

October 7th: Why Hamas Fought and the Prospects for Long-Term Peace in Israel-Palestine

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For Sammy

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II. Abstract

This thesis provides relevant recommendations to policymakers within the US National Capital Region, the international community, and academic researchers for a realistic ceasefire and stable peace equilibrium in Israel and Palestine. This paper does not intend to comprehensively account history of the long-standing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians nor does it analyze the wartime complexities of the Israel-Gaza War. Rather, this thesis focuses on specific causes for violence breaking out between Israel-Palestine and failed peace negotiations to inform policy recommendations. This thesis will research the implications of the failed Oslo Accords and identify precipitating factors of the Israel-Gaza conflict. The paper applies historical research, international relations, and game theory in a historical and current context in order to develop intervention tools that sustain long-term peace in Israel and Palestine. This framework gives more insights into why there was a peace-making “bargaining breakdown” on the Oslo process, why Hamas launched the October 7th, 2023 attacks against Israel, and the prospects for a peaceful future between Israel-Palestine. The Oslo peace process collapsed because of mutual out-group misperceptions, the anchoring effect in peace bargaining, internal political contestation within Israeli and Palestinian sides, and commitment problems. Hamas attacked on October 7th due to commitment problems, their waning political power in Gaza, its principal-agent relationship with Iran, intangible incentives for violence, uncertainty surrounding the Palestinian future, and misperceptions. The model of strategic terrorism coherently summarizes the strategic approaches and goals of Hamas, while conventional deterrence theory explicates the Israeli response in the Israel-Gaza War to this point. Finally, effective intervention tools for the peaceful resolution of civil wars illuminate a trajectory that best shapes long-term peace and stability in the region.

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III. Context

A. Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and the Ongoing Israel-Hamas War

Hamas launched Operation Al-Aqsa Flood with over 3,000 rockets, an airborne assault, and a ground maneuver upon Israeli military posts, a harmonious Jewish kibbutz, and a peaceful music festival in southern Israel on October 7th, 2023. Hamas killed 1,139 people - the majority being innocent civilians - and seized 240 hostages.¹ Orel Kessler, an Israeli historian, compared this terrorist attack as twelve times worse than the 9/11 terrorist attacks for Israel and represented the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust during World War II. In response to this tragedy, Israeli Defense Forces executed a ground campaign within Gaza to defeat the terrorist threat of Hamas and reclaim the hostages. This subsequent offensive resulted in over 48,000 Palestinian deaths, 111,000 reported injuries, and 1,200 Israeli deaths as of February 18th, 2025 according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza and the Israeli military.² If divorced from understanding the historical background of the conflict, this intensive violence appears disastrously unwarranted between the Israelis and Palestinians. However, this example replicates episodes over the past century and resonates with the pattern of long-standing instability and conflict in the region. It is important to contextualize this history to understand the present.

B. Historical Background

1. Post 1967 War and the Israeli Occupation

It is worthwhile to review the history behind Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and resultant tensions that erupted into the intifadas and the historical breakthrough of the Oslo Accords. With the cessation of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War also known as the Six-Day

¹ Callamard, "Gaza and the End of the Rules-Based Order."

² "Reported Impact Snapshot | Gaza Strip (18 February 2025)."

War, Israel defeated the Arab coalition of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and conquered territories of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula as a result. The United Nations (UN) Security Council adopted Resolution 242 in November 1967 that affirmed “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force” and called for “withdrawal from territories” seized through this war in order to reinstate sovereignty and acknowledge political independence. Ever since, the US and Israel disputed that the resolution only calls for some territories rather than all, enabling Israel to satisfy the resolution through a withdrawal of certain territories as opposed to every seized territory.³ Consequently, Israel expanded its territorial control and established military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Jordan and Egypt had respectively controlled prior to 1967. This Israeli occupation of former Arab-controlled lands embittered the subjugated Palestinians and fermented conditions for their resistance. The following map depicts the enlargement of Israel following 1967:

³ “Palestine-Israel Primer”; Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine*, 138.



Territories occupied by Israel since June 1967. United Nations Department of Public Information, Cartographic Section, 1997

Figure 1. Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories Map in June 1967⁴

⁴ 1967 United Nations Map sourced from "Palestine-Israel Primer."

The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 radically changed the map and transformed the political atmosphere of the Israel-Palestine conflict. With the exception of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the Arab states gradually withdrew their focus towards and tangible support for Palestinians. For example, Egypt and Jordan eventually normalized relations with Israel and negotiated peaceful relations. Events like Black September in Jordan and the Lebanese civil war perpetuated this increased deference towards the Palestinian cause by Arab states.⁵ With respect to the post-1967 period, researcher EGH Joffé commented that the support for “the Palestinians as part of the Arab World was at best an empty sham and at worst a lie,” as demonstrated by Arab sovereign actions.⁶ On the whole, the post-1967 period represented a shift from Arab state protectionism and advocacy towards exacerbating disengagement of Palestinian issues.

Prior to 1967, the affairs of Palestinians were largely incorporated within pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism agendas.⁷ In the years afterwards, the Palestinian movement oriented towards self-determination and Palestinian nationalism, specifically hinged upon establishing an independent Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.⁸

During this era, Israel instituted a repressive and classist hierarchy for Palestinians within the occupied territories so that its state maintained a Jewish majority and national identity.⁹ The Israel government incarcerated over 800,000 Palestinians since 1967 – some in administrative detention indefinitely without trial and illegally tortured – with over 40% of the Palestinian male population having been imprisoned at least once.¹⁰ Following the Six-Day War, Israel financially incentivized and constructed settlements in the occupied territories with the goal of creating a

⁵ “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

⁶ Joffé, “Arab Nationalism and Palestine,” 167.

⁷ Joffé, 167–69.

⁸ Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 200–201.

⁹ “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

¹⁰ “Palestine-Israel Primer”; Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 452.

security buffer from Arab invasions. The establishment of Israeli security outposts accompanied these Jewish settler communities within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, creating a persistent environment of friction and tensions with the subjugated Palestinians. The decades of illegal settlement expansion accumulated over 236,000 settlers in East Jerusalem and 478,600 settlers in the West Bank by 2023.¹¹ Other forms of oppression included special identity cards, higher tax burdens, cumbersome security checks along essential roads and border points, and other bureaucratic restrictions like permits and licensing.¹² The International Court of Justice ruled an advisory opinion in July 2024 that Israel's past conduct and governance within the occupied territories as unlawful.¹³ Palestinian philosopher Sari Nusseibeh once characterized the injustice and repression against Palestinians: "we were, in a word, coopted and our whole economic well-being and existence became parasitic on our being coopted."¹⁴ The occupation led to a politically marginalized and economically impoverished Palestinian population, increasingly resentful of Israel and activated for change.¹⁵ The Palestinians became jaded from the occupation and a resistance movement percolated into the First Intifada.

2. The First Intifada and its Challenge to Occupation

On December 9th 1987, an Israeli truck driver collided with civilian vehicles and killed four Palestinian workers, some of whom were from the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza. Palestinians believed that the crash was retribution for killing an Israeli in Gaza the day prior, while the Israeli authorities denied this allegation of coordination and intention. Palestinian

¹¹ "Palestine-Israel Primer."

¹² Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 452.

¹³ Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

¹⁴ Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 325.

¹⁵ Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 222.

resistance manifested through graffiti, barricading, stone throwing, and launching Molotov cocktails.¹⁶ The movement started relatively peaceful as a Palestinian organization named the United National Leadership in January 1988 issued leaflets on protest protocol and a fourteen-point list of demands developed in conjunction with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).¹⁷ The Palestinian movement adopted civil disobedience measures within the first three years of the intifada by engaging in general labor strikes, shop closures, refusal to pay Israeli taxes, and boycotting Israeli products.¹⁸ In November 1988, the PLO pivoted towards diplomatic measures with Israel and unilaterally declared Palestinian statehood,¹⁹ calling for direct negotiations with Israel based on UN Resolution 242 and the principle of “land for peace.”²⁰

Despite these civil movements, the comingling of lethal violence into the Palestinian resistance movement still was a concern for the Israeli government and international humanitarian law. The Palestinian leadership made a conscious choice to disavow the use of guns and knives since the beginning of the First Intifada.²¹ However, the crowded protests of Palestinians amidst restless Israeli military police – both equally incensed with tension and frustrations – often degenerated into violence from each side. For example, from the outset some Palestinians employed violent resistance through Molotov cocktails, stone-throwing, and hand-to-hand violence that edged into lethality. These forms of non-lethal violence furthermore delegitimized the civil resistance movement and sharpened the Israeli response. Palestinian shootings and stabbings became more widespread in the early 1990s during the First Intifada,

¹⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 452–53.

