced to stand for elections and was defeated. Perhaps his stalling tactics had shifted the terms of the ultimate formal peace agreement affecting the borders of Israel and the future Palestinian states. He almost certainly contributed to delaying and minimizing cooperation and economic integration between the peoples of the two states. Yet, by signing the US-mediated agreement, he had acknowledged that Israel had no viable alternative but to make peace with a Palestinian state.

Assessing the effectiveness of various mediation approaches is difficult since the consequences can be contradictory and reverberate over time. Principal mediation, traditional big-power mediation, can induce adversaries to come to the negotiating table. The US Secretary of State and US President succeeded in convening the 1991 Middle East Peace Conference in Madrid; but they were unable to bring about any agreements among the negotiating parties. Yet that failure led to back-channel negotiations, with a problem-solving approach, yielding a signed agreement. Sometimes, indeed, the US government can induce a signed agreement, but then the agreement is not implemented, as happened with the Wye River

Memorandum. Yet that failure led to the election defeat of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and renewed negotiations and new agreements. In these negotiations, as in the Israeli–Jordanian negotiations resulting in a peace treaty, mediation did not play a great role.¹⁴

Making peace, like making war, is complicated and the results are always uncertain. Many different people in each camp, and on the sidelines, pursue various goals using diverse methods. Consequently, making peace is messy and requires perseverance, thoughtfulness, and good fortune. It requires a wide variety of appropriate and complementary actions by many kinds of people to be effective. No single method of conflict resolution or of mediation is effective for every actor in all circumstances. Different methods are appropriate as a conflict de-escalates, is transformed, and peace is built. Furthermore, peace is never fully and finally reached; it is not a static condition, but an ongoing process of evolving relations.

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¹⁴ Indeed, the newly elected Prime Minister Barak requested that the United States government step back from an active mediating role so the parties would assume more responsibility for the negotiations. The PA encouraged Egypt and the USA to intervene with Israel, and the Egyptian government did so (Peace Monitor, 2000: 118).

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