

Visions in Collision | *Jeremy Pressman*

What Happened at Camp David and Taba?

Many officials and analysts have inaccurately portrayed the Israeli-Palestinian-U.S. summit at Camp David in July 2000 and subsequent negotiations. Based on this inaccurate portrayal, a number of observers have argued that a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not possible at this time. This article addresses the inaccuracies of this dominant narrative and offers a different understanding of Israeli-Palestinian relations in 2000 (and January 2001) that, in turn, suggests that the door to Israeli-Palestinian political talks is open.

After the Camp David summit, Israel and some U.S. officials told a story about what happened that was widely accepted in Israel and the United States. According to this dominant version of the events at Camp David, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak made a generous offer to the Palestinian negotiators who rejected it without even putting forth a counterproposal. At Camp David, Barak offered a Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and more than 90 percent of the West Bank, a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem, shared control of the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem's Old City, and a commitment to withdraw many Israeli settlements from the West Bank. The Israeli version continues that Palestinian leaders rejected Barak's offer and the diplomatic route to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Instead, they tried to destroy Israel by pressing throughout the Israeli-Palestinian talks for the return of millions of Palestinian refugees to Israel and by launching the second intifada, or uprising, in September 2000.¹

Jeremy Pressman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut.

I would like to thank Boaz Atzili, Michal Ben Josef-Hirsch, Robert Blecher, Waleed Hazbun, Scott Lasensky, Sarah Kenyon Lischer, Stephen Van Evera, Cory Welt, Amos Zehavi, and the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on previous drafts. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2002 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston, Massachusetts. I am grateful for the support of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

1. The Israeli version refers to the recounting of events since the end of the Camp David summit by Ehud Barak, the Israeli prime minister, and his senior negotiators such as Shlomo Ben-Ami and Gilead Sher; it is also reflected in official statements by the Israeli ministry of foreign affairs and the Israel Defense Forces. The U.S. version is similar to the Israeli one and refers to events as seen by President Bill Clinton, U.S. special envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross, Assistant Secretary of

The Palestinian version of the Camp David summit, other high-level Israeli-Palestinian talks, and the outbreak of the second intifada has been far less influential in Israel and the United States. According to Palestinian negotiators, Israel's offer at Camp David did not remove many of the vestiges of the Israeli occupation in terms of land, security, settlements, and Jerusalem. Despite Israel's intransigence, these negotiators continued, the Palestinian Authority (PA), the governing entity of the semiautonomous Palestinian areas in Gaza and the West Bank, preferred negotiations to violence. They argued that the PA did not launch the intifada. Rather it was caused by factors under Israel's control, including: frustration from continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands despite the 1993 and 1995 Oslo peace agreements; the visit of Ariel Sharon, leader of Israel's Likud opposition, to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary on September 28, 2000; and the heavy-handed response of Israeli forces to the resulting Palestinian protest.

In this article I argue that neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian version of the events at Camp David and subsequent talks is wholly accurate. The Palestinian version, however, is much closer to the evidentiary record of articles, interviews, and documents produced by participants in the negotiations, journalists, and other analysts. Israel did make an unprecedented offer at Camp David, but it neglected several elements essential to any comprehensive settlement, including: the contiguity of the Palestinian state in the West Bank, full sovereignty in Arab parts of East Jerusalem, and a compromise resolution on the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Moreover, despite Israeli contentions, Palestinian negotiators and much of the Palestinian nationalist movement favored a genuine two-state solution and did not seek to destroy Israel either by insisting on the right of return or through the second intifada.

The Palestinian version has two shortcomings. First, the PA did not give credit to Israel for the evolution in its negotiating position from the Camp David summit to the talks in Taba, Egypt, in January 2001 on issues such as the territorial contiguity of the West Bank and Palestinian sovereignty in East Jeru-

State for Near East Affairs Martin Indyk, and major U.S. newspapers such as the *New York Times*. The Palestinian version describes events in the eyes of negotiators such as Mohammed Dahlan, Akram Haniyah, and Ahmed Qorei; it is also reflected in official statements of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, the governing entity of the semiautonomous Palestinian areas in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Robert Malley (a member of President Clinton's National Security Council staff) and Deborah Sontag (writing for the *New York Times*). These labels are not absolute: Israelis may support the Palestinian version and vice versa. This illustrative list also does not capture the internal disagreements among officials who worked together on the same team.

salem. By the time of the Taba negotiations, Israel was much more cognizant of the compromises that it would need to make to end the occupation. Second, the Palestinian explanation for the outbreak of the second intifada was accurate in part. It neglected two crucial elements, however: the role of Palestinian militants in escalating the conflict and PA unwillingness to attempt to decisively rein them in.

The dominance of the Israeli/U.S. version of events is not surprising given the power imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel and the United States alone—but especially together—have more power and leverage at the bargaining table than the Palestinians. They also have a significant edge in the public relations battle over rhetoric, images, and symbols.²

In addition to substantive Israeli-Palestinian disagreements, the misjudgments and procedural errors made by all three parties significantly reduced the likelihood of a successful deal in 2000–01. A number of factors combined to undermine the drive toward peace, including: Israeli and Palestinian mixed messages; the absence of a Palestinian public relations campaign to explain the failure of the Camp David summit; Israeli/U.S. misunderstanding of the Palestinian bottom line on the core issues of Jerusalem, refugees, and territory; and several U.S. decisions about the conduct and the timing of the summit. By being mindful of these and other mistakes in future talks, the parties will give negotiators a better chance of success.

One important caveat is that this article is an assessment of diplomatic meetings that did not result in a signed agreement. As is common in bargaining situations, the positions shifted as both parties sought the best deal possible. At Camp David, the parties took an all-or-nothing approach: “Nothing was considered agreed and binding until everything was agreed.”³ Most proposals were verbal, not written.⁴ Therefore, the details about positions on specific issues at the Camp David summit and subsequent negotiations are vaguer than if the talks had resulted in a signed agreement.

In the first section, I describe the three proposals for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the Israeli proposal at Camp David, the U.S. framework known as the Clinton plan, and the ideas discussed at Taba. In the second sec-

2. This imbalance is also reflected in the structure of this article in that it devotes more space to the Israeli/U.S. version.

3. Gilead Sher, “An Israeli View: Comments on the Negotiating Strategies of Israel and the Palestinians,” June 17, 2002, edition 22, <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl170602ed22.html>.

4. Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors,” *New York Review of Books*, August 9, 2001, p. 62.

tion, I describe the Israeli/U.S. explanations for the failure of Camp David, the breakdown of negotiations, and the Palestinian turn to violence. The third section assesses these claims. In the fourth and fifth sections, I do the same for the Palestinian version of events, first presenting it as told and then analyzing the claims. In the sixth section, I describe procedural errors that undermined the negotiations. I conclude with a discussion of the impact of the inaccurate narratives on Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

The Camp David Summit, the Clinton Plan, and the Taba Talks

Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. delegations met at Camp David, in Maryland, on July 11–25, 2000. The summit was convened to conclude the final status talks—that is, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, and other issues that were set out as the final stage of negotiations in the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles. At the summit, Israel offered to establish a sovereign Palestinian state encompassing the Gaza Strip, 92 percent of the West Bank, and some parts of Arab East Jerusalem.⁵ In return, it proposed the annexation of Jewish neighborhoods (settlements) in East Jerusalem. Israel also asked for several security measures, including early warning stations in the West Bank and an Israeli presence at Palestinian border crossings. In addition, it would accept no more than a token return of Palestinian refugees under a family reunification program.⁶ The summit concluded without Israel and the Palestinian Authority reaching an agreement.

After the failure of the summit, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators continued to meet in small groups in August and September 2000. The United States was about to present its own plan for resolving the conflict when the second intifada began on September 28–29, 2000. As a result of the intifada, President Bill Clinton did not put forth the U.S. plan to Israeli and Palestinian negotiators until December 23, 2000.

The Clinton plan proposed the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and 97 percent of the West Bank.⁷ As for East Jerusalem,

5. Israel offered the Palestinians 91 percent of the West Bank plus the equivalent of 1 percent of the West Bank in land from pre-1967 Israel.

6. Palestinian refugees from 1948 include those expelled and their descendants. As of June 30, 2003, there were just under 4.1 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. See “UNRWA in Figures,” August 2003, <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/pdf/uif-june03.pdf>.

7. The figure of 97 percent is based on a Palestinian state in 94–96 percent of the West Bank plus the equivalent of 1–3 percent of the West Bank in land from pre-1967 Israel. For instance, the Pales-

Clinton stated, "The general principle is that Arab areas are Palestinian and that Jewish areas are Israeli." With regard to the holiest parts of Jerusalem's Old City, the Palestinians would be sovereign over the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary and the Israelis over the Western Wall. On security, Clinton mentioned Israeli early warning stations, a "nonmilitarized" Palestinian state, and an international force for border security. The plan called for a number of measures to address issues involving Palestinian refugees, including: the right of return to the Palestinian state, financial compensation, and an Israeli acknowledgment of the suffering caused to the Palestinians in 1948.⁸ Both Israel and the PA accepted the Clinton plan.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met for the last time at Taba on January 21–27, 2001. According to most accounts, they used elements of the Clinton plan as a basis for the talks and made significant progress toward a final agreement. The main summary of the discussions was written after the fact by the European Union envoy, Miguel Moratinos.⁹ At the end of the Taba talks, Israel and the PA issued an upbeat communiqué: "The sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections."¹⁰ In February 2001, Ariel Sharon defeated Ehud Barak in the Israeli elections, and Sharon's new government chose not to resume the high-level talks.

The Israeli/U.S. Version of the Failure of Negotiations

Israel, some U.S. government officials, and much of the Israeli and U.S. media drew five major conclusions from Palestinian conduct in 2000–01, each of which became public relations mantras.¹¹ First, Barak made a generous offer at

tinian state might be composed of 94 percent of the West Bank and 3 percent of swapped land for a total of 97 percent.

8. For one version of the Clinton plan, see Bill Clinton, "Proposals for a Final Settlement," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 2001), pp. 171–173. The issue also lists the citations for several other publications where the Clinton plan is reproduced, including "Clinton Minutes," *Ha'aretz*, December 31, 2000, pp. 1, 3.

9. The Moratinos summary was published in Akiva Eldar, "The Peace That Nearly Was at Taba," *Ha'aretz*, February 14, 2002, pp. 4, 9.

10. "Israeli-Palestinian Joint Statement at Taba," January 27, 2001, <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/a3275>.

11. For examples of the official Israeli version on many of these points, see "Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee: First Statement of the Government of Israel," December 28, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0jcb0>; and "Sharm El-Sheikh Fact-finding Committee: Second Statement of the Government of Israel," March 20, 2001, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0jrb0>.

Camp David, and the Palestinian negotiators turned it down. Second, the Palestinians never put on the table a counterproposal to the Israeli offer. Third, the rejection of Barak's offer proves that the Palestinians do not accept Israel's right to exist. Fourth, Palestinian violence in the context of the second intifada confirms the Palestinian desire for war and bloodshed, not negotiations and compromise. Fifth, the Palestinians seek Israel's destruction through the right of return.

PALESTINIAN REJECTION OF BARAK'S GENEROUS OFFER

According to the Israeli/U.S. version, each time Israel and/or the United States put forward a pathbreaking plan to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Palestinians rejected it. Barak put the problem succinctly: "[Arafat] missed every opportunity presented to him to achieve a permanent peace for his people."¹² From the Israeli perspective, the Palestinians rejected three generous proposals: the Israeli offer at Camp David (July 2000), the Clinton plan (December 2000), and the Israeli offer at Taba (January 2001).