¹⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, 453.

¹⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, 453.

¹⁹ Cleveland and Bunton, 455.

²⁰ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 65.

²¹ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 453.

signifying a shift from non-lethal means towards armed struggle despite outward appearances of moderation expressed by PLO leadership.²²

In response to Palestinian resistance, the Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered a “break the bones policy” in February 1988 that exerted excessive force and collective punishment against the uprising Palestinians through mass arrests, curfews, tear gas, disconnected basic utilities, and a deployment of over 80,000 troops.²³ The defense forces focused on crowd control rather than combat measures, adopting procedures for civil unrest rather than a militarized resistance. However, the liberal rules of engagement for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) included self-defense or firing when there was no threat to life amongst soldiers or bystanders, contributing to an increased rate of accidental or wrongful killings according to a 1990 Human Rights Watch report.²⁴ Despite earnest efforts of the Israeli government to regain control, there were cases of disproportionate force against the intifada movement that belied this intent and escalated mutual violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

In response to strong-handed Israeli repression, a more muscular resistance movement within Hamas – an acronym for the Arabic name Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah that translates into Islamic Resistance Movement in English – flourished and emerged as a prominent alternative within the Palestinian cause.²⁵ Hamas started as an off-shoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and officially established in 1987 in the wake of the First Intifada. Hamas had been avoiding general involvement with the Palestinian liberation movement and instead centered on Islamic spiritual revival. Sheikh Ahmed Yasin, Hamas’ organizational leader since 1965, had impressively doubled its mosques from 77 in 1967 to 150 by 1987 within Gaza. The

²² Cleveland and Bunton, 453.

²³ “Palestine-Israel Primer”; Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 64–65.

²⁴ “The Israeli Army and the Intifada Policies That Contribute to the Killings.”

²⁵ Alakoc, “Israel-Palestinian Conflict Post 1967.”

blending of Islamic revivalism and nationalism with social, political, economic, and military functions was mutually reinforcing and essential to the modus operandi of Hamas.²⁶

Having established a base of support with its religious foundation, Hamas advanced towards the political fray and rapidly employed armed resistance against Israel in tandem with the intifada.²⁷ In contrast with the PLO, Hamas refuses to recognize Israel or support a two-state solution. Drawing from Islamist roots, Hamas envisioned rebuilding liberated Palestine with Islamic principles and institutions.²⁸ Hamas based its ideology and approaches on the “teachings of Islam” and viewed a “sacred struggle” against the “Zionist settler occupation” to establish an “independent Islamic state.”²⁹ The organization adopted armed struggle, also known as jihad, against the “Zionist project” in order to achieve complete destruction of Israel and establishment of an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine.³⁰

The First Intifada was a bloodied uprising that catalyzed tangible political change and peace efforts for Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. When the First Intifada ended in 1993, the revolution had resulted in 1,025 Palestinians dead – including 250 alleged revenge killings against Palestinian collaborators – 56 Israelis killed, 37,000 Arabs wounded, and 40,000 arrested.³¹ The uprising represented an 8:1 kill ratio of Palestinians versus Israelis, showing the imparity between Israel’s modern militarized force and the Palestinian resistance movement.³²

The First Intifada elevated the saliency of the Palestinian cause and evoked sympathy internationally. This intifada also undermined the legitimacy of the Israeli occupation and opened

²⁶ Hummel, “The Road to October 7,” 2–3.

²⁷ Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 140–41.

²⁸ Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 223–25.

²⁹ “The Avalon Project : Hamas Covenant 1988.”

³⁰ Hummel, “The Road to October 7,” 2.

³¹ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 454.

³² Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 223.

external criticism to alter this policy, consequently exerting pressure on Israel to more broadly cooperate with Palestinian independence. The center of gravity for Palestinian nationalism shifted from the PLO leadership in Tunis towards the “insider” Palestinian insurgents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, even though the PLO insisted that the organization represented the Palestinian cause internationally.

C. Israeli-Palestinian Peace Efforts in the 1990s

1. The Madrid Peace Conference: Testing Arab-Israeli Dialogue

A confluence of events shaped conditions for the PLO to enter negotiations with Israel. The PLO opposed the US-led attack against Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait in 1991 through an official Arab League vote, eventually receiving international and regional condemnation for this alignment. The PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat sought to maintain support from Iraq, one of the main champions for the Palestinian cause at the time, especially as its traditional sponsor the Soviet Union faced dissolution.³³ Following the First Gulf War, the PLO experienced degraded international reputation and financial support. The PLO needed success to maintain its political clout and recover from this downturn. The stage was set for a peace break-through.

Several environmental changes in 1991 eased relations between Palestinian leadership and the Israeli government. Since the majority of Arab states supported the US-led Gulf War against Iraq, the US facilitated mediation over the Israel-Palestine issue along with some Arab states during the Madrid Peace Conference in exchange for their wartime support. President George H.W. Bush and his administration pressured Israel to open negotiations with the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan at a multilateral peace conference in Madrid, Spain in October 1991.

³³ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 456–59; “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

The US maintained a forceful position in pushing forward peace talks between Israel and Palestine as demonstrated by the blunt statement of Secretary of State Jim Baker to Israel: “Now is the time to lay aside...the unrealistic vision of greater Israel. Israel interests in the West Bank and Gaza – security and otherwise – can be accommodated in a settlement based on Resolution 242...forswear annexation. Stop settlement activity...reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve political rights.”³⁴ Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, a right-wing conservative party leader and Irgun paramilitary veteran, refused to meet with the PLO directly because Israel widely still perceived the PLO a terrorist organization.³⁵ President Bush compelled Israeli participation with the conference through threats of withholding 10B USD in loan guarantees towards Israeli programs to absorb one million Russian Jews if Israel did not freeze settlements and join negotiations.³⁶ Israel begrudgingly acquiesced to negotiations with heavy stipulations upon the Palestinians; PLO exclusion from the talks, Palestinian representation subsumed by a Jordanian delegation, and no reference to Palestinian independence or statehood.³⁷

From the outset, this established a power imbalance between Palestinian and Israeli deliberations that doomed progression. The Madrid conference included a Palestinian delegation comprised of diaspora Palestinians exclusive of PLO leadership and East Jerusalem Palestinians. However, the PLO leadership still regularly guided the delegation while a Palestinian Steering Committee of sidelined Palestinians informally advised the delegation.³⁸ Over the course of the Madrid conference and subsequent Washington and Moscow summits through September 1993, the negotiations largely stalled into a deadlock between Israel refusing to accept withdrawal from

³⁴ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 22.

³⁵ Mitchell, 23.

³⁶ Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 137.

³⁷ “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

³⁸ “Palestine-Israel Primer”; Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 144.

all occupied territories as prescribed in UN Resolution 242 and the Palestinian delegation conditioning progress on this assurance.³⁹

Although the Madrid conference did not achieve much, the process did significantly demonstrate to Israelis that Palestinians could act as “diplomats speaking of peace rather than militants promoting conflict.”⁴⁰ This Israeli public sentiment of openness towards diplomacy with Palestinians transformed amidst the First Intifada, failing IDF operations along the Israel-Lebanon border, and Iraqi scud missile launches against Israel during the First Gulf War. The environment on the Israeli side shifted towards relinquishing their controlled land for peace and security guarantees. Reflecting this changing sentiment, the 1992 Israeli elections marked a significant loss for the conservative Likud Party since 1977. Yitzhak Rabin was elected Israeli Prime Minister under the Labor Party through his campaign promises of setting aside long-standing skepticism of the peace process with Palestinians and engaging in negotiations with the Palestinian representation.⁴¹

2. The Oslo Breakthrough

Prime Minister Rabin and his Foreign Minister Shimon Peres established a back channel, i.e. secretive diplomatic negotiations, following their electoral success in early December 1992 that enabled parallel talks with the PLO in Oslo. This effectively split negotiations between the government of Israel and two distinctive Palestinian factions: the Palestinian negotiations under the purview of the Jordanian delegation and the PLO. The US and Moscow curated the formal Madrid process while the Norwegian government in Oslo secretly facilitated separate talks

³⁹ Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 152.

⁴⁰ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 68.

⁴¹ Mitchell, 67–69.

between the PLO and new Israeli government.⁴² This allowed the new government of Israel to relitigate issues from the Madrid process with the PLO directly rather than dealing indirectly with a subordinate Palestinian delegation. The secret talks between Israel and the PLO allowed momentum in the peace process behind its closed doors.⁴³

The Oslo discussions resulted in the signature of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (DOP) in front of the White House on September 13th, 1993. The DOP most importantly established mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO along with a five-year interim period for permanent status negotiations. These final status issues included “Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbours, and other issues of common interest.” The Oslo Accords formed a new Palestinian interim governing administration and introduced necessary conditions for a future Palestinian state with reference to UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. These resolutions stipulated return of occupied territories following the 1967 Six Day War and outlined peace processes following the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Many critics such as Mahmoud Darwish, famous Palestinian poet and author of the Palestinian Declaration of Dependence in 1988, condemned the Oslo Agreement as a surrender on the Palestinian cause because it did not guarantee Palestinian sovereignty and ignored international law on seized territory.⁴⁴ Legal theorists such as Noura Erakat emphasize that Oslo completely ignored the prescriptive international law of the UN resolutions that required Israeli withdrawal.⁴⁵ On the other hand, proponents of the Oslo Agreement such as Herbert Kelman commented that the process indicated an attitude shift amongst both Palestinian and Israeli

⁴² Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 152–57.

⁴³ Erakat, 155–65.

⁴⁴ Erakat, 164–65.

⁴⁵ Erakat, 163–64.

majority opinion towards long-term interest in accommodating the other side. Essentially, this peace breakthrough represented a shift from zero-sum thinking on each side towards actual compromise. Furthermore, the Oslo process demonstrated that each side could recognize the others' identity and right to existence without undermining their own identities.⁴⁶ The Oslo Agreement represented a significant breakthrough for Israel and Palestine, unprecedented for this entrenched conflict, as each side began to mutually collaborate towards peace.

In terms of the Palestinian side, the PLO received official recognition as the representative for the Palestinian people from Israel and the international community. The PLO earned political stature as a legitimate peacemaker for the Palestinians. Having been exiled to Tunisia since 1983, Yasser Arafat was free to return to Gaza City in Palestine and reintegrated over 9,000 Palestinian refugees.⁴⁷ Israel began to withdraw from Gaza and Jericho in May 1994 through the Gaza-Jericho agreement that established the Palestinian National Authority (PA) as an interim self-governing body and a new Palestinian Civil Police Force. This agreement also initiated the Oslo Accord five-year timeline and officially circumscribed the deadline for the negotiations over permanent status issues to May 1999.

The following agreement in September 1995, since labelled "Oslo II", refined the Palestinian interim self-rule and organized its civil administration. Oslo II divided the West Bank and Gaza into three governing zones labelled Areas A, B, and C with differing degrees of Palestinian autonomy. The agreement stipulated that the PA would directly control Area A (3% of the West Bank), control some administrative functions jointly with Israel in Area B (24% of the West Bank), and Israel would retain control of Area C (74% of the West Bank with all 145 Israeli

⁴⁶ Kelman, "The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes," 290–91.

⁴⁷ Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 165.

settlements included).⁴⁸ Israel agreed to withdraw from Areas A and B within three months and subjected additional withdrawals during the five-year interim period for Area C:⁴⁹

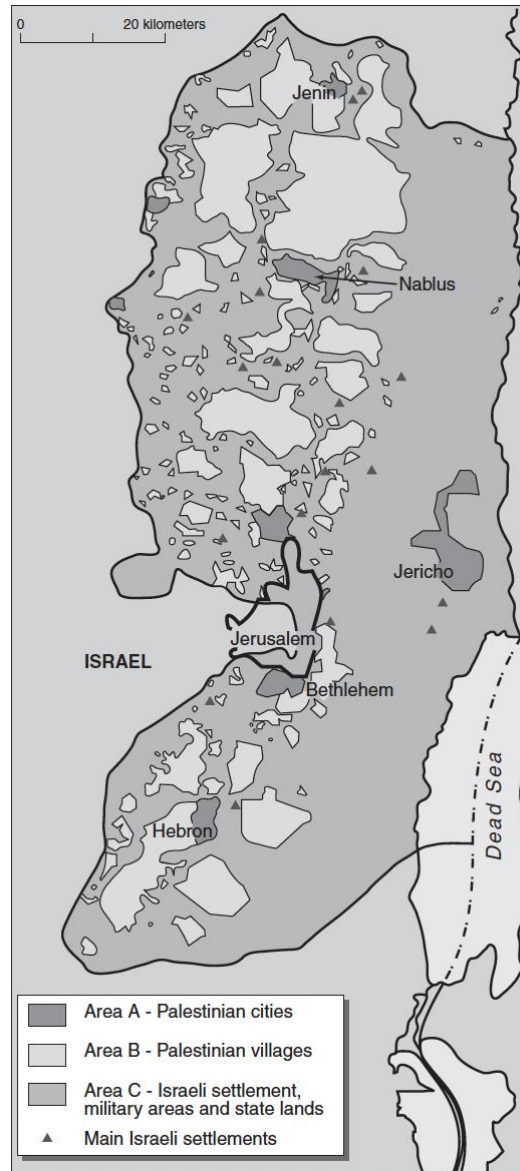


Figure 2. Map of the Palestinian Territories and Area Division under Oslo II⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 480.

⁴⁹ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 70–71; “Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (a.k.a. ‘Oslo II’).”

⁵⁰ Sourced from Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 239; “Map of The Oslo II Plan.”

The PA held elections to establish an official legislature and elected Yasser Arafat as president. Arafat maintained responsibilities as the PLO chairman to represent Palestinians internationally and assumed this political authority to govern new Palestinian administrative zones.⁵¹

From the perspective of the Israelis during the Oslo process, Israel gained security and political assurances when the PLO renounced terrorism and violence, while removing articles in their charter that renounced Israel's right to exist.⁵² The First Intifada had impressed upon Israel that endless violence would continue if the occupation did not stop and Palestinian nationalism would not materialize. The Oslo process allowed Israel to transition governing and security responsibilities towards the PA and its police force. In addition to relieving this administrative burden for Israel, the PA became a formidable partner in maintaining security and conducting counterterrorism operations against Hamas and the PIJ to maintain stability during the peace process.⁵³ The economy of Israel benefitted from the peaceful environment as its economic growth exceeded 5% annually, unemployment rates halved, and inflation rates reduced from double to single digits.⁵⁴ The accords also opened Arab-Israeli diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states and cemented a comprehensive Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement in 1994, portending broader resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁵⁵

Even though the Oslo Accords represented the best effort in peacebuilding thus far between Israel-Palestine, the accords were an imperfect attempt at peace, susceptible to disruption. The Oslo Accords showed mutual recognition and negotiations between Israel and a Palestinian national movement were possible for the first time ever. However, the agreement

⁵¹ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 71.

⁵² Mitchell, 69.

⁵³ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 486.

⁵⁴ "Israel - Peace Process, Oslo II, Rabin | Britannica."

⁵⁵ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 480.

never explicitly recognized a two-state solution as an endpoint and lagged during the interim period in assuaging a myriad of unaddressed issues. For example, the Oslo process never touched upon the permanent status issues indispensable to the conflict like refugee disposition, the status of Jerusalem, borders, security, and settlements. These limitations reflected the considerable bargaining still required and the lack of commitment between both parties. This also opened the negotiations to increased public criticism and ultimate failure despite its idealistic intent.⁵⁶

3. The Faltering of the Oslo Accords

The Oslo Accords unraveled when Israeli and Palestinian detractors alike played against the fears of the general public and disrupted a stable peace process. In Israel, the Oslo Accords enjoyed relative popular support due to its promise of security and stability when the DOP was first signed. Throughout the interim period, major Israeli opposition to the Oslo process calcified within religious circles that framed surrendering of land as a violation of God's covenant and Jewish claims to the holy land. Rabbis in 1995 even encouraged IDF soldiers to abandon post and resist orders while the Oslo II subjected Israeli withdrawal from parts of the West Bank.