On the first anniversary of the 2000 Camp David summit, Deborah Sontag wrote an investigative piece on why it failed with details from many of the participants. The article suggested that Israeli and U.S. missteps were an important factor. This assessment contrasted sharply with the dominant narrative that placed nearly all the blame for the summit's failure on Yasir Arafat's intransigence on key issues.¹³

According to Barak, Clinton took strong exception to Sontag's analysis: "What the hell is this? Why is she turning the mistakes we [i.e., the United States and Israel] made into the essence? The true story of Camp David was that for the first time in the history of the conflict the American president put on the table a proposal, based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 [of 1967 and 1973], very close to the Palestinian demands, and Arafat refused even to accept it as a basis for negotiations, walked out of the room, and deliberately turned to terrorism. That's the real story—all the rest is gossip."¹⁴ Like Barak and other Israeli participants at Camp David, the former president had

12. Ehud Barak, "Israel Needs a True Partner for Peace," *New York Times*, July 30, 2001, p. 17. See also Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions," updated August 2002, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0i9o0>.

13. Deborah Sontag, "Quest for Mideast Peace: How and Why It Failed," *New York Times*, July 26, 2001, p. A1.

14. Benny Morris, "Camp David and After: An Exchange (1. An Interview with Ehud Barak)," *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 2002, pp. 42–45 at p. 42.

no doubt that Arafat was responsible for turning down the Israeli offer for a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As Israeli and many U.S. officials portrayed the situation, both the Israeli offer at Camp David and the Clinton plan were groundbreaking. In a statement at the close of the Camp David summit, President Clinton told reporters that Barak “showed particular courage, vision, and an understanding of the historical importance of this moment.” This positive assessment stood in sharp relief to his faint praise for Arafat: “Arafat made it clear that he, too, remains committed to the path of peace.”¹⁵ In the words of *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, Barak offered the “unthinkable” and the “unprecedented.”¹⁶ Clinton and Barak, Friedman later wrote, described “a historic compromise proposal that would have given Palestinians control of 94 to 96 percent of the West Bank and Gaza—with all the settlements removed, virtually all of Arab East Jerusalem, a return to Israel of a symbolic number of Palestinian refugees and either the right of return to the West Bank and Gaza or compensation for all the others.”¹⁷

In the view of Israeli and U.S. officials, every deal failed because of Arafat’s rejectionism. One year after Camp David, Barak said that he became prime minister “either to unmask Arafat” or to see if Arafat was a “Palestinian Sadat” who could end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹⁸ For Barak, Arafat was no Anwar Sadat, the late president of Egypt who signed a historic peace treaty with Israel in 1979: “At Camp David, Mr. Arafat well understood that the moment of truth had come and that painful decisions needed to be made by both sides. He failed this challenge.”¹⁹ Former U.S. special envoy to the Middle East Dennis Ross described how Arafat scuttled the Clinton plan as well, despite the delayed but official Palestinian acceptance: “Arafat came to the White House on January 2 [2001]. Met with the president, and I was there in the Oval Office. He said yes, and then he added reservations that basically meant he re-

15. “President William J. Clinton Statement on the Middle East Peace Talks at Camp David,” July 25, 2000, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/mid027.htm>.

16. Thomas Friedman, “The Best of Enemies,” *New York Times*, February 16, 2001, p. 19; and Thomas Friedman, “Arafat’s War,” *New York Times*, October 13, 2000, p. 33. See also William Safire, “ Hamas vs. Abbas,” *New York Times*, May 1, 2003, p. 35.

17. Thomas Friedman, “It Only Gets Worse,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2001, p. 19.

18. Ehud Barak interviewed by Lally Weymouth, “Barak: Die or Separate,” *Newsweek*, July 23, 2001, p. 28. See also Ron Pundak, “From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?” *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 31–45 at p. 39.

19. Barak, “Israel Needs a True Partner for Peace.” See also Shimon Peres, “Why Security Must Be Globalized,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2002, p. 13; and interview with Israeli negotiator Oded Eran, CNN Morning News, July 26, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ho30>.

jected every single one of the things he was supposed to give.”²⁰ Later that month, the same fate befell Taba, the final effort to save the Oslo process, which began with the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles on September 13, 1993. Former Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Shlomo Ben-Ami explained: “At Taba, too, they didn’t budge. A dream proposal is on the table, but the Palestinians are in no hurry.”²¹

ABSENCE OF A PALESTINIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL

In the eyes of Israeli and some U.S. negotiators, the Palestinians not only rejected the historic Israeli offer at Camp David, but they also presented no counterproposals. According to this view, Arafat and members of the Palestinian negotiating team refused to play a constructive role and build on the positive elements of Israeli and U.S. proposals. Nor did they show any flexibility or willingness to compromise on key issues.²²

Both during and after the 2000–01 negotiations, Israeli and U.S. officials have stressed the absence of Palestinian ideas on settling the conflict. According to Barak, “[Arafat] did not negotiate in good faith; indeed, he did not negotiate at all. He just kept saying ‘no’ to every offer, never making any counterproposals of his own.”²³ This was true, according to Ben-Ami, even in the face of Israeli concessions: “The whole time [at Camp David] we waited to see them make some sort of movement in the face of our far-reaching movement. But they didn’t.”²⁴ Ross attributes similar thoughts to Clinton after Camp David: Arafat had “been here fourteen days and said no to everything.”²⁵

PALESTINIAN REFUSAL TO ACCEPT ISRAEL’S RIGHT TO EXIST

For Israel, the Palestinian failure to respond positively to its historic offer reflected an even deeper problem: The Palestinians, led by Arafat, did not rec-

20. Dennis Ross interviewed by Brit Hume, “Transcript: Dennis Ross, Former U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East,” *FOX News Sunday*, April 21, 2002, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,50830,00.html>. See also Raviv Drucker, *Harakiri* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2002), pp. 379–380; Sher, “An Israeli View”; Sher (summary of remarks prepared by Liat Radcliffe), “The Brink of Peace? An Inside Look from Camp David to Taba,” *Peacewatch*, No. 318, April 18, 2001, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/watch/Peacewatch/peacewatch2001/318.htm>; and Shlomo Ben-Ami interviewed by Ari Shavit, “End of a Journey,” *Ha’aretz* (magazine), September 14, 2001, pp. 10–15, 29.

21. Ben-Ami interviewed by Ari Shavit, “End of a Journey,” p. 29. See also Barak, “Israel Needs a True Partner for Peace,” p. 17.

22. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Conclusion of the Camp David Summit: Key Points,” July 25, 2000, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0hnm0>.

23. Quoted in Morris, “Camp David and After,” p. 42.

24. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, “End of a Journey,” p. 14.

25. Dennis Ross, “Camp David: An Exchange,” *New York Review of Books*, September 20, 2001, p. 9.

ognize Israel's right to exist, a sine qua non for a negotiated settlement. At best, they consider a two-state solution as just another stage in the conflict, one that would ultimately improve their ability to destroy all of Israel. Barak was adamant on this point: "What they [Arafat and his colleagues] want is a Palestinian state in all of Palestine. What we see as self-evident, [the need for] two states for two peoples, they reject."²⁶ In the negotiations, Barak saw "that at the deepest level Arafat does not accept the moral and juridical right of the State of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. That . . . Arafat's obsession is not to establish Palestinian sovereignty in part of the land but 'to correct the injustice of 1948'—in other words, to destroy the State of Israel."²⁷

Other Israeli officials echoed Barak's charge. "[Arafat] doesn't accept the idea of two states for two peoples," said Ben-Ami, "He may be able to make some sort of partial, temporary settlement with us—though I have my doubts about that, too—but at the deep level, he doesn't accept us. Neither he nor the Palestinian national movement accept us."²⁸ Given this view of the Palestinian position, the talks were doomed. As one Israeli journalist put it, "Arafat believes that to compromise in areas such as Jerusalem and refugees would mean accepting Israel's moral legitimacy. This he will never do, and this is why Camp David and Taba had to fail."²⁹

WAR AND BLOODSHED VERSUS NEGOTIATIONS AND COMPROMISE

The second intifada and the unwillingness of the Palestinian Authority to stop it, argue Israelis and some U.S. officials, are proof that at minimum the Palestinians reject a negotiated resolution to the conflict—if not Israel's right to exist. The Palestinian leadership planned and initiated the second intifada. Pursuing a negotiated settlement and engaging in a massive wave of terrorism are incompatible.

Israelis have little doubt in their belief that Arafat and the Palestinians wanted to use violence after the failure at Camp David. According to Barak: "We know, from hard intelligence, that Arafat intended to unleash a violent confrontation, terrorism."³⁰ The intifada, says Barak, "was preplanned, pre-prepared. I don't mean that Arafat knew that on a certain day in September [it

26. Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 42.

27. Ehud Barak interviewed by Ari Shavit, "Eyes Wide Shut," *Ha'aretz* (magazine), September 6, 2002, pp. 8–12, 14, at p. 11.

28. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey." See also Sher, "An Israeli View."

29. David Makovsky, "Taba Mythchief," *National Interest*, Spring 2003, pp. 119–129 at p. 128.

30. Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 43. See also Martin S. Indyk, "Is Yasser Arafat a Credible Partner for Peace?" testimony before the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, Special Oversight Panel on Terrorism, 107th Cong., 2d sess., June 6, 2002.

would be unleashed]. . . . It wasn't accurate, like computer engineering. But it was definitely on the level of planning, of a grand plan."³¹ Gilead Sher, an Israeli negotiator, agreed: After Camp David and into the fall of 2000, "Arafat sought the appropriate timing and excuse to introduce an additional element into the arena: violence."³²

To the Israeli government, the launching of the second intifada was a rejection of the Oslo process because the Oslo agreements committed Israel and the PA to resolve their differences through negotiations, not the use of force.³³ The Israel Defense Forces' (IDF) characterization of the uprising captures this sentiment: "The disturbances . . . show that the Palestinian Authority sees the use of unbridled violence as a legitimate and effective means of advancing their objectives. In this way the Palestinians have undermined the basic concept of the peace process, which was not resorting to violence as a means to achieve political goals."³⁴ According to another official Israeli version, "Israel had sought to resolve differences with the Palestinians at the negotiating table, yet the Palestinian Authority was unwilling to abandon its strategy of armed struggle."³⁵ Friedman supported these assessments, suggesting that the intifada be called "Arafat's War": "This explosion of violence would be totally understandable if the Palestinians had no alternative. But that was not the case. . . . [The violence] came in the context of a serious Israeli peace overture, which Mr. Arafat has chosen to spurn. That's why this is Arafat's war."³⁶ Thus, had Arafat been serious about a negotiated settlement, he would have reined in the militants and terrorists.

THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL THROUGH THE RIGHT OF RETURN

Israeli negotiators also came to believe that in addition to attacking Israel directly through terrorism, the Palestinians planned to use a final settlement of the Palestinian refugee issue as a second avenue for eliminating the Jewish

31. Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 43.

32. Sher, "An Israeli View." For a view from the Israeli right, see Dore Gold, "Only Buffer Zones Can Protect Israel," *New York Times*, February 27, 2002, p. 21.

33. See article 15 of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (Oslo 1) and article 31 of the Oslo 2 agreement. Oslo 1 and 2 are available at <http://www.mideastweb.org/meoslodop.htm> and <http://www.mideastweb.org/meosint.htm>.

34. "Overview of the Violence in the Territories, 29 September–9 November 2000," http://www.idf.il/english/news/background_20nov00.stm.

35. Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions: Palestinian Violence and Terrorism—The International War against Terrorism," January 2002. For the August 2002 version, see <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH019o0>.

36. Friedman, "Arafat's War." See also Ross, "Camp David: An Exchange."

state. By forcing Israel to accept 4 million Palestinian refugees, the Palestinians could permanently change Israel's demographic balance, making Jews a minority in their own state. With a Palestinian majority, Israel's Jewish identity could be eliminated through democratic means.