Israeli resistance resorted to violence in order to de-legitimize the ongoing Oslo process and manipulated Israeli fears of insecurity. Baruch Goldstein, an Israeli settler and activist, fired an automatic weapon upon Palestinians praying in the Mosque of Abraham in Hebron and killed 29 Palestinians in February 1994, provoking a ferocious Palestinian Islamist suicide bombing campaign in retaliation. Israel provoked the ire of Hamas even further when the intelligence agency Shin Bet assassinated Hamas explosives engineer Yahiyah Ayyash in January 1996. Even more significantly, while Prime Minister Rabin was attending a peace rally in Tel Aviv and Yigal Amir, a young Israeli religious scholar, assassinated the politician in November 1995, throwing

⁵⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, 481–87; Kelman, “The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes,” 292–93.

Israel into internal strife and general unease amidst the Oslo process. The majority of Israelis wanted to see the fruits of the Oslo Accords on the condition that it delivered durable peace and security, but the Israeli oppositionists and Palestinian armed resistance called the idealism of Oslo into question. As a result, the Israeli elections in May 1996 following the assassination of Rabin ushered the Likud party into power once again under the helm of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.⁵⁷ Benjamin Netanyahu ran a platform that decried Oslo and promised to “slow down” the peace process.⁵⁸ Although the Likud Party won by narrow margins, this altered political mandate reflected growing Israeli sentiment against the viability of Oslo.

Additionally, Hamas immediately opposed the Oslo Accords upon their signature on the basis that recognizing the state of Israel defied their vision for an indivisible Palestine under an Islamic caliphate. Hamas turned to armed resistance as the popularity of the Oslo Accords waned within the Palestinian territories. Hamas executed a suicide bombing in April 1994 following the Hebron massacre that killed eight Israelis in Afula.⁵⁹ When Israeli intelligence eliminated Ayyash, Hamas responded with three revenge suicide attacks in Israeli cities between February 25th and March 3rd 1996. The PIJ conducted a fourth bombing during this period, resulting in 57 dead and 216 injured during this period.⁶⁰

This terrorist campaign preceded election of the right-wing Likud election in Israel and firm suppression of the Palestinian political violence. Benjamin Netanyahu took a hard stance against such Palestinian aggression and sought to re-establish deterrence against such security threats. Israel and the US pressured Arafat to weaponize his newly formed PA security forces to

⁵⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 484–85.

⁵⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, 485.

⁵⁹ Erakat, *Justice for Some*, 170.

⁶⁰ Pearlman, “Spoiling Inside and Out,” 102.

subdue and raid Islamist militants with over 1,200 Palestinians arrested.⁶¹ The PA counterterrorism efforts against Hamas and the PIJ only engendered more Palestinian infighting and opposition against the status quo during Oslo. Israel became more disengaged and controlling over the occupied Palestinian territories in an attempt to mitigate more violence, reverting to pre-intifada tendencies.⁶² The Oslo negotiations then effectively stalled as each side reneged on past commitments, fizzling the peace process until its material discontinuation at Camp David in 2000. The incremental progress and historic advancement of the Oslo Accords had dissipated rapidly into instability and antagonism between Israel-Palestine once again.

4. The Second Intifada and Israeli Disengagement Reshaping the Status Quo

The complete collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process during the Camp David Summit in 2000 inflamed Palestinian resistance through the Second Intifada. The Bill Clinton administration convened negotiations between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in July 2000 at Camp David in order to revitalize and settle issues outstanding from the Oslo process. For the first time ever, final status issues such as Jewish settlements, right of return for Palestinian refugees, and sovereignty of East Jerusalem were negotiated between respective leaders.⁶³ Ehud Barak proclaimed his red lines of Israel not returning to pre-1967 borders, East Jerusalem remaining under the sovereignty of Israel, annexation of settlement blocs in the West Bank, and refusal to accept legal or moral culpability for the Palestinian refugee problem. On the other hand, Yasser Arafat announced his goal of Israeli withdrawal from the

⁶¹ Pearlman, 102.

⁶² Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 486.

⁶³ Cleveland and Bunton, 488.

majority of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem to establish an independent Palestinian State.⁶⁴ The summit resulted in an impasse, largely over the division of Jerusalem.

With the promises of Oslo and the Camp David final status negotiations collapsing, Israelis and Palestinians conflagrated into violent turmoil known as the Second Intifada. Ariel Sharon marched towards the Temple Mount and Haram Al-Sharif, mutual religious sites for Jews and Muslims, with 1,000 armed guards in protest of Israeli withdrawal from Oslo II areas and political competition for the Israeli hardline right-wing leadership. Palestinians viewed this public stunt as provocative and offensive to their religious and political sensibilities, leading to Palestinians throwing rocks at Jews praying at the Western Wall. The quasi-peaceful standstill of the Oslo Accords dissipated as IDF brutally repressed Palestinian protestors and hostile PA armed security forces.⁶⁵ The Second Intifada was characterized by suicide bombings from Hamas, the PIJ, Fatah, and the PA while Israel escalated military deterrence with F16 fighter planes, tanks, and helicopters. When the Second Intifada simmered in 2005, approximately 3,000 Palestinians and 800 Israelis had been killed with a sevenfold number of injuries on both sides.⁶⁶ The intensive violence turned each side away from peaceful alternatives and reshaped the security environment between Israel-Palestine, a situation that continues to this day.

The Second Intifada marked a transition from PLO and PA control over a moderate Palestinian approach towards Hamas dominance through armed struggle, while the Israeli majority lost faith in the peace-seeking coalition and resorted to disengagement from the Palestinian question. Following the Second Intifada, Fatah and Hamas struggled for power in the 2007 Battle of Gaza with 161 killed and 700 wounded after a surprising electoral victory by

⁶⁴ "Palestine-Israel Primer."

⁶⁵ "Palestine-Israel Primer."

⁶⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 491; "Israeli-Palestinian Fatalities since 2000 - OCHA Special Focus"; "Palestine-Israel Primer."

Hamas in 2006 elections.⁶⁷ The political infighting and armed conflict ended with Hamas controlling the Gaza Strip and the PA consolidating control over the West Bank.⁶⁸

The Israeli government constructed a barrier to separate Israel and its settlements from other parts of the West Bank in 2002. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced IDF redeployment from the Gaza Strip in early 2004 and the dismantlement of Israeli settlements there, implementing its disengagement plan from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.⁶⁹ The Israeli disengagement from Gaza fostered mutual indignation and hostility while compartmentalizing the underlying issues that the Oslo Accords aspired to amend.

The situation transformed from pre-intifada and intra-Oslo trends into a new security environment and political reality. Hamas domineered the Palestinian political atmosphere and armed struggle against the Israeli occupation, while Israel barricaded, blockaded, and disengaged from the Palestinians in self-defense. The Arab World perceived the intifadas and subsequent skirmishes against Israel as proof of a weakening Israel and limited strength of the IDF in containing a non-state actor threat.⁷⁰ Hamas and the PIJ launched missile and rocket attacks from Gaza to further threaten the security of southern Israel, while Hezbollah conducted similar maneuvers upon northern Israel. Israel exhibited a pattern of tolerating these attacks, especially following the construction of the Iron Dome in 2011 with its enhanced anti-missile defense capability.⁷¹ When Palestinian militants surpassed this threshold of Israeli condonement through hostage capturing or more threatening barrages, then the IDF conducted forceful military offensives to counter this threat, totaling six military campaigns from 2006 – 2023.⁷²

⁶⁷ “Palestinian Center for Human Rights.”

⁶⁸ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 96–97.

⁶⁹ “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

⁷⁰ Karsh, “From Oslo to Be’eri,” 804–5.

⁷¹ “What Are Israel’s Iron Dome, David’s Sling, Arrow and Thaad Missile Defences?”

⁷² “Palestine-Israel Primer.”

While there were attempts to reconcile and rebuild the promises of Oslo, these ultimately became foiled peace initiatives. The withering of the Oslo process ruined mutual trust required for negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Disengagement allowed Israel to ignore Palestinian issues and abandon peace for the sake of maximal security. The Israeli state increased settlements within Palestinian Occupied Territories and economically sanctioned Palestinians with little repercussions, which only provoked greater resistance from Palestinians against such oppression. Israel and Palestine remained frozen in this back-and-forth friction that latently threatened to ignite into another intifada or greater conflict.

The low-intensity fighting that occurred in the period between the Second Intifada and October 7th, 2023 merely demonstrated the delicate status quo and fulminating tensions between each side. This period of short, intense skirmishes pockmarked with frangible peace negotiations reflected the lingering frustrations and complications from this historical conflict and the collapse of the Oslo process. It is important to bear this in mind in analyzing the current Israel-Hamas war and future prospects for a balanced peace resolution. A useful tool for unpacking the underlying conflict dynamics and failed peace negotiations is game theory.