The Israeli/U.S. version suggests that refugees are a vital tool in the Palestinian plot against Israel. Barak called the right of return "a euphemism for the elimination of Israel."³⁷ *New York Times* columnist William Safire shared this conclusion: "By flooding Israel with 'returning' Palestinians, the plan in its promised final phase would drive the hated Jews from the Middle East."³⁸ The Palestinian leadership "do[es] not want, merely, an end to the occupation—that is what was offered back in July–December 2000, and they rejected the deal. They want all of Palestine and as few Jews in it as possible. The right of return is the wedge with which to prise open the Jewish state."³⁹

Evaluating the Israeli/U.S. Version

The five claims made by Israeli and some U.S. officials to explain the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian talks and the outbreak of the second intifada are seriously flawed. Moreover, they lead to unwarranted conclusions about the reasons for failure and the likelihood of an eventual comprehensive agreement. Contrary to these claims, I argue that the 2000–01 negotiations laid the groundwork for progress toward a settlement.

REJECTING BARAK'S GENEROUS OFFER

The Israeli offer at Camp David, the Clinton plan, and the Israeli proposals at Taba all broke new ground for Israel and the United States. In each case, the Palestinian negotiators accepted some significant points and also broke new ground. They did not reject the Israeli/U.S. proposals in toto.

At Camp David, the Israeli offer was unprecedented, but it was neither as generous nor as complete as Israel has since suggested. With the Clinton plan,

37. Barak interviewed by Weymouth, "Barak: Die or Separate." See also Morris, "Camp David and After."

38. William Safire, "Not Arafat's Fault?" *New York Times*, July 30, 2001, p. 17.

39. Benny Morris, "Peace? No Chance," *Guardian* (magazine), February 21, 2002, pp. 2, 4 of G2. See also Thomas Friedman, "Nine Wars Too Many," *New York Times*, May 15, 2002, p. 23; Akiva Eldar, "How to Solve the Palestinian Refugee Problem," *Ha'aretz*, May 29, 2001, p. 4; Ari Shavit, "The Right of Return at Taba," *Ha'aretz*, July 11, 2002, p. 5; Ari Shavit, "The Security Umbrella of Victory," *Ha'aretz*, August 8, 2002, p. 5; and Uzi Benziman, "Rolling to Where?" *Ha'aretz*, March 31, 2002, p. 5.

Israeli and U.S. negotiators correctly noted that Palestinian officials had serious reservations about proposals for the West Bank, Palestinian refugees, and the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary. In explaining the failure of the diplomatic route, however, they did not highlight the significant Israeli reservations about the Clinton plan on many of the same issues. The Taba talks were serious, and important developments took place. The Palestinians did not reject another Israeli offer.

AN INCOMPLETE OFFER AT CAMP DAVID. At Camp David, Israel made a major concession by agreeing to give Palestinians sovereignty in some areas of East Jerusalem and by offering 92 percent of the West Bank for a Palestinian state (91 percent of the West Bank and 1 percent from a land swap). By proposing to divide sovereignty in Jerusalem, Barak went further than any previous Israeli leader.

Nevertheless, on some issues the Israeli proposal at Camp David was not forthcoming enough, while on others it omitted key components. On security, territory, and Jerusalem, elements of the Israeli offer at Camp David would have prevented the emergence of a sovereign, contiguous Palestinian state. These flaws in the Israeli offer formed the basis of Palestinian objections.

Israel demanded extensive security mechanisms, including three early warning stations in the West Bank and a demilitarized Palestinian state. Israel also wanted to retain control of the Jordan Valley to protect against an Arab invasion from the east via the new Palestinian state. Regardless of whether the Palestinians were accorded sovereignty in the valley, Israel planned to retain control of it for six to twenty-one years.⁴⁰

Three factors made Israel's territorial offer less forthcoming than it initially appeared. First, the 91 percent land offer was based on the Israeli definition of the West Bank, but this differs by approximately 5 percentage points from the Palestinian definition. Palestinians use a total area of 5,854 square kilometers. Israel, however, omits the area known as No Man's Land (50 sq. km near Latrun),⁴¹ post-1967 East Jerusalem (71 sq. km), and the territorial waters of the

40. This is not to say that Israel's position was six to twenty-one years. Rather, Ze'ev Schiff, *Ha'aretz's* senior military correspondent, claimed that it was twenty-one years; Jerome Slater, an American academic, claimed six to twelve. Ze'ev Schiff, "Drawing a New Red Line," *Ha'aretz*, January 5, 2001, p. A4; and Jerome Slater, "What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 171–199 at p. 183. At Camp David on July 16, 2000, Charles Enderlin quoted Gilead Sher as proposing twenty years during which Israel would gradually withdraw from the valley. Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995–2002* (New York: Other Press, 2003), pp. 208, 213.

41. The land was designated as such in the 1949 Israeli-Jordanian armistice talks.

Dead Sea (195 sq. km), which reduces the total to 5,538 sq. km.⁴² Thus, an Israeli offer of 91 percent (of 5,538 sq. km) of the West Bank translates into only 86 percent from the Palestinian perspective.

Second, at Camp David, key details related to the exchange of land were left unresolved. In principle, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed to land swaps whereby the Palestinians would get some territory from pre-1967 Israel in exchange for Israeli annexation of some land in the West Bank. In practice, Israel offered only the equivalent of 1 percent of the West Bank in exchange for its annexation of 9 percent. Nor could the Israelis and Palestinians agree on the territory that should be included in the land swaps. At Camp David, the Palestinians rejected the Halutza Sand region (78 sq. km) alongside the Gaza Strip, in part because they claimed that it was inferior in quality to the West Bank land they would be giving up to Israel.⁴³

Third, the Israeli territorial offer at Camp David was noncontiguous, breaking the West Bank into two, if not three, separate areas. At a minimum, as Barak has since confirmed, the Israeli offer broke the West Bank into two parts: "The Palestinians were promised a continuous piece of sovereign territory except for a razor-thin Israeli wedge running from Jerusalem through from [the Israeli settlement of] Maale Adumim to the Jordan River."⁴⁴ The Palestinian negotiators and others have alleged that Israel included a second east-west salient in the northern West Bank (through the Israeli settlement of Ariel).⁴⁵ If true, the salient through Ariel would have cut the West Bank portion of the Palestinian state into three pieces.

Thus, at Camp David, the total Palestinian land share of the West Bank would have been closer to 77 percent for the first six to twenty-one years. Israel

42. Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem, "The Withdrawal Percentages: What Do They Really Mean?" January 2001, <http://www.poica.org/casestudies/Withdrawal-Percentages1-1-2001/index.htm>.

43. Clyde Haberman, "Israeli Cabinet Rules Out Idea of Exchange of Territory," *New York Times*, July 16, 2001, p. 6.

44. Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 44. Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, p. 201, quoted Clinton as noting this line.

45. The map produced by Palestinians at the Orient House, the unofficial headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jerusalem, after the Camp David summit included two divisions (and thus the Palestinian share of the West Bank would have been in three parts). The map was intended to be a reconstruction of what Israel had proposed at the summit. See <http://www.orienthouse.org/dept/images/Maps/ecartediplo.eng.html>. Amira Hass echoed this charge in "The Compromise That Wasn't Found at Camp David," *Ha'aretz*, November 14, 2000, p. 4. This second salient through Ariel could have been a single salient under Israeli sovereignty. It also could have been a combination of two elements: an Israeli salient from pre-1967 Israel to Ariel combined with Israeli control of the neighboring Jordan Valley.

planned to annex 9 percent of West Bank territory while giving the Palestinians the equivalent of 1 percent from pre-1967 Israel. Israel proposed retaining control of 10 percent or more of the Jordan Valley and did not include roughly 5 percent annexation in the total (e.g., Latrun and parts of East Jerusalem).

Although Barak received significant credit for proposing to divide Jerusalem, he did not offer full Palestinian sovereignty in all the Arab neighborhoods and villages of East Jerusalem. Israel offered full Palestinian sovereignty in outlying areas of East Jerusalem, including Abu Dis, al-Aysawiyah, Shu'fat, Bayt Hanina, Qalandiya, al-Thuri, Umm Tuba, al-Sawahirah al-Gharbiyah, Kafr Aqb, and Samir Amis.⁴⁶ Israel offered only Palestinian functional autonomy, not Palestinian sovereignty, in core Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, including al-Shaykh Jarrah, al-Suwwanah, al-Tur, Salah-al-Din Street, Bab al-Amud (Damascus Gate), Ra's al-Amud, and Silwan.⁴⁷ When combined with uncertainties about the future disposition of the Old City of Jerusalem, this meant that Israel would retain significant sovereign rights in Arab areas of Jerusalem.

The distinction between sovereignty and functional autonomy in Jerusalem and the issue of Israeli east-west salients running through the West Bank speak directly to the history of relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. For Israelis, control of a single, thin road that stretched across the West Bank might have seemed nonthreatening and not like a border at all. Yet given Israel's repeated closures of Palestinian areas, extensive use of checkpoints, and emphasis on asserting every right in past agreements, the Palestinians probably feared that narrow salients or even individual roadways could very quickly become permanent divisions. Barak's later claim, for instance, that "Palestinian territorial continuity would have been assured by a tunnel or bridge" might sound hollow given such promises as the long-delayed travel corridor linking the Gaza Strip and West Bank for Palestinians.⁴⁸ The same held true for Jerusa-

46. Yossi Beilin, then the Israeli minister of justice, concurred and also added Qalandiya. See report on an interview with Beilin by Walid Abu-al-Zuluf and Mahir al-Shaykh, *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), August 2, 2000, pp. 1, 22, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), August 4, 2000. One Israeli media account mentioned al-Ram and Anata in this category. See Ben Kaspit, "Jerusalem's Partition Plan," *Ma'ariv*, July 27, 2000, p. 2, in FBIS, July 31, 2000.

47. Akram Haniyah, "Camp David Papers," *al-Ayyam*, August 3, 2000, 4th installment, in FBIS, August 28, 2000. An abridged version of Haniyah's writings appear in "The Camp David Papers," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 2001), pp. 75–97. An Israeli account added Jabal al-Mukabbir and described the proposed Palestinian powers as "local administrative rights, such as autonomy." Kaspit, "Jerusalem's Partition Plan." See also Robert Malley, "Fictions About the Failure at Camp David," *New York Times*, July 8, 2001, p. 11.

48. Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 44.

lem: Functional autonomy is not the same as sovereignty, and that distinction could come back to haunt Palestinians in the future.

At Camp David, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators made little progress on the right of return for Palestinian refugees. It was not a central focus of the talks at the summit. According to one Palestinian negotiator, "The refugee issue did not budge one inch at Camp David."⁴⁹

Although the Israeli offer at Camp David was not generous or complete, on two issues the Palestinian representatives could have been more constructive. First, the Palestinians rejected several compromise formulas for the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, in part because the Palestinian delegation claimed that it did not have the authority to make such compromises on behalf of all Arabs and Muslims. In addition to supporting compromise formulas on the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary as a whole, Israel asked for a "prayer corner" on the site, which the Palestinians rejected.⁵⁰ In post-summit talks, Ben-Ami suggested that in exchange for Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, the Palestinians would agree not to excavate on the site "because [it] is sacred to the Jews."⁵¹ The Palestinians refused. Palestinian opposition is not surprising given the claim by some Palestinians that Jews have no tie to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary; Arafat has asserted that there never was a Jewish temple on the site.⁵² The historical inaccuracy of such claims undermines Palestinian credibility.⁵³

Second, the Palestinians could have framed the summit and its contents more constructively. They rightly noted many of the shortcomings of U.S. and Israeli proposals, but they did too little to recognize the Israeli concessions. For example, they did not acknowledge that Barak had come much closer to the Palestinian position on Jerusalem than previous Israeli leaders.