IV. Analyzing Israeli-Palestinian Dynamics through Game Theory: Peace-breaking and Peace-making

Game theory is a powerful research tool that provides a framework to analyze and predict how actors will interact strategically – whether they are nations, militaries, insurgent groups, or gangs – in regards to initiating conflict or keeping a peaceful status quo. The “game” of conflict requires decision-making under uncertain conditions and optimization against the adversaries’ choices. Warfare is a context of conflicting interests where each side seeks to maximize its gains – territory, security, influence – while minimizing losses – lives, resources, political capital. Game

theory facilitates strategizing by evaluating the players, approaches, and payoffs so that one can predict behavior, equilibrium outcomes, and how changes within the game can influence the results.⁷³ Game theory does not guarantee complete prognostication, but it succeeds in clearly evaluating strategic tradeoffs and decision-making with the best models available.⁷⁴

Game theory is instrumental in understanding incentives that shape how and why parties decide to either choose the road towards war or peace. Game theory concepts such as cooperative bargaining can promote understanding of the long-standing conflict of Israel-Palestine. This bargaining model suggests that warring parties can negotiate a deal to split resources or engage in conflict. A key principle within the model is that as long as the expected value of peace outweighs the expected value of waging war, neither party will break the peace and initiate conflict. Theorists evaluate this process via probabilistic models that calculate the expected utility once conflict occurs and the expected value of peace as a comparison. These principles can also be generalized towards hostilities below the threshold of warfare such as civil warfare, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism between non-state actors and states.

This cooperation remains consistent as long as each party can wield the threat of violence and credibly signal its costs.⁷⁵ When parties decide to engage in violence, international relations scholars describe this deviation from peaceful negotiation as a “bargaining breakdown.”⁷⁶ This breakdown occurs when either party evaluates the expected outcomes from war and perceives the costs associated with war minimized to an extent that it is beneficial. On October 7th, 2023, there was a bargaining breakdown between Israel and Hamas due to the precipitating factors of

⁷³ O'Neill, “Chapter 29 Game Theory Models of Peace and War.”

⁷⁴ Emery, “Moral Choices Without Moral Language: 1950s Political-Military Wargaming at the RAND Corporation - Texas National Security Review.”

⁷⁵ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 31–35; Shook, “Week 4 Lecture: Origins and Developments of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.”

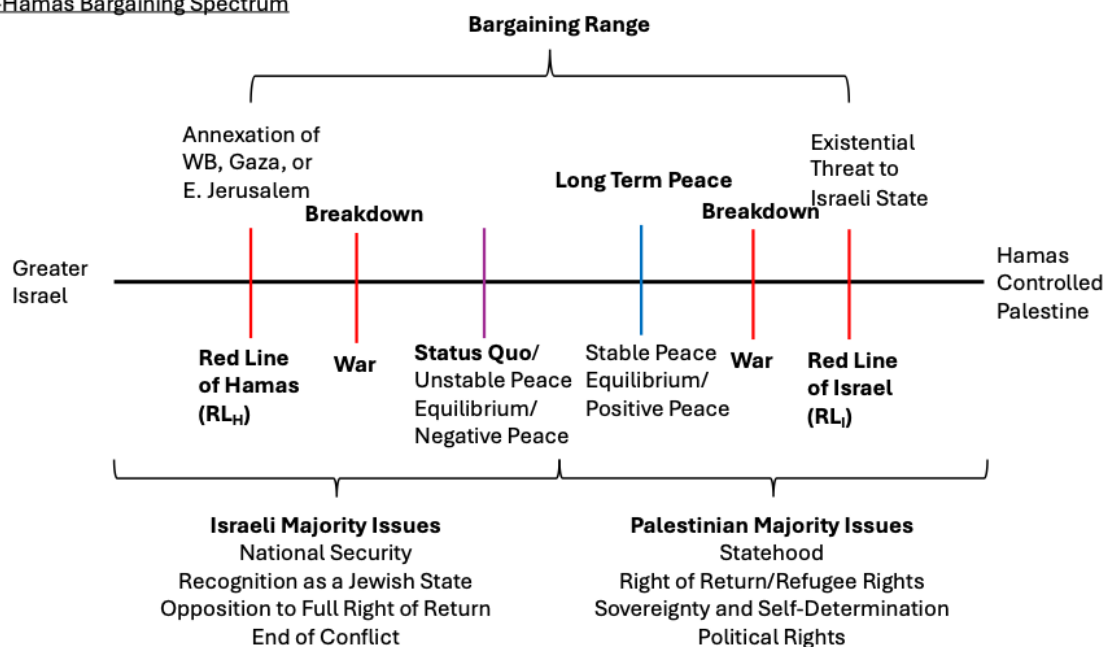
⁷⁶ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 22–23.

conflict. These issues pervade today as both parties negotiate short-lived ceasefires that lapse without a durable peace.

The figure below illustrates the bargaining between Hamas and Israel. The first figure simplifies how Hamas and Israel move along the spectrum of compromise in peace and war. The red lines indicate excesses that the parties cannot tolerate and will require escalation through warfare as a response, as the October 7th massacre triggered for Israel. However, there are actions besides October 7th or the Israeli annexation of Palestinian territory that can provoke war or lower-level conflict. A terrorist attack or changing policies could prompt a “bargaining breakdown” of the peaceful standoff between Israel and the Occupied Territories such that this violence breaks out. The purple line indicates a relatively instable peace equilibrium that existed prior to October 7th, 2023 and to varying degrees through the Israel-Palestine history. There are still exacerbating factors towards violence that complicate and frustrate this fragile peace. Some of these could include issues amongst the Israeli and Palestinian political majority as listed below, but they could also more likely manifest through conflict dynamics that enforce this vicious cycle. The blue line represents an ideal long-term peace that truly satisfies the Israeli and Palestinian coalition to an extent that continual skirmishes will not break out. This requires a more complicated process than short-term ceasefires or uneven peace agreements.

A stable peace equilibrium requires consideration of the underlying roots of violence and incorporating tools that address these concerns. The pie chart below the bargaining line provides another visual model of how Israel and Hamas bargain over resources such as settlements, international aid, territory control, security, and other intangible issues such as right of return in their oscillation between peace or warfare. These diagrams do not represent exact realities on the ground, nor do they encompass every issue relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The pie chart is split roughly 75% Israel and 25% Hamas to reflect the power imbalance in favor of Israel given conventional military advantages, territorial control, and resources. Although the models are not precise, this simplified representation promotes understanding of the concepts behind peace-making and peace-breaking.

Israel-Hamas Bargaining Spectrum



Israel-Hamas Bargaining Pie Chart

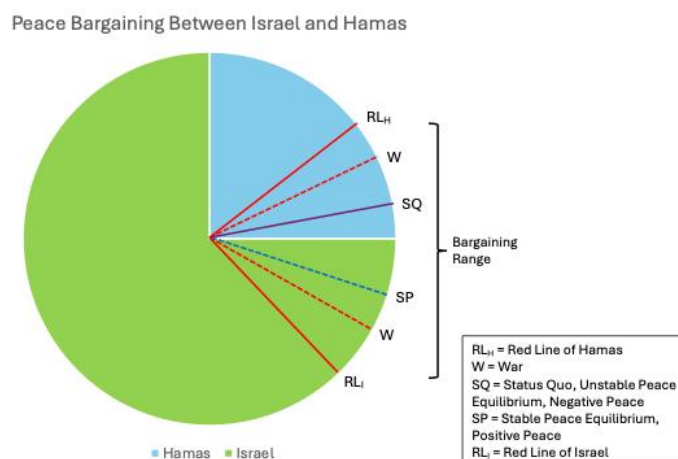


Figure 3. Israel-Hamas Bargaining Range and Pie Chart under Unstable Peace

In *Why We Fight*, Blattman introduces such concepts to explicate conflict breakout and enduring peace negotiations. The main drivers of conflict are unchecked interests, intangible incentives, uncertainty, commitment problems, and misperceptions. Unchecked interests denote the principal-agent problem, in which political leadership or interest groups do not bear the costs of war and wage war for personal gain.⁷⁷ Intangible incentives denote when committing violence leads to benefits through various incentives such as vengeance, dominance, religious motivations, freedom, injustice, or a sense of empowerment that ultimately offset the costs of war. Uncertainty is the third reason for a bargaining breakdown. Uncertainty suggests that rivals have imperfect information about their opponent and sometimes incentivizes an overstatement of their military strength, which can lead to miscalculations in warfare. Commitment problems are rarer since they require every following factor; a significantly large power shift, anticipation of

⁷⁷ Blattman, 22.

an attack, limited transfers or resources, and inability to reduce the power shift.⁷⁸ Finally, misperceptions involve misjudgments of an adversary such as projecting values upon them, prejudice and biases, misperceiving motives or preferences, and overconfidence.⁷⁹ These generalized factors help explain how war breaks out and peace cannot prevail. In the case of Israel and Palestine, there is evidence of these factors plaguing its history that leads to its fragile peace efforts and perpetuating conflict.