49. An interview with Muhammad Dahlan, "A Palestinian View—Nothing Tangible Was on the Table," July 15, 2002, edition 26, <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl150702ed26.html>. Yossi Beilin, who was not at Camp David, concurs in *Madrikh Le-Yonah Petsuah* [Manual for a wounded dove] (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2001), p. 130.

50. Kaspit, "Jerusalem's Partition Plan." The prayer corner is also mentioned by Slater, "What Went Wrong?" p. 186.

51. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey," p. 15.

52. Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, pp. 281–282; Akram Haniyah, "Camp David Papers," *al-Ayyam*, August 6, 2000, 5th installment, and August 10, 2000, 7th installment, in FBIS, August 28–29, 2000; Janine Zacharia, "Ross to 'Post': Palestinians Missed Historic Opportunity," *Jerusalem Post*, January 19, 2001, pp. A1, A14; and Morris, "Camp David and After."

53. For more on the connection between Jerusalem and the ancient Jewish Temple, see Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

After Camp David, the United States explicitly tested the Palestinian commitment to a diplomatic resolution of the conflict. In response to a Palestinian request for greater U.S. involvement, Washington's message was explicit. According to Ross: "If you want us to do something, you have to demonstrate to us that you're prepared to be serious and you're prepared to work these issues out." The Palestinians passed this U.S. test by initiating a private channel with Israeli negotiators in August and September 2000 that focused on Jerusalem and security issues.⁵⁴

MUTUAL RESERVATIONS TO THE CLINTON PLAN. Israeli and U.S. officials point to the Palestinians' response to the Clinton plan as further proof of Palestinian rejectionism. Their charge that the Palestinians said yes but offered reservations that vitiated the plan is largely true.

The Israeli/U.S. view omits the other half of the story, however: Israel also had serious reservations that undermined the Clinton plan. If the expression of major qualms was tantamount to rejection, Israel too rejected this plan. Indeed, Barak presented Clinton with a twenty-page document of reservations, later implying that two of his major reservations concerned Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary and the right of return.⁵⁵ In early January 2001, Barak publicly stated that he would not accept Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, even though the Clinton plan called for Palestinian sovereignty only over the Noble Sanctuary (the Haram).

In a speech to the Israel Policy Forum on January 7, 2001, Clinton used parallel language to sum up the standing of his plan. He stated, "Both Prime Minister Barak and Chairman Arafat have now accepted these parameters as the basis for further efforts. Both have expressed some reservations."⁵⁶

PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS AT TABA CUT SHORT. The talks at Taba demonstrated that Israel and the Palestinian Authority were committed to the Clinton plan and, more generally, to a negotiated solution to the conflict. Several im-

54. Dennis Ross, "From Oslo to Camp David to Taba: Setting the Record Straight," August 8, 2001, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/ross/ross.htm>.

55. Barak interviewed by Shavit, "Eyes Wide Shut," p. 11. See the main elements of Israel's reservations to the Clinton plan in Gilead Sher, *B'Merchak Negia* [Just beyond reach] (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2001), pp. 372–374. In a private interview, one U.S. diplomat noted differences in how the Israeli government and the PA handled their responses to the Clinton plan. Israel quickly accepted the plan and presented its serious reservations separately. The PA responded more slowly and coupled its acceptance with the presentation of significant reservations.

56. Bill Clinton, "Speech on Middle East Policy," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 2001), pp. 173–175 at p. 174.

portant disagreements lingered, but with more time the two parties might have bridged the remaining gaps.

According to most sources, the Israelis and Palestinians saw the Clinton plan as the framework for the Taba talks. In their concluding communiqué, the negotiators noted that the “two sides took into account the ideas suggested by President Clinton together with their respective qualifications and reservations.”⁵⁷ According to U.S. negotiator Ross, “What was done in Taba was basically to focus on the Clinton ideas.”⁵⁸ The Moratinos summary of Taba frequently mentions the Clinton plan and its ideas. On the issue of territory, Moratinos notes, “The Clinton parameters served as a loose basis for the discussion, but differences of interpretations regarding the scope and meaning of the parameters emerged. The Palestinian side stated that it had accepted the Clinton proposals but with reservations.”⁵⁹ David Makovsky, an Israeli journalist, challenged this assessment, citing in particular statements by Palestinian negotiator and then-speaker of the legislature Ahmed Qorei (a.k.a. Abu Ala) that the Palestinians “refused to accept the Clinton initiative as a basis for negotiations.”⁶⁰

The talks at Taba did not bridge all the gaps separating the Israelis and Palestinians. For instance, neither side accepted the exact parameters of the Clinton plan for the territorial division of the West Bank. The majority of the Israeli delegation favored retaining control of 8 percent of the West Bank. One Israeli map proposed annexing 6 percent and leasing an additional 2 percent from the new Palestinian state.⁶¹ Part of Arafat’s hesitancy in endorsing the Clinton plan was based on the belief that Israel wanted 8 percent, not 4–6 per-

57. “Israeli-Palestinian Joint Statement at Taba.”

58. Ross, “From Oslo to Camp David to Taba.” Ross, however, was not at the Taba talks. Menachem Klein, a professor at Bar Ilan University and an adviser to the Israeli delegation to the Camp David summit, agrees. See Klein, *Shovrim Tabu: ha-maga'im le-hesder keva bi-Yerushalayim, 1994–2001* [Shattering a taboo: The contacts toward a permanent status agreement in Jerusalem, 1994–2001] (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2001), p. 75.

59. Eldar, “The Peace That Nearly Was at Taba,” p. 4.

60. Qorei’s statement to *al-Ayyam* on January 29, 2001, and in Sher, *B’Merchak Negia*, p. 398, are cited in Makovsky, “Taba Mythchief,” p. 122. See also Sher, *B’Merchak Negia*, p. 406.

61. See section 1.1 of the Moratinos summary in Eldar, “The Peace That Nearly Was at Taba,” p. 4. See also Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, pp. 341–343, 352; and David Matz, “One Effort to Understand One Negotiation,” University of Massachusetts, Boston, December 2002. Matz interviewed seventeen of the twenty-eight negotiators and professional staff who had been at Taba. Ben-Ami presented a different map to the Palestinians with 5 percent Israeli annexation. Israel’s 8 percent figure may have been Barak’s bottom line, or it may have been a bargaining tactic. See Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 400; and Sher, *B’Merchak Negia*, p. 404.

cent of the West Bank.⁶² The Palestinians presented a map showing a 3 percent Israeli annexation, but continuing differences over the definition of the West Bank clouded the issue. The Palestinian figure included Israeli annexation of Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and parts of the Latrun salient. Thus what was 3 percent to Palestinians was only 2 percent to Israelis. Israeli representatives believed that Israel would be unable to annex 150,000 West Bank settlers and thereby minimize settler withdrawals.⁶³

Most analysts believe that with more time or another meeting (and without an Israeli election for prime minister on February 7, 2001), the two sides could have compromised on these issues as well.⁶⁴ Ariel Sharon won the election, and his government chose not to continue the government's high-level talks with the Palestinians.

LACK OF A PALESTINIAN RESPONSE

According to Israeli and some U.S. officials, the Palestinian negotiators never produced a comprehensive draft framework and were often, especially at Camp David, in a reactive mode. From the Palestinian perspective, however, the PA had already accepted the compromises embedded in the international frame of reference for the conflict. Furthermore, the Palestinians made several central concessions to Israel during the talks.

To understand the differences on this issue, one has to recognize the international frame of reference used by the Palestinians. The Palestinians have long argued that the basis for an agreement with Israel is embodied in UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and UN General Assembly resolution 194 (1948). Resolution 242 calls for Arab acceptance of Israel in exchange for territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war; this is the principle of land for peace. Palestinians cite resolution 194 as the basis for the right of return. By invoking these UN resolutions, Palestinians believe they have put forward a proposal for a final and complete settling of the conflict.⁶⁵

Moreover, starting with Camp David, important Palestinian concessions cut across a range of permanent-status issues. The Palestinians agreed that Israel

62. Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, p. 343.

63. Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 400.

64. Eldar, Enderlin, Alain Gresh (*Le Monde*), Matz, and Pundak all believe that, based on what transpired at Taba, an agreement could have been attained with more time. Makovsky claims that the parties were still far apart.

65. See, for instance, Mustafa Barghouti, "Generous to Whom?" *al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, May 10–16, 2001, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/533/op2.htm>.

could annex some settlement blocs (including Ariel in the north, some parts of the Latrun salient, and the Etzion bloc near Bethlehem). They also agreed that Israel could annex Israeli/Jewish neighborhoods (settlements) established in East Jerusalem since 1967 such as Gilo, Neve Ya'acov, and Pisgat Ze'ev. Though the two sides differed on the size and location of the swaps, the Palestinians accepted the principle of such swaps as compensation for West Bank territory to be annexed by Israel.⁶⁶ They also discussed Israeli security measures, agreeing on the stationing of an international force in the Jordan Valley. They disagreed, however, on whether the force would include Israelis.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the Palestinians at both Camp David and Taba had their own maps of proposed land divisions of the West Bank.⁶⁸

One problem with Israeli-Palestinian understandings of what constitutes a compromise or concession is the gap between principles and implementation. For instance, it became clear at Taba that although the two sides had agreed that Israel could annex certain settlement blocs, the Israeli and Palestinian territorial definitions of these settlement blocs were different. Israel wanted to annex land that would allow for further settlement growth, while the Palestinians opposed annexation of land for such growth, especially as it would mean more Palestinian villages annexed by Israel.

This dilemma is well illustrated by the Taba discussions about Ma'ale Adumim, a large settlement/suburb to the east of Jerusalem. Officially, the Palestinians said they did not want Israel to annex it. Unofficially, however, they would accept the proposal as long as Israel agreed not to annex the roads and sparsely developed land between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim.⁶⁹

Another problem involves the 1947 UN partition plan and the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Israel is currently sovereign in 78 percent of the total territory apportioned under the 1947 UN plan. Palestinian acceptance of Israel concedes

66. For a brief review of Palestinian concessions at Camp David, see Malley, "Fictions About the Failure at Camp David." See also Hasan Asfour, "Right of Reply/Ben-Ami's Occupation Syndrome," *Ha'aretz* (magazine), October 19, 2001, p. 23. On Jerusalem, see Beilin, *Madrikh Le-Yonah Petsuah*, p. 132.

67. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey," p. 13. See Ross interviewed by Hume, "Transcript: Dennis Ross"; and Morris, "Camp David and After," p. 44. For Klein's view, see Akiva Eldar, "A Million Israelis, One Consultant, and a Researcher," *Ha'aretz*, May 2, 2002, p. 4. At Taba, on the issue of border control at the border of Palestine with Jordan, Israel still called for an Israeli presence. See Sher, *B'Merchak Negia*, p. 403.

68. The Palestinians presented a map at Camp David. See Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey," p. 15; and Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, p. 242. For a copy of the Taba map, see Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*; see also Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 400; and Sher, *B'Merchak Negia*, pp. 405–406.

69. Matz, "One Effort to Understand One Negotiation."

this amount of land to the Israeli state. Thus many Palestinians are reluctant to part with much of the remaining 22 percent and, as a result, argue that demands for further concessions on the West Bank are not legitimate.⁷⁰ For many Israelis, however, this uneven division of the land is a direct result of Arab and Palestinian rejection of the 1947 UN partition plan. It is not Israel's fault, they contend, that only 22 percent of the land is now under negotiation, and therefore a call for further Palestinian concessions with regard to the division of the West Bank is an acceptable Israeli demand.