This conflict paradigm not only clarifies underlying roots of conflict, but develops a framework to break this cycle of violence and ensure a successful process towards a stable peace. If there is incentive and interest to bargain, then these groups will exchange resources – whether it is land, money, people, other negotiable issues – and accept this transaction to prevent or end conflict. Despite Thomas Hobbes philosophizing that “war is the natural state of man”,⁸⁰ bloodshed is actually the exception while peace is more commonplace. As Immanuel Kant argues in *Perpetual Peace*, the natural state of man is a tense, yet non-violent stand-off instead of war.⁸¹ The costs of warfare incentivize each party to trade resources rather than commit to its devastating effects. Contract and legal theorists leverage the Coase theorem, which suggests that “rivals have incentive[s] to bargain and transfer resources to avoid inefficient outcomes.”⁸² Within conflict theory, this theorem suggests that rivals transfer resources to avoid war. In fact, peace is more prevalent than warfare over time due to this dynamic so long as you factor out

⁷⁸ Blattman, 22–23; Blattman, “Rationalist Warfare.”

⁷⁹ Blattman, “Misperceptions.”

⁸⁰ Hobbes and Plamenatz, *Leviathan*.

⁸¹ Kant, *Perpetual Peace*.

⁸² Shook, “Week 4 Lecture: Origins and Developments of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict”; Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 336.

selection bias towards peace failures.⁸³ This model seeks to understand the root of conflict and develop policy options that mitigate a fragile peace.

This framework gives more insights into why there was a peace-making breakdown on the Oslo process, why Hamas launched the October 7th, 2023 attacks against Israel, and the prospects for a peaceful future within Israel-Palestine. The Hamas attacks occurred out of unchecked interests, uncertainty, intangible incentives and misperceptions as primary factors for their assault. I will also leverage a model of strategic terrorism from Kydd et al that coherently summarizes the strategic approaches and goals of Hamas. Then, I will apply the lessons learned from the failure of the most successful Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the recent Israel-Hamas conflict to illuminate a trajectory that best shapes long-term peace and stability in the region.

V. Why the Oslo Peace Process Was a Bargaining Breakdown

A. The Collapse of the Oslo Accords and its Important Lessons for Israel-Palestine Peace Negotiations

The Oslo Accords largely deteriorated because of resurfacing negative attitudes, maintenance of reserve options, and internal political contestation. Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat internally envisioned the conflict ending with a two-state solution, but could not publicly commit to this resolution. Both political leaders required concessions from the other side and mobilizing public support to progress outstanding issues towards this purpose.⁸⁴ Due to the aspirational goals of Oslo, the process required strong affirmation and buy-in amongst their societies. Public support and political climates influenced the negotiations and ultimately degraded their success.

⁸³ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 9–10.

⁸⁴ Kelman, “The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes,” 292.

1. Israeli and Palestinian Misperceptions – Misprojection and Misconstrual

Israelis and Palestinians have embedded, mutual negative perspectives that hindered the Oslo process. Bar-Tal in 1990 applied an epistemological-cognitive approach to illustrate these counteracting belief systems. The epistemic process occurs when individuals' beliefs crystalize based on associative thinking, personal experience, and external sources of information.⁸⁵ Israeli and Palestinian belief systems become “frozen” such that individuals possess beliefs incompatible with those of rival parties and cannot consider alternative hypotheses critical of their perspective.⁸⁶ This results in a “monopolization of truth and objectivity” that restricts each party from empathy and from accepting relative beliefs. This leads to various problems such as a complete disregard to the other side's needs, moral self-righteousness, placing blame on the other parties, and the galvanization of mutual hostility.⁸⁷ This cognitive discrepancy inhibits stable peace resolutions.

In terms of Blattman's framework, these sunken belief systems galvanize misprojections and misattribution of the other side. Misprojection means that each side project their own beliefs and information onto their rivals, creating a manufactured and relatively false reality of their opponent.⁸⁸ This cognitive discrepancy explains the starkly distinctive narratives for Israelis and Palestinians, which each side unequivocally insists to be objectively and exclusively true. Blattman summarizes that misprojection results in “a stubborn tendency to not revise those views but rather to confirm them in a way that reinforces [their] biases against the hated out-group”.⁸⁹ Misconstrual means that each side misunderstands the motives and attributes the worst intentions

⁸⁵ Bar-Tal, “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” 11–13.

⁸⁶ Bar-Tal, 12.

⁸⁷ Bar-Tal, 21.

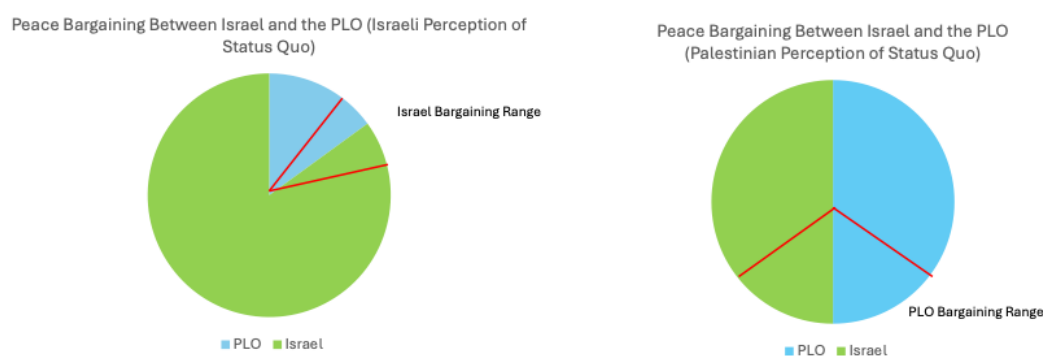
⁸⁸ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 150.

⁸⁹ Blattman, 166.

of their rivals.⁹⁰ Also known as attribution bias, each side interprets events and situations in such a way that it confirms its preconceived notions of pessimism towards the other side. The narratives surrounding historical events, such as the Naqba for the Palestinians and the War of Independence for Israelis, represent the extremes of each sides' perspective. Such underlying misperceptions undermined the Oslo Accords and contributed to its eventual downfall.

These embedded mutual perceptions lead to different bargaining pie charts between Israel and the PLO during Oslo. The figure below illustrates how these misperceptions altered how each side viewed their negotiating strength and prevented a mutual bargaining agreement:

Israel-PLO Uncertainty and Misperceptions



Sources: Lecture slides "3. Unchecked Leaders and Uncertainty" p. 26-35 and "7. Intangible Incentives and Misperceptions" p. 4-30, *Why We Fight* Ch. 4 and 6

Figure 4. Israel-PLO Bargaining Range under Misperceptions during Oslo

A stark example of misperception between Israel and the PLO during the Oslo process was the perception of bad faith for each side. Even though the PLO and PA performed counterterrorism operations against Hamas, Israel still scrutinized Palestinian intentions to pivot from an armed

⁹⁰ Blattman, 150.

resistance strategy and assumed the worst intentions, especially when Hamas and the PIJ executed disruptive terrorist attacks. On the other hand, the PLO had its impressions of bad faith with the state of Israel as it continued to build settlements during Oslo. The way each side interpreted these actions leaked poison into each step in the negotiation and prevented trust required for compromise.

2. Unchecked Interests – Internal Political Contestation within Palestinian Leadership

The Oslo Accords also collapsed due to political fractionalization within the Israeli and Palestinian sides that actively degraded the peace process. Wendy Pearlman provides an internal political contestation model that demonstrates how minority and extreme groups such as Hamas and Israeli militants disrupted the peace process following the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the Oslo Accords. Pearlman suggests that Hamas did not commit terrorism necessarily to promote interests in the negotiations or disrupt the Oslo Accords, but rather leveraged terrorism to compete politically and reverse power centralization of competing political groups. Conventional explanations regarding peace processes regard that negotiators and spoilers act primarily to achieve their objectives opposite an external opponent. This external utility model suggests that groups fight when they expect to achieve more by acting unilaterally and cooperate when they expect to achieve more in this way.⁹¹ Another model conditions this game through domestic audience costs and the ability of a representative leader to pursue negotiations.⁹² Audience costs represent the domestic price that political actors could pay for foreign policy decision-making.⁹³ In terms of domestic politics, some research solely considers internal politics influenced by

⁹¹ Pearlman, "Spoiling Inside and Out," 80–81.

⁹² Pearlman, 81.

⁹³ Pearlman, 79.

audience costs. However, Hamas does not necessarily have the increased audience costs that a democracy would face. Hamas in actuality commits terrorist attacks to win power dynamics of Palestinian political leadership in addition to spoiling external actions such as Israeli policy or undesirable international cooperation. This modelling derives from the paradigm of George Tsebelis' "nested games" that modelled Western European electoral politics and expands the model to non-state actors within the Middle East Peace Process.

Pearlman suggests that an internal contestation model that considers the internal and external motivations of each faction more completely analyzes these dynamics. The model considers the spoiling and negotiating that pervades the international stage and the politics within a community. Within each faction, elites and aspirants compete for influence, striving for organizational, political, and personal advantage against external adversaries and amongst each other.⁹⁴ Pearlman posits two hypotheses within the paper. First, she argues that negotiating and spoiling as internal contestation are more probable when one party within a conflict lacks an institutionalized system of legitimate representation. Although there is the PLO, PA, and Hamas that can represent Palestinian interests at varying levels and locations, there is a significant gap and disunity in independent governance and institutions. This ecosystem perpetuates the incentive for spoiling between Palestinian political factions. Secondly, Pearlman theorizes that the motivations compelling factions to make or break peace depends on policy preferences and the balance of power dynamics within their community.⁹⁵ The internal contestation model assumes a nesting game in which overlapping and competing interests between "peace-makers"

⁹⁴ Pearlman, 82–83.

⁹⁵ Pearlman, 80.

and “peace-breakers” disrupt the peace process.⁹⁶ The figure below demonstrates varying interests factions would pursue to compete politically:

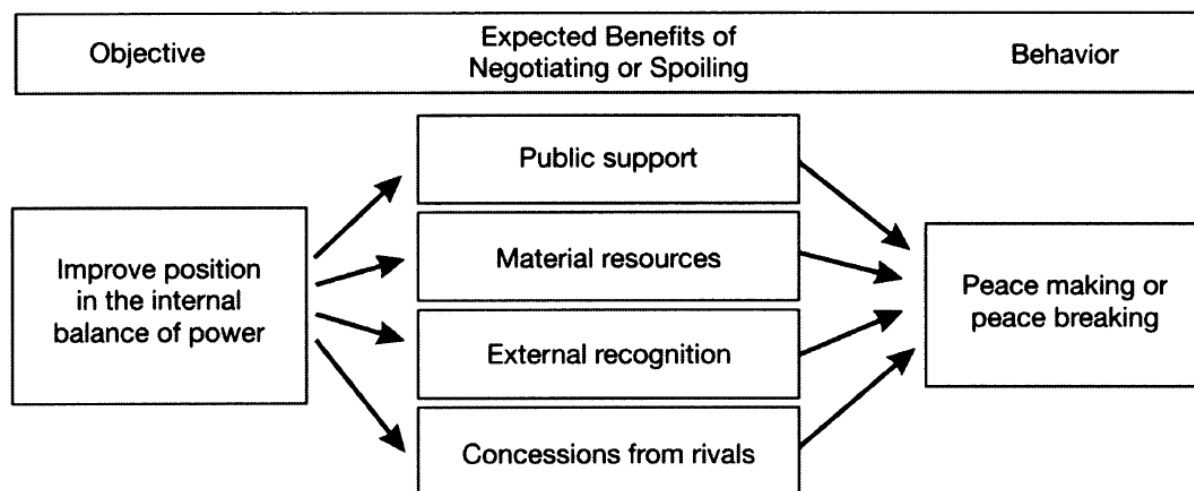


Figure 4. Internal Contestation Model (Pearlman 2009 model)⁹⁷

Hamas demonstrated political pragmatism in their employment of terrorism that promoted their internal balance of power. Hamas selectively employed terrorism based on popular support and the degree of its political integration into the Palestinian nationalist agenda. Hamas deferred to public opinion for the peace process, refusing to employ armed resistance and terrorism without popular support. For example, Hamas limited violent attacks against Israel and the PLO during the Madrid Conference because 87% of Palestinians supported its efforts. Conversely, Hamas and the PIJ timed suicide bombings in February 1994 following a Jewish settler killed 29 Palestinian worshippers in Hebron’s Ibrahimi Mosque when there was public outrage against Israel and universal appeal for a revenge attack. Hamas halted the suicide bombing campaign in the summer 1995 when the PA invited them to high level talks during Oslo, showing how

⁹⁶ Pearlman, 83.

⁹⁷ Pearlman, 84.

inclusive political representation at the time pacified Hamas.⁹⁸ Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh proclaimed a year after the signing of Oslo that “the scale of the attacks will be determined by the level of popular support for such a strategy.”⁹⁹

Following a jihadist campaign that harmed hundreds of Israelis and backfired in 1996, Hamas realized that terrorism as a policy tool transitioned from an asset to a liability. The PA security forces raided Hamas headquarters and Palestinian public support plummeted to 70% criticizing the Islamist attacks while 59% supporting the PA counterterrorism operations.¹⁰⁰ Hamas resorted to political activism and social programming in 1996 to recover from their losses and concentrate political power again. These examples underscore how Hamas committed violence solely when it was politically advantageous.

Hamas was largely motivated by power dynamics and political strengthening rather than disrupting the Oslo Accords. Hamas in the early 1990s originally pursued an outbidding strategy in terrorism to demonstrate its resolve and superiority over the PLO and PA in achieving Palestinian interests. Hamas orchestrated terrorist attacks with the PIJ during the First Intifada to signal their relative strength and elevate their prominence over the PLO and other civil disobedience measures. Although the failure of Oslo was a convenient outcome, Hamas terrorist attacks sought to expose the weakness and ineffective policy of moderate groups in achieving Palestinian interests. Hamas also employed violence to intimidate cooperators with Israel, the PLO, and the PA in order to coalesce their base. Their terrorist campaign intended to overthrow the developing power within PLO and PA political structures in favor of their Islamic resistance model. These efforts also bolstered Hamas’ political clout and garnered their present influence.

⁹⁸ Pearlman, 102–3.

⁹⁹ Pearlman, 102.

¹⁰⁰ Pearlman, 102–3.

3. Unchecked Interests – Internal Political Contestation within Israeli Democracy

Pearlman's model also illustrates how Israeli resistance and political turmoil played its part in the decline of Oslo in similar patterns as Palestinian internal contestation. When Yigal Amir assassinated Prime Minister Rabin, the Israeli opposition singlehandedly eliminated a peace partner that the PLO could trust, while also signaling to the larger Israeli public that the concessions made in Oslo interim agreements agitated ultra-religious minorities. The Hebron Massacre in 1994 and subsequent retaliation from Palestinian Islamists only further damaged mutual trust. However, this political violence represented growing resentment of the Oslo process and Israeli political coalitions competing against the peace movement underneath the Labor Party.¹⁰¹ Israeli democracy designed a unicameral legislature that serves the legislative and executive purposes along with appointing a Prime Minister. As such, there is no written constitution nor checks and balances within the government. The political structuring requires frequent compromise and coalition building. In other words, minority opinions and losing majority control threatens political positioning.¹⁰² Yitzhak Rabin's government only held a slim majority of 62 out of 120 Knesset seats at the signature of Oslo and relied on a religious party for the enabling support. This narrow majority prevented Rabin from faithfully following through on Oslo stipulations, such as dismantling settlements, and circumscribed his capacity to make concessions in order to avoid provoking right-wing opposition.

Following the election of the Likud Party in 1996 after Rabin's tragic death, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nominally supported the Oslo Accords while implementing policies that worked against the process such as avoiding implementation of key agreements,

¹⁰¹ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 481–83; Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 73–75.