THE PALESTINIANS DO NOT ACCEPT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST

Four indicators suggest that Israeli concerns about Israel's future existence are overstated. These indicators of Palestinian intent include the historical evolution of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian nationalist movement, the PA's intensive negotiating approach at Camp David and later, alternate explanations for Palestinian behavior that concerns Israel, and polling data. Furthermore, Israeli existential concerns ignore Israel's overwhelming military power and influence.

The historical evolution of the Palestinian national movement has been away from total victory and toward a compromise settlement. Palestinian leaders have made risky decisions that go beyond negotiating for the sake of pleasing U.S. diplomats, setting the stage for breakthroughs in 1988, 1991, and 1993. In December 1988, in discussions facilitated by the United States after the Palestinian declaration of statehood of November 15, the PLO emphasized its adherence to UN resolutions 242 and 338, acceptance of Israel's right to exist, and condemnation of terrorism. In 1991, Palestinian leaders agreed to support the Madrid conference, an Arab-Israeli peace conference sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, even though Israel had vetoed an independent Palestinian delegation. The PLO was not formally represented at the talks.⁷¹ Since 1993, PLO and then PA leaders have made significant concessions regarding the pace of territorial withdrawal and the framing of future Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. Although opposition to Israeli settlements and sup-

70. See, for instance, PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, "Memorandum: Lessons Learned Concerning U.S. Involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process over the Last Seven Years," January 20, 2001, <http://www.nad-plo.org/eye/news19.html>; Asfour, "Right of Reply"; and Ben Kaspi's interview with Marwan Barghouti, "Assassinate Me. So What? You'll Miss Me Yet: The Intifada Will Continue Even after Me," *Ma'ariv*, November 9, 2001, pp. 2-3.

71. For more on the evolution of the Palestinian position, see Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

port for Palestinian statehood were fundamental elements of the Palestinian position, the PLO and PA leadership agreed to a process that called for neither a halt to Israeli settlements nor guaranteed Palestinian statehood as the endpoint. The Palestinian evolution was apparent when Arafat and other Palestinians leaders wrote op-eds in 2002 that endorsed a compromise solution.⁷²

More important, some might wonder why the Palestinians would quibble over details at the Camp David summit when they could get Gaza and 90 percent of the West Bank as a launching pad for the elimination of Israel.⁷³ Critics of the PLO and PA have long decried Palestinian tactics of seeking to destroy Israel in stages. Their rejection of the offer at Camp David is thus strong evidence against this claim. Palestinian negotiators negotiated as if they expected to abide by any agreements and live for the long term within the framework of a two-state solution.

Two alternative explanations account for evidence that the PA seeks to destroy Israel: domestic politics and bargaining strategy. Palestinian leaders may pursue policies not because they want to destroy Israel, but because vocal and often armed domestic political factions demand such policies and would not support alternatives. Domestic political survival, especially in a highly fragmented actor such as the Palestinian entity, can easily trump negotiations and peacemaking. In addition, negotiators achieve the best outcome when they hold firm. Leaders do not make a concession until they must. If they show signs of weakness or appear too eager to compromise, the other party will pocket the concessions and offer nothing in return.

Domestic politics and bargaining strategy, for instance, can explain the Palestinian Authority's failure to imprison the entire leadership of Hamas and disarm its members. Hamas is dedicated to the destruction of Israel, so on one level this suggests that the PA is complicit in Hamas's objective. It may be, however, that such a crackdown would result in a Palestinian civil war and possibly the removal of the current PA leadership. PA leaders could face not only Hamas and its supporters but also many secular-nationalist Palestinians who believe that, in attacking Hamas, the PA was only doing Israel's bidding. At a minimum, the PA might want to avoid such a confrontation until it has

72. See Marwan al-Barghuthi, "Want Security? End the Occupation," *Washington Post*, January 16, 2002, p. A19; Mohammed Dahlan, "Our Partners in Life in This Land," *Ha'aretz*, January 31, 2002, p. 5; and Yasser Arafat, "The Palestinian Vision of Peace," *New York Times*, February 3, 2002, p. 15.

73. Stephen Van Evera brought this point to my attention. Ross agreed that Arafat's behavior did not fit with a staged approach to Israel's destruction. See interview with Ross, "From Oslo to Camp David to Taba."

made enough gains on the final status issues to allow it to use those gains to justify to the Palestinian public the end of the armed struggle and the dismantling of those organizations that continue to pursue it.

Confronting Hamas would be risky, as both Israelis and Palestinians were well aware. The PA negotiators might want to use the possibility of a confrontation with Hamas as a bargaining chip to elicit concessions from Israel. As with the domestic politics explanation, they do not take a position vis-à-vis Hamas because they support the Islamists' goals but rather because of what the negotiators need or hope to get out of moving against Hamas.

Many Palestinians, like Israelis, support a two-state resolution to the conflict. This support has been especially strong when the talks have been going well. Public opinion is sensitive to the state of Israeli-Palestinian relations, so answers to fundamental questions on which one might expect people to have fixed viewpoints can vary significantly based on the state of the environment.⁷⁴ Public support for extreme solutions such as the destruction of Israel coexists with public support for a negotiated two-state solution. For example, in a December 2001 poll, 43.9 percent of Palestinians saw the goal of the second intifada as the liberation of all of Palestine, including pre-1967 Israel; in another poll, 73 percent supported Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation based on a Palestinian state recognized by Israel.⁷⁵ In late September 2002, 44 percent of Palestinians said they preferred a two-state solution, a higher percentage than those who supported either a single, binational state in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza "where Palestinians and Israelis enjoy equal rights" (28.9 percent) or a single, Palestinian state (10.4 percent).⁷⁶

To this point, I have focused on Palestinian intentions. The entire debate about Palestinian intentions, however, is less consequential than many Israelis sometimes suggest because the Palestinians do not have the capabilities to eliminate Israel. Israel is backed by the United States, the world's only superpower. In addition to possessing hundreds of nuclear weapons, Israel has a massive qualitative conventional military advantage over not only the Pales-

74. Questions on fundamental issues include those that address whether the other side has a right to exist in an independent state and whether force and violence are the best means to achieve one's ends.

75. Amira Hass, "Most Palestinians Want to 'Liberate All of Historic Palestine,'" *Ha'aretz*, June 13, 2002, p. 2; and Deutsche Presse-Agentur, "Most Palestinians Favor Cease-Fire," *Ha'aretz*, December 26, 2001. See also Danny Rubinstein, "Compromise Still Exists—In the Polls," *Ha'aretz*, January 27, 2003.

76. An additional 12.6 percent thought there was no solution. The margin of error was 3 percent. See question 12 in "On Palestinian Attitudes towards the Palestinian Situation and the Second Anniversary of the Intifada," Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre Public Opinion Poll No. 46, September 21–25, 2002, <http://www.jmcc.org/publicpoll/results/2002/no46.htm>.

tinians but also the Arab states. The 2003 removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq has only increased Israel's relative strength in the region. Therefore, the long-held fear of an attack on Israel's eastern front through the West Bank no longer exists.⁷⁷

TERRORISM VERSUS NEGOTIATIONS

The outbreak of the second intifada did not signal fundamental Palestinian opposition to a negotiated settlement with Israel. Instead, it revealed major miscalculations both on the part of PA leaders as to what the uprising could achieve for Palestinians and on the part of Israeli leaders as to the likely Palestinian reaction to the use of overwhelming military force.

In the late 1990s, both sides began to prepare for the eruption of violence. The situation in the West Bank and Gaza was tense: Some Palestinian leaders, especially younger leaders such as Marwan Barghouti, leader of Fatah in the West Bank,⁷⁸ thought that the threat of force would push Israel to accept a genuine two-state solution. Meanwhile, the IDF argued that Israel had been too soft on the Palestinians in past confrontations such as the 1996 tunnel riots and the May 2000 al-Nakba riots. If renewed fighting broke out, the IDF was prepared to use overwhelming force to quickly crush Palestinian resistance.⁷⁹

More generally, in 2000 the Oslo process was behind schedule, and for many Palestinians, their freedom of movement and economic standing had only worsened since 1993. U.S. officials pushed for the summit at Camp David in part to act before a violent outbreak. On the Palestinian side, some leaders thought that protest and violence would release the pressure building among the Palestinian people as a result of increasing economic troubles, the growth of Israeli settlements, and the delay in concluding the Oslo process and acquiring statehood.

77. For a related discussion, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Frozen in Place," *Ha'aretz*, April 30, 2003.

78. Fatah, led by Arafat, is the dominant faction within the PLO. Fatah, a secular nationalist organization, is the reverse acronym for the Movement for the National Liberation of Palestine (*Harekat al-Tahrir al-Wataniyyeh al-Falastiniyyeh*).

79. Ben Kaspi, "Israel Is Not a State That Has an Army but Rather an Army That Has a State Attached to It," *Ma'ariv*, September 6, 2002, pp. 8–11, 32 of Rosh Hashanah supplement; Ben Kaspi, "The Army Will Decide and Approve," *Ma'ariv*, September 13, 2002, pp. 6–10 of the Sabbath supplement; Yezid Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," *Survival*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 47–60; Khalil Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (January/February 2002), pp. 89–105; Aluf Benn, "In Israel, Too Much to Leave to the Generals," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2002, p. B1; Jeremy Pressman, "The Second Intifada: Background and Causes of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 2003); and Menachem Klein, "The Origins of Intifada II and Rescuing Peace for Israelis and Palestinians," *Foundation for Middle East Peace Current Analysis*, October 2, 2002.

In this environment, the decision by both the Israelis and the Palestinians not to exercise restraint after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary and the initial Palestinian protests to the visit proved catastrophic. Palestinian officials asked Israeli and U.S. officials to block the visit. As the Mitchell report, commissioned in October 2000 by the United States in consultation with the UN secretary-general to look at the origins of the intifada and suggest ways to end it, concluded, Sharon's visit "did not cause the 'Al-Aqsa Intifada.' But it was poorly timed and the provocative effect should have been foreseen; indeed it was foreseen by those who urged that the visit be prohibited."⁸⁰ Israel responded to the Palestinian protests by immediately implementing the IDF's plan of using overwhelming force to crush the Palestinians. The IDF's lack of restraint led to greater bloodshed, more motivated and prolonged opposition, and an escalatory spiral.

As Israel's response played out in the first days, Arafat rebuffed PA officials who feared that the violence would worsen the Palestinian position. Instead, he sided with Barghouti and others who felt the clashes would force Israel to accept a fair two-state solution. Barghouti later called the fighting the "intifada of peace," declaring that it was the only way to convince Israel to end its occupation. As a result, the PA did not rein in the militants.⁸¹ A prominent Palestinian pollster explained the motivation of the young generation of Palestinian activists, "The failure to achieve a breakthrough at Camp David affirmed these younger leaders' belief that the Palestinians could end the occupation on their own terms only through armed popular confrontation."⁸² The Mitchell report emphasized the same factors in explaining the violence: "More significant [than Sharon's visit] were the events that followed: the decision of the Israeli police on September 29 to use lethal means against the Palestinian demonstrators; and the subsequent failure . . . of either party to exercise restraint."⁸³

DESTROYING ISRAEL THROUGH THE RIGHT OF RETURN

For many Palestinian refugees, the right of return is driven by personal factors—they lost their homes, land, and livelihoods, and they want them back.

80. *Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee*, full text of the report completed on April 30, 2001 and published on May 20, 2001, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rpt/3060.htm>, p. 7.

81. On Arafat's decision to capitalize on the violence, see Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," p. 49. See also Marwan Barghouti interviewed by Kaspit, "Assassinate Me. So What?" p. 3. In this discussion, I do not address Hamas and the Islamist role in the early days of the second intifada.

82. Shikaki, "Palestinians Divided," p. 97.

83. *Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee*, p. 7.

Whether the effort to return is based on hatred for Israel or a desire for life before 1948, the practical implication is the same. Acknowledging Palestinians' personal motivations, however, means that the confrontation with Israel is about more than an anti-Semitic, irrational desire to throw the Jews into the sea.

The Israeli assumption that Palestinians want to use the right of return to eliminate Israel also reflects the difficulty in distinguishing bargaining strategies and domestic political imperatives from this supposed objective. If the right of return meant that 4 million Palestinian refugees could move to Israel, the solution traditionally called for by the Palestinians, Israel would cease to have a Jewish majority. Israel might exist but not as a Jewish state, so support for the right of return and support for a meaningful two-state solution might seem mutually exclusive. For that reason, however, the right of return is the Palestinians' best bargaining chip. Moreover, in terms of domestic politics, it is a core issue for Palestinians and a difficult one on which to sell a concession to the Palestinian people—especially the more than 1 million Palestinians living in the refugee camps in neighboring Arab states such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Presenting compromises on the right of return becomes even more difficult unless these are balanced with significant gains in other areas.

During the negotiations in 2000–01, both parties made important concessions on the refugee issue, although those on the Palestinian side were more profound. What becomes clear is that even if the parties were not on the verge of an agreement, they had set forth and discussed the components of what could one day be a robust solution to the refugee question. In short, they negotiated and in doing so left a useful toolbox for future attempts to address the right of return.

Israeli negotiators discussed mechanisms that would have increased Israeli involvement in resolving the refugee question. Israel has long accepted a small number of refugees under a family reunification program. At Taba, Israeli representatives considered accepting additional refugees beyond the existing family reunification program. Israel also considered agreeing to express some regret for the creation of Palestinian refugees in 1948.⁸⁴ When presenting his

84. In general, see Akiva Eldar, "How to Solve the Palestinian Refugee Problem"; and Akiva Eldar, "Sir, If You Please, Tear Down Your House," *Ha'aretz*, May 31, 2001, p. 4. See also the Clinton plan; Yossi Beilin, "An Israeli View: Solving the Refugee Problem," December 31, 2001, edition 5, <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl311201ed5.html>; Eldar, "The Peace That Nearly Was at Taba"; and Alain Gresh, "The Middle East: How the Peace Was Lost," *Le Monde*, September 2001, <http://mondediplo.com/2001/09/01middleeastleader>. *Le Monde* published what it claimed to be an Is-

plan, President Clinton told both parties, "I believe that Israel is prepared to acknowledge the moral and material suffering caused to the Palestinian people as a result of the 1948 war."⁸⁵

During the 2000–01 period, Palestinian negotiators moved away from demanding the unconditional right of return, focusing instead on a compromise solution with five elements. First, there would not be an unconditional right of return. To sell this idea to the Palestinian public, the PA's approach has been to separate the right of return from the implementation of return: that is, in exchange for Israel acknowledging the theoretical right of refugees to return even to pre-1967 Israel, the PA would agree to significant limitations on the manner in which this right could be exercised. At Camp David, where little progress was made on this issue, the Palestinians accepted that the right of return should be implemented in a way that protected Israeli security and demography, two key Israeli concerns. According to Ross, "Even though they were not prepared to give up the principle of right of return, they were prepared to talk about practical limitations on how it might be carried out."⁸⁶ Arafat later echoed this remark: "We understand Israel's demographic concerns and understand that the right of return of Palestinian refugees, a right guaranteed under international law and United Nations Resolution 194, must be implemented in a way that takes into account such concerns."⁸⁷ Ben-Ami claims that at Taba the Palestinian representatives said, "We have to establish the right of return and then discuss the mechanisms."⁸⁸

According to one account, Palestinian negotiators may have even conceded the right of return to pre-1967 Israel. David Matz, who interviewed the majority of Taba negotiators, suggested that some Taba documents on refugees have not been made public because "concessions were made for which the parties would now prefer not to accept responsibility. The only issue that could generate this much heat would be a Palestinian concession on the right of return."

raeli non-paper, "Private Response to Palestinian Refugees," January 23, 2001, <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/a3277>. Barak told Shavit this was a "bad document" and was "not a document of the State of Israel." *Le Monde* also published "Palestinian Paper on Refugees," January 22, 2001, <http://mondediplo.com/focus/mideast/a3276>. See also Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 397; and Matz, "One Effort to Understand One Negotiation."

85. Clinton, "Proposals for a Final Settlement," p. 172.

86. Ross, "From Oslo to Camp David to Taba." See also Malley, "Fictions About the Failure at Camp David"; Gresh, "The Middle East: How the Peace Was Lost"; and Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David and After: An Exchange (2. A Reply to Ehud Barak)," *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 2002.

87. Arafat, "The Palestinian Vision of Peace."

88. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey."

The Palestinians, he continues, waived the right of return to Israel in exchange for Israeli acceptance of “at least partial responsibilities” for the origins of the 1948 refugees.⁸⁹

The second element of compromise was that Israel would be only one of several possible destinations for the 1948 refugees. At Camp David, Israel and the United States did not support the possibility of Israel as a destination for Palestinian returnees. In the Clinton plan, however, the president proposed five locations for resettling the refugees: (1) the new Palestinian state, (2) swapped areas that had been part of pre-1967 Israel but were now to be annexed to the Palestinian state, (3) host Arab countries, (4) third countries (e.g., Canada), or (5) Israel. The right of return, however, would only apply to the new Palestinian state and the swapped areas annexed to it. States in the other three categories—host countries, third countries, and Israel—would retain the sovereign right to accept or reject Palestinian refugees.⁹⁰

Third, the number of Palestinians allowed to return to Israel would be limited, and Israel would likely retain the right to decide whom to accept. As early as talks in Stockholm, Sweden, in the spring of 2000, Palestinian negotiators were open to the idea of a cap on the number of Palestinian refugees allowed into Israel. Israel suggested 10,000–15,000 over a number of years. According to Ben-Ami, “[the Palestinian negotiators] Abu Ala and Hassan Asfour didn’t accept those figures, but they showed readiness to enter substantive talks and to discuss numbers.” He adds, however, that after Stockholm Mahmoud Abbas (aka Abu Mazen), then a senior Palestinian negotiator and secretary-general of the PLO Executive Committee, was opposed to talking numbers.⁹¹

By the time of the Taba talks, both sides were discussing figures. Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin, apparently without authorization from Barak, first suggested to a Palestinian team led by Nabil Sha’ath a total of 25,000 Palestinian returnees to Israel over three years, which he later amended to 40,000 over five years. The latter figure was to be over and above those Palestinians accepted under Israel’s family reunification program.⁹² The Moratinos summary mentions these figures, but states that the Palestinians did not present a number.

89. Matz, “One Effort to Understand One Negotiation.”

90. See Clinton, “Proposals for a Final Settlement,” pp. 172–173. See also Yossi Sarid, leader of Meretz (a party to the left of Barak’s Labor Party), quoted in Gresh, “The Middle East: How the Peace Was Lost.”

91. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, “End of a Journey,” pp. 11–12.

92. Drucker, *Harakiri*, pp. 398–399. Beilin confirmed the 25,000 figure in Yossi Beilin interviewed by Akiva Eldar, “The Refugee Problem at Taba,” *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2002), pp. 12–13.

The Palestinians did, however, discuss numbers at Taba. The highest Palestinian figure in “various information papers that were passed around” was 150,000 refugees a year over a ten-year period for a total of 1.5 million.⁹³ Moshe Amirav, chairman of Barak’s team of experts on Jerusalem, said that the Palestinians suggested 150,000 to 300,000 in total.⁹⁴ Others have mentioned 200,000, the same number of Palestinians in East Jerusalem who “would drop off the Israeli demographic rolls” when the Palestinians assumed control of East Jerusalem.⁹⁵ Sha’ath reportedly mentioned this figure to Beilin at Taba; early in the talks, Sha’ath told Beilin that the PA needed Israel to take the Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, who numbered about 250,000.⁹⁶ “The Ra’is [Arafat] told me to return with a six-digit number,” Sha’ath said to Beilin. Beilin understood this to mean 100,000.⁹⁷ Amirav claims that Sha’ath and the late Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian political representative in Jerusalem, told him that if Israel accepted 200,000 Palestinians, Arafat would have agreed.⁹⁸

Fourth, both parties consented to the creation of a multibillion-dollar compensation fund.⁹⁹ Much of the funding for the plan would come from the United States and West European states. The funding might be structured in a way that offers financial incentives to Palestinian refugees not to seek return to Israel.

Finally, the PA negotiators accepted that the agreement on refugees would satisfy the Palestinian right of return in toto. The Palestinian negotiators were not truly tested on this point because a complete agreement was never reached. This is a key point because some Israelis argue that any acceptance of the right of return or of UN resolution 194 opens Israel’s doors to millions of Palestinian refugees.¹⁰⁰

The PA’s position has become even more conciliatory since the last talks at Taba in early 2001. When the Palestinian Authority submitted an official document on the core issues to the United States in June 2002, it did not base the ref-

93. Ben-Ami interviewed by Shavit, “End of a Journey.”

94. Moshe Amirav, “Soul of a Politician,” *Ha’aretz*, October 12, 2001, p. 19. Amirav teaches at the University of Haifa.

95. Sontag, “Quest for Mideast Peace: How and Why It Failed,” p. A11; and Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 398. Beilin mentioned this in a later op-ed as well. See Yossi Beilin, “What Really Happened at Taba,” *Ha’aretz*, July 15, 2002, p. 5.

96. Private discussion with Palestinian nongovernmental leader, April 2002; and Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 397.

97. Drucker, *Harakiri*, p. 398.

98. Amirav, “Soul of a Politician.”

99. See Ross interviewed by Hume, “Transcript: Dennis Ross”; and Eldar, “A Million Israelis, One Consultant, and a Researcher.”

100. Shavit, “The Right of Return at Taba”; and Shavit, “The Security Umbrella of Victory,” *Ha’aretz*, August 8, 2002.

ugee claim on the right of return. Instead, the document—given to Secretary of State Colin Powell by Sha'ath—called for a “fair and agreed upon solution” and referred specifically to resolution 194.¹⁰¹ In addition, some influential Palestinian politicians have publicly called for changes in the Palestinian approach to the refugee problem that would make a resolution acceptable to Israel more likely. On October 15, 2001, Sari Nusseibah, the PA's political representative in Jerusalem, told an Israeli audience at Hebrew University: “The Palestinians have to realize that if we are to reach an agreement on two states, then those two states will have to be one for the Israelis and one for the Palestinians, not one for the Palestinians and the other also for the Palestinians.”¹⁰² In 2002, both Abbas (at the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria) and Sha'ath (at the Rashadiyah refugee camp in Lebanon) warned refugees that returning to Israel was not a desirable option.¹⁰³ In 2003, a top Palestinian pollster found that only 10 percent of Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, and the occupied territories would seek to return to Israel if granted the right.¹⁰⁴

The Palestinian Version of the Failure of the Negotiations

The Israeli version of the Camp David summit and the related talks has overshadowed the Palestinian version of the same events. Only a year after the summit did the Palestinian version get much attention, and much of this was due to efforts by non-Palestinians. Whereas early efforts such as Akram Haniyah's eight-part series in *al-Ayyam*, a Palestinian newspaper, or the Pales-

101. The document also calls for Israeli sovereignty in the Jewish Quarter and over the Wailing (but not Western) Wall. For the text of the June 15, 2002 document, see http://www.mopic.gov.ps/key_documents/Palestinian_Vision_for_the-Outcome_of_permanent_Status_Negotiations.asp.

102. Sari Nusseibah, excerpts from a speech delivered at Hebrew University, October 15, 2001, as quoted in Joel Greenberg, “Palestinian Offers Idea: Get Israelis on Our Side,” *New York Times*, October 17, 2001, p. 7. Nusseibah told the Associated Press that “the refugees should be resettled in a future Palestinian state, ‘not in a way that would undermine the existence of the state of Israel as a predominantly Jewish state.’” Quoted in Dan Perry, “Palestinians’ Jerusalem Envoy: Insisting on Right of Return Was a Key Error,” Associated Press, October 23, 2001. For a discussion of the debate as well as the claim that the Fatah youth organization endorsed Nusseibah's position, see Sari Hanafi, “Opening the Debate on the Right of Return,” *Middle East Report*, No. 222 (Spring 2002), http://www.merip.org/mer/mer222/222_hanafi.html. See also “Ziyad Abu Zayad's Statement of Principles,” *Ha'aretz*, July 23, 2002, p. 4.

103. Akiva Eldar, “Marwan Barghouti's New Year's Wishes,” *Ha'aretz*, September 5, 2002, p. 4; and Nabil Sha'ath interviewed by Akiva Eldar, “The Refugee Problem at Taba,” *Palestine-Israel Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2002), p. 22.

104. Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) press release, “Results of PSR Refugees' Polls in the West Bank/Gaza Strip, Jordan, and Lebanon on Refugees' Preferences and Behavior in a Palestinian-Israeli Permanent Refugee Agreement,” July 18, 2003, <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/refugeesjune03.html>. See also James Bennet, “Palestinian Mob Attacks Pollster,” *New York Times*, July 14, 2003, p. 1.

tinian submissions to the Mitchell Commission were largely overlooked, articles by Robert Malley and Deborah Sontag in the summer of 2001 received considerable attention.¹⁰⁵ Although not following the official Palestinian line, they took exception to the dominant Israeli/U.S. narrative and thus offered different approaches for understanding the failure of the negotiations in 2000–01.

Palestinians did not view the Israeli offer at Camp David as generous. Rather, many saw it as a façade behind which Israel was continuing its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. For Palestinians, the intifada was not the result of Palestinian planning but rather of mounting frustration with the Israeli occupation, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, and the harsh Israeli response to the Palestinian protests that it sparked.

NEGOTIATIONS TO DEEPEN THE OCCUPATION

According to some Palestinian officials, Israel wanted a settlement only if it allowed for permanent Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. During the Camp David summit at a July 19 meeting, Arafat warned Clinton: "I will not give the occupation legitimacy so that it will continue."¹⁰⁶ Haniyah, editor of *al-Ayyam* and a member of the Palestinian delegation, was one of the first to write publicly about this argument: "[At Camp David, the] Israelis came to consolidate the gains of their war in 1967, and not to make peace that removes the traces of this war. They came to reorganize and legitimize the occupation, instead of searching for a language for dialogue on living and coexisting with neighbors and partners."¹⁰⁷ According to another Palestinian observer, "Barak wanted Camp David to serve as his exit strategy from a peace process that was leading inevitably closer to ending the occupation."¹⁰⁸

105. Malley, "Fictions About the Failure at Camp David"; Sontag, "Quest for Mideast Peace"; Agha and Malley, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors"; Akiva Eldar, "What Went Wrong at Camp David—The Official Palestinian Version," *Ha'aretz*, July 24, 2001, p. 4; and Lee Hockstader, "A Different Take on Camp David Collapse," *Washington Post*, July 24, 2001, p. A17. See also Graham E. Fuller, "Start with Palestinian Statehood," *Los Angeles Times*, April 18, 2002, p. B15; Ewen MacAskill, "The Real Deal," *Guardian*, April 14, 2001, p. 20; and Robert Wright, "Was Arafat the Problem?" *Slate*, April 18, 2002, <http://slate.msn.com/?id?2064500>.

106. Quoted in Haniyah, "Camp David Papers," *al-Ayyam*, August 6, 2000, fifth installment, in FBIS, August 28, 2000.

107. Haniyah, "Camp David Papers," *al-Ayyam*, August 3, 2000, fourth installment, in FBIS, August 28, 2000. See also Negotiations Affairs Department of the PLO, "Camp David Peace Proposal of July 2000: Frequently Asked Questions," n.d., <http://www.nad-plo.org/eye/news38.html>; Eldar, "What Went Wrong at Camp David—The Official Palestinian Version"; and Gideon Levy, "Dahlan's Complaint," *Ha'aretz* (magazine), April 13, 2001, pp. 6–8.

108. Ghassan Khatib, "A Palestinian View—Camp David: An Exit Strategy for Barak," July 15, 2002, edition 26, <http://www.bitterlemons.org/previous/bl150702ed26.html>. Khatib was not a

On the core issues, the Palestinians argued, the Israeli negotiating position at the summit was designed to consolidate indefinite Israeli occupation. Marwan Barghouti explained: "We agreed to make do with 22% of historic Palestine. At Camp David you tried to take from this small portion an enclave here, a bloc there, the Jordan Valley, border crossings, Jerusalem. This is a state? This is a solution? This is justice?"¹⁰⁹ On security issues at Camp David, "Israel continued to demand measures that would have represented a perpetuation of the military occupation."¹¹⁰ On the land issue, the Israeli offer at Camp David, according to Ahmed Qorei, "would have carved Israeli-controlled cantons out of the West Bank and dashed any hopes for a viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state."¹¹¹ Moreover, "Israel's [territorial] proposals would have transformed the 'end to Israeli occupation' promised in 1991 into the wholesale annexation by Israel of the areas most vital to the hoped-for Palestinian state and the continued presence of Israeli soldiers on a large portion of the remaining land."¹¹²

Many Palestinians assert that Israel rejects the idea of genuine Palestinian self-determination and a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel. According to Haniyah, "Arafat was aware that he was facing a plan, which aims at finishing off the essence of Palestinian national rights. His calculations were correct."¹¹³ Hassan Asfour, a senior negotiator, agreed about Israel's intent: "Israel, meanwhile, has yet to recognize our right to establish an independent and sovereign state according to the June 1967 borders. The sovereignty of any nation must be genuine, practical and meaningful. I am doubtful whether Israel, at any moment during the negotiations, accepted such an interpretation."¹¹⁴ Whereas the Palestinians believed that resolutions 242 and 338 would serve as guiding prin-

member of the PA leadership during Camp David, but he was minister of labor in the PA when he wrote this article.

109. Barghouti interviewed by Kaspit, "Assassinate Me. So What?" p. 3. See also Levy, "Dahlan's Complaint," pp. 7–8; Tanya Reinhart, *Israel/Palestine: How to End the War of 1948* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002); Khatib, "A Palestinian View—Camp David"; and "Preliminary Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the International Commission of Inquiry," December 8, 2000, p. 10. For links to all the Palestinian submissions to the Mitchell Committee (the International Commission of Inquiry), see <http://www.nad-plo.org/mitchel%20report%20docs/mitchel%20report%20documents.html>.

110. Executive summary, "Third Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," April 3, 2001, p. 8. See also Levy, "Dahlan's Complaint," p. 7; and "Third Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," April 3, 2001, pp. 48–49.

111. Hockstader, "A Different Take on Camp David Collapse."

112. "Third Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," p. 48.

113. Haniyah, "Camp David Papers," *al-Ayyam*, August 6, 2000, fifth installment.

114. Asfour, "Right of Reply."

ciples, "Israel's attitude of lawlessness and its repeated acts of provocation have eroded Palestinian confidence that Israel stands by those principles."¹¹⁵ In short, "Nowhere evident in the proposals [at Camp David was] . . . the principle of self-determination."¹¹⁶

THE SECOND INTIFADA—PLANNED OR SPONTANEOUS?

The Palestinian version asserts that three factors caused the second intifada: the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which deepened during the Oslo years and created an explosive situation at the popular level; Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, which sparked Palestinian protests; and Israel's unrestrained response to the protests the next day.¹¹⁷

Throughout the Oslo process, Israel continued to expand settlements and confiscate land. Despite expectations to the contrary, the quality of life for Palestinians declined, fomenting a sense of "frustration and hopelessness."¹¹⁸ Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary "came as the final blow"; to Palestinians his visit was "an inherently inflammatory political maneuver."¹¹⁹ It was the "spark" or "triggering event."¹²⁰

In the Palestinian version, Israel's response the next day ignited the intifada: "Still, the matter might not have led to a new uprising had the Israeli occupation forces acted with restraint on the next day."¹²¹ Ghassan Khatib claimed that the harsh response was planned by Israel: "Barak's army and police then activated a military plan to brutally shut down civilian protests against the [Sharon] visit, killing tens of Palestinian demonstrators and decisively transforming relations between the two sides from peaceful negotiations into

115. "Third Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," p. 24.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

117. One Palestinian document characterizes the Sharon visit and the harsh Israeli response to Palestinian protest as the immediate cause of the intifada and the occupation and lack of progress toward peace as the underlying cause. See PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, "The Palestinian Uprising against Occupation," fact sheet, n.d., http://www.nad-plo.org/fact_sheets_faq/faq1.html.

118. "Preliminary Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the International Commission of Inquiry," p. 10. See also "A Crisis of Faith: Second Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee," December 30, 2000.

119. "Preliminary Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the International Commission of Inquiry," p. 10.

120. "A Crisis of Faith: Second Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee." See also Asfour, "Right of Reply."

121. "A Crisis of Faith: Second Submission of the Palestine Liberation Organization to the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee." See also Asfour, "Right of Reply"; and Mohammed Dahlan, "We'll Choose Our Leaders," *Guardian*, July 2, 2002, p. 13.

bloody confrontation."¹²² For the Palestinians, Israel alone is responsible for the escalation of violence.

Evaluating the Palestinian Version

The evidence suggests that the Palestinian narrative of the 2000–01 peace talks is significantly more accurate than the Israeli narrative. At Camp David, Israel's position—whether intended or not—was arguably an extension of the occupation under a different guise. The Palestinian narrative, however, overlooks an important fact: By the time of the Clinton plan and the talks at Taba, Israel had moved much closer to accepting the Palestinians' minimum demands. Over time, Israeli leaders seemed to gain a greater understanding of what it would take to have a two-state solution and the end of the Israeli occupation. The Palestinian explanation for the second intifada, based on the deepening Israeli occupation in the 1990s, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, and Israel's harsh response to the resultant Palestinian protests is accurate as far as it goes, but it omits a crucial factor: the failure of the PA to try to restrain Palestinian militants.

DIPLOMACY TO PROLONG THE OCCUPATION

Israeli governments have generally been willing to defy Israeli public opinion and offer concessions in pursuit of a diplomatic solution. In 1978–79, Israel's Likud-led government agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula despite the opposition of many of its own supporters. In mid-1993, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed off on secret talks with the PLO in Oslo at a time when much of the Israeli public opposed dealing with PLO terrorists. In November 1995, Rabin paid with his life for signing peace agreements with the Palestinians.

In 2000–01, Barak's government grew increasingly aware of the concessions needed on the core issues of land, security, and Jerusalem. As a result, its negotiating position moved closer to the minimum Palestinian demands. Over time, Israel increased the amount of land it was willing to give to the Palestinians. At Camp David, its best offer was 92 percent, which included 91 percent of the West Bank plus a land swap for 1 percent from pre-1967 Israel. The Clinton plan called for 97 percent, which included 94–96 percent of the West

122. Khatib, "A Palestinian View—Camp David."

Bank plus a land swap for 1–3 percent from pre-1967 Israel. At Taba, Israel put forward two figures: 95 percent, and 94 percent but with an additional 2 percent of the West Bank leased by Israel.¹²³ Neither included land swaps.

As noted earlier, at Camp David, Barak hoped to have a presence in the Jordan Valley for six to twenty-one years after the agreement, but by the time of the Clinton plan, the figure was firmly six years.¹²⁴ According to Ben-Ami, Israel had dropped its call for Israeli sovereignty in the Jordan Valley by September 2000.¹²⁵

At Camp David, Israel made a major concession by agreeing to give Palestinians sovereignty in some areas of East Jerusalem. In proposing to divide Jerusalem, Barak went further than any previous Israeli leader, but stopped short of offering full Palestinian sovereignty in all Arab areas of East Jerusalem. By Taba, however, Israel was ready to accept Palestinian sovereignty in all Arab areas of East Jerusalem, though the future of the Old City and the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, in particular, remained a sticking point.

In addition to specific changes in Israeli proposals from the Camp David summit to the Taba talks, domestic political and bargaining explanations account for evidence that is sometimes cited as proof of Israeli intransigence. Just before Camp David, Israel continued building settlements, skipped an agreed-upon redeployment from West Bank land, and did not proceed with a pullback from Abu Dis and two other villages on the outskirts of East Jerusalem as previously agreed. In addition, Barak issued his five no's: no return to the 1967 borders, no division of Jerusalem, no total abandonment of settlements, no foreign army west of the Jordan River, and no right of return for thousands of Palestinian refugees.¹²⁶ Many Palestinians interpreted these actions and statements as a sign that the Israeli government did not want to end the occupation. Barak, however, was seeking to protect his domestic standing by convincing the Israeli public that he would not cave easily; he wanted to appear to be a tough bargainer to Palestinians as the two sides entered high-level talks. Decades ago, Thomas Schelling clearly captured the dilemma: "They all run the risk of establishing an immovable position that goes beyond the ability of the

123. According to the Moratinos notes on the Taba talks, the figures were 94 percent (Israel) and 96.9 percent (Palestinians). Israel, he wrote, requested 2 percent under a lease arrangement. The maps from Taba appear in Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, between pages 238 and 239.

124. Clinton, "Proposals for a Final Settlement," p. 172.

125. Ben Ami interviewed by Shavit, "End of a Journey," pp. 14–15.

126. Danna Harman and Janine Zacharia, "Barak Appeals for Public Support: Foreign Minister Levy Opts Out of Summit Delegation," *Jerusalem Post*, July 10, 2000, p. 1.

other to concede, and thereby provoke the likelihood of stalemate or breakdown."¹²⁷

A majority of Israelis have come to accept the idea of a Palestinian state. In late April 2002, 52 percent of Israelis supported a "regional conference based on the establishment of two states for two peoples and on the basis of the Saudi initiative calling for a full withdrawal from the territories in exchange for peace with all the Arab countries." Opposition stood at 39 percent.¹²⁸ In early December 2002, 58 percent of Israelis said they would favor the establishment of a Palestinian state if "Israel and the Palestinians eventually reach a stage of negotiations that is progressing toward a peace agreement." Thirty-seven percent said they would oppose the creation of such a state, which suggests that outright rejectionism is in the minority.¹²⁹

THE SECOND INTIFADA—A PREMEDITATED UPRISING

The deepening of the Israeli occupation during the Oslo years, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary, and Israel's massive use of force against Palestinian protesters the following day caused the second intifada. But this leaves out the role of both Arafat and other PA leaders as well as the Tanzim, a Fatah paramilitary organization often said to be under Marwan Barghouti's control, in the escalation of the violence. This is a significant omission. Had the Palestinian Authority attempted to rein in the Palestinian militants, the escalation would likely have been more limited.

Younger Palestinian militants within the secular-nationalist camp, including Barghouti and Nasser Aweis, a senior Tanzim leader in the northern West Bank, favored the use of violence to push Israel toward a two-state solution. In this they differed with some senior Palestinian ministers and negotiators. The Tanzim and the al-Aqsa Brigades, loosely organized local militias also associated with Fatah, have been central Palestinian players in the intifada. The Sharon visit and the confrontations that followed provided an opportunity to

127. Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960, reprinted 1980), p. 28.

128. The poll's margin of error was 4.5 percent. *Ma'ariv*, April 26, 2002, pp. 12–13, of shabbat supplement, in FBIS. The inclusion of the phrase "with all Arab countries" might have boosted the support, given that this would appear to include an Israeli peace agreement with Syria and Lebanon. In late July 2002, 61 percent of Israelis supported the establishment of a Palestinian state given a lasting peace agreement and no Palestinian right of return to Israel itself. See Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Hermann, "Majority In Favor of Left's Stand on Peace, Targeted Liquidations," *Ha'aretz*, August 6, 2002, p. 4, margin of error 4.5 percent.

129. See Ephraim Ya'ar and Tamar Hermann, "The Majority Trusts Sharon When It Comes to Negotiation," *Ha'aretz*, December 9, 2002, margin of error 4.5 percent.

pressure Israel through violence, an idea that had been floating around and for which some militants had been preparing.

Arafat resisted the idea of reining in the militants because he thought he could gain political advantages. Also, he recognized that there was significant domestic support for confronting Israel. It is doubtful that Arafat expected the intifada to last for years and result in a significant weakening of his international standing.

Procedural Errors

At least three procedural decisions and miscalculations during the final status talks had the cumulative effect of undermining what were already bound to be delicate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. First, Israeli and Palestinian leaders ignored or did not realize the damaging impact that messages directed at one's home audience can have on the other side. Palestinian leaders often did not present their position in a constructive light following negotiating setbacks; sometimes they failed to present their public position at all. After Camp David, the Palestinian leadership did not aggressively take to the airwaves to voice its desire for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict and to note the compromises it was willing to make—especially when others were charging that the Palestinian position was rigid.¹³⁰

Second, Israel and the United States did not correctly ascertain the minimum Palestinian demands for a final agreement. Israel confused misperceiving the Palestinian bottom line on statehood with the absence of a bottom line. In other words, when the Palestinians did not accept Israel's offer at Camp David, Israel (eventually) assumed that this was because the Palestinians would not accept any offer rather than assuming that Israel had simply made an insufficient offer.

Third, several U.S. decisions about the conduct and timing of the negotiations did not have the desired impact. In general, Clinton administration officials focused more on the shortcomings and remaining gaps than on the

130. For more on this point, see Sayigh, "Arafat and the Anatomy of a Revolt," pp. 53–54. Hassan Abdel Rahman, the Palestinian representative to the United States, attended Camp David and said that Arafat refrained from countering Clinton's and Barak's post-summit assertions because (1) Arafat thought it would be a temporary phase of recriminations, and (2) he knew that he would need to work with Clinton again and did not want to jeopardize his ties to the U.S. president by engaging in a public spat with him over the details of the summit. See Abdel Rahman's comments in the sidebar to Wright, "Was Arafat the Problem?"

progress made by the diplomatic process. We will never know what would have happened if, prior to Camp David, the United States had accepted Palestinian suggestions and pushed for more high-level, presummit negotiations. The United States also did not prepare its Arab allies such as Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia to support Palestinian concessions at the summit.¹³¹ At Camp David, the United States initially offered a compromise “non-paper” on core issues, but strong negative reactions from Arafat and Barak led the United States to pull the paper and thereafter refrain from seeking to define the middle ground.¹³² Moreover, Israeli ideas were often “presented [to the Palestinians] as U.S. concepts, not Israeli ones.”¹³³ The Palestinians often knew these were really Israeli ideas, and thus resented the attempted American subterfuge.

The United States was on the verge of presenting the Clinton plan to the two parties in late September or early October 2000 when the intifada started; having just met about some of the details, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were on an airplane back to the region when the fighting erupted.¹³⁴ For two months following the outbreak of fighting, Barak convinced the Americans not to put the Clinton plan on the table.¹³⁵

These and other misjudgments suggest that largely procedural errors contributed to the failure of the negotiations. Rectifying these errors in future talks could help Israelis and Palestinians reach an agreement.

Conclusion

In 2000–01, Israeli and Palestinian representatives created many of the building blocks for a future negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

131. Jane Perlez, “News Analysis: Falling Short of Peace,” *New York Times*, October 15, 2000, pp. 1, 12. Dennis Ross said that the United States refrained from lobbying Arab leaders before Camp David at Barak’s request. See Jane Perlez, “U.S. Mideast Envoy Recalls the Day Pandora’s Box Wouldn’t Shut,” *New York Times*, January 29, 2001, p. A4. See also Jane Perlez, “U.S. Regards Egypt as Key to Peace Deal in the Mideast,” *New York Times*, August 27, 2000, p. 13. On July 18 and 19, 2000, Clinton lobbied some Arab leaders about Jerusalem from Camp David. See Haniyah, “Camp David Papers,” *al-Ayyam*, August 8, 2000, sixth installment, in FBIS, August 29, 2000. The general point was also mentioned in private discussions with a U.S. official and a Palestinian non-governmental leader, April 2002.

132. Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams*, pp. 189–194; private discussions with U.S. official, October 2002; and Haniyah, “Camp David Papers,” August 5, 2000, fifth installment.

133. Agha and Malley, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors.”

134. Ross, “From Oslo to Camp David to Taba”; and private discussion with U.S. official, October 2002. See also Sontag, “Quest for Mideast Peace.”

135. Kaspi, “The Army Will Decide and Approve.”

The Israeli/U.S. narrative of the Camp David summit, the Clinton plan, and the Taba talks, however, suggests the opposite conclusion: Despite the best efforts of Israeli and U.S. officials, the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people are not ready for peace with Israel. This dominant Israeli/U.S. narrative has had a dramatic impact on the Israeli public and its views about the peace process: "The groundless contention that former Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians 'almost everything' and in return they set in motion a wave of terrorism, has become the most widely accepted axiom in Israeli public opinion."¹³⁶ Shaul Arieli, an Israeli closely involved with the negotiation and implementation of the Oslo process, "believes the myth that 'Barak gave them almost everything and Arafat responded with terror' has become one of the deepest pits blocking the road back" to negotiations.¹³⁷ The Israeli understanding of the failure at Camp David and the outbreak of the intifada has led directly to the loss of hope for a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.

The Israeli conclusion, however, is based on five contentions that do not hold up when assessed in light of the evidence from 2000–01. Israel's offer at the Camp David summit was not as generous or complete as Israeli and U.S. officials have claimed. The Palestinian Authority negotiated and made notable concessions on the final status issues. Many Palestinians favor a two-state solution, not the destruction of Israel. The second intifada was not a premeditated Palestinian Authority effort to destroy Israel. The Palestinian Authority recognized Israel's existential concerns about the Palestinian right of return and discussed policies to address those concerns.

Looking at the same events, many Palestinians have concluded that Barak's government alone was responsible for the failure of the 2000–01 negotiations. This conclusion, however, overlooks Palestinian decisions—especially those of the Palestinian Authority—that helped cause the failure of the diplomatic process. From the Camp David summit to the Taba talks, Israel's proposals moved closer toward Palestinian ideas. The Palestinian Authority and nationalist Palestinian militant organizations made decisions that contributed to the outbreak of the second intifada.

Although the negotiations of 2000–01 did not achieve their objectives, the talks crystallized the outstanding Israeli-Palestinian differences. The record of

136. Gideon Levy, "The People's War," *Ha'aretz*, April 7, 2002, p. 5. See also Gideon Samet, "Out of the Bloody Square," *Ha'aretz*, August 7, 2002, p. 5; and Akiva Eldar, "There Is Not a Divine Decree," *Ha'aretz*, February 18, 2002, p. 5.

137. Akiva Eldar, "They Just Can't Hear Each Other," *Ha'aretz*, March 11, 2003.

the talks gives diplomats time to think of ways to bridge the remaining gaps. Israelis and Palestinians can study what further concessions would be needed to achieve a two-state solution.

Different perceptions of the Camp David summit and after make for different possibilities for the future. As long as Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and the United States do not engage in high-level talks on land, security, Jerusalem, and refugees, they are squandering an opportunity for a negotiated settlement.