¹⁰² Scheindlin, "The Fight for a New Israel."

expanding settlements, and antagonizing Palestinian negotiators.¹⁰³ Although these actions competed externally against the Palestinian political movement and Israeli peaceniks, the resurgence of an Israeli political party opposed to Oslo manifested from internal strife and contestation. Israeli politics during the late 1990s demonstrate this political competition. During the 1999 elections in Israel, 33 political parties were authorized to field candidates and 15 of these parties won seats in the Knesset, which was an unprecedented amount of political divergence and fractionalization.¹⁰⁴ Comparatively, Israeli elections to this point ranged from 14 to 25 political parties on average.¹⁰⁵

This creates the problem of unchecked interests within the Israeli democracy wherein individuals or factions find private incentives to disrupt the peace process. The political opposition such as the Likud party see a political opportunity to undermine the process when a leader within the peace-supporting Labor party struggles during the Oslo Accords. This problem becomes accentuated with weak national leadership, a fragile coalition, or other detrimental circumstances such as Palestinian terrorist attacks. This proliferation of political parties and interest groups complicated the Oslo Peace process and hamstrung Israeli leadership from compromising.

4. A Commitment Problem – Israeli Settlements

The increasing Israeli settlements, particularly under the watch of Benjamin Netanyahu in the late 1990s, exacerbated a commitment problem during the Oslo process. Commitment problems require a significantly large power shift, anticipation of an attack, limited transfers or

¹⁰³ Bazelon, “Was Peace Ever Possible?”

¹⁰⁴ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 487–88.

¹⁰⁵ “Elections and Parties.”

resources, and inability to reduce the power shift.¹⁰⁶ Even though Israel promised steps to cease settlements during Oslo, Israel fostered uncertainty for Palestinian negotiators by increasing settlements in the 1990s and over time expanding 100,000 new Israeli settlements. Ahmad models game theory that Israel, as the relatively stronger power, has the incentive and thus strategy to take “salami slices” through settlements until the Palestinians retaliate with a costly all-out war. Ahmad institutes a noncooperative bargaining model where Israel and Palestine want to maximize control over the territories and the land is a source of future bargaining power.¹⁰⁷ This model demonstrates a complex frustration for Israel-Palestine negotiations.

The settlements increased bargaining power for Israel and complicated the “land for peace” model. Israel has a strategic interest in incrementally increasing settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as this expansion alters the status quo irreversibly. The expanding settlements shrinks the set of bargains that Palestinians will accept and Israelis will offer, creating a classic commitment problem. In the long term, Israel perpetuates its long-term power growth and a future power shift that is too large to be offset by bargaining exchanges. Furthermore, third-party guarantees such as a US mediator cannot be powerful enough to restrain this dynamic.

The increase of Israeli settlements exposed a serious power imbalance between Israel-Palestine that continually disrupts peace negotiations.¹⁰⁸ This commitment problem leads to violence because Israel cannot credibly promise to honor a future agreement. Even if both parties would prefer a peaceful outcome to the costly destruction of war, the lack of trust that promises will be kept prevents them from finding a stable deal. This inability to commit eliminates the

¹⁰⁶ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 22–23.

¹⁰⁷ Ahmad, “Land for Peace? Israel-Palestine through the Lens of Game Theory.”

¹⁰⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 486.

incentives for compromise in a distinct way, effectively narrowing or even eradicating the bargaining range. In 2018, Israel had constructed over 655,000 settlements and still continue their construction.¹⁰⁹ The commitment problem of Israeli settlements impeded the momentum of the Oslo Accords and demonstrated clear detractions from the peace process.

B. Camp David Summit and Resurging Misperceptions – Anchoring Inhibits Compromise on Final Status Issues

The negotiations at Camp David illustrate the differing narratives and anchors to respective positions that ruin compromise. Tversky and Kahneman defined the anchoring effect as a psychological phenomenon in which judgements or decisions are influenced by previous reference points that can be completely irrelevant.¹¹⁰ On the Palestinian side, the majority narrative considered that the PLO offered a historic compromise by merely recognizing the state of Israel in exchange for promises of a Palestinian state that only constituted 22% of the pre-1948 mandatory Palestine. Additional compromise beyond this meandered into the territory of Israel's continuing domination of the Palestinian people. In effect, Arafat's positioning during Camp David anchored to the pre-1948 map and mitigated compromise from this standard.¹¹¹ On the contrary, Israelis consider that Ehud Barak offered a generous compromise with PA partial sovereignty over sections of East Jerusalem and increased withdrawal from the West Bank.¹¹² Israel anchored its compromise based on Israeli sovereignty since 1967.¹¹³ The figures below taken from Kelman's research on attitude theory illustrate the Israeli and Palestinian anchors during Camp David that frustrated compromise and lead to a deadlock:

¹⁰⁹ Ahmad, "Land for Peace? Israel-Palestine through the Lens of Game Theory."

¹¹⁰ Tversky and Kahneman, "Judgment under Uncertainty," 185; Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 119.

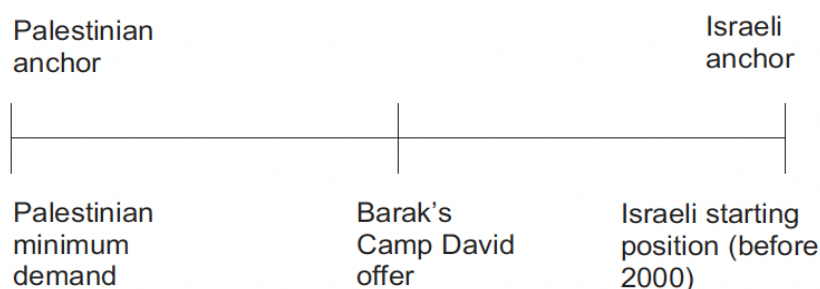
¹¹¹ Kelman, "The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes," 294–95; Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 82.

¹¹² "Palestine-Israel Primer"; Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 488.

¹¹³ Mitchell, *A Path to Peace*, 82.

Figure 3

Anchors for Judging the Significance of Ehud Barak's Offer at the Camp David Summit

**Figure 4**

Anchors for Judging the Evidence of Palestinian Compromise

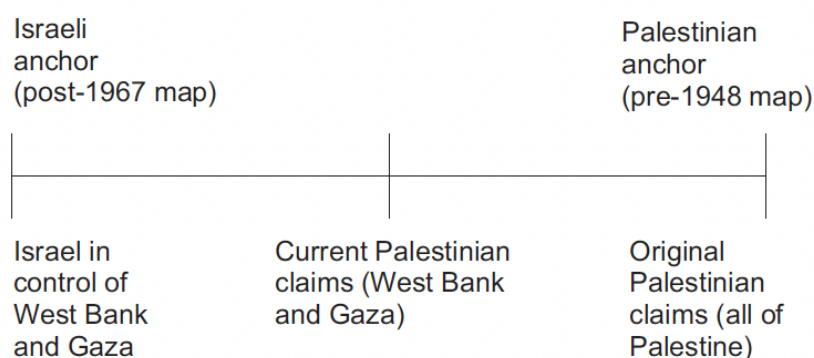


Figure 5. Israeli-Palestinian Anchors during the Camp David Summit¹¹⁴

Galinsky and Mussweiler suggest that detrimental anchoring effects can be mitigated or circumnavigated in negotiations by re-adjusting assessments based on arguments against the anchor. In effect, they recommend that “thinking the opposite” and leveraging empathy of the other side eases the negotiation process.¹¹⁵ These psychological nuances and negotiation strategies are essential in winning a stable peace long term for Israel-Palestine. It is important to

¹¹⁴ Sourced from Kelman, “The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes,” 295.

¹¹⁵ Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 126–27.

encapsulate the lessons learned from the Oslo Accords and the Camp David Summit to make the next peace resolution even more sustainable.

VI. Why Hamas Fought on October 7th

A. Analyzing the Conflict Dynamics of Israel-Palestine Prior to the Current Israel-Hamas War

1. Prevalence of Negative Peace and the Promise of Positive Peace for the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Although tensions have endured over a century, the Israel-Palestine conflict is not immune to the principle that peace is more common than all-out warfare. Including the Intifadas and the Arab-Israeli wars, Israel and Palestine have experienced 5,960 conflict days over the course of 28,104 days since the Emirate of Transjordan separated from Mandatory Palestine on May 15, 1923, a key date in which the territories of Mandatory Palestine most resembled modern Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Although there is a potential for over-estimating peaceful days by omitting single days of terrorist attacks and intermittent attacks, these results yield a noticeable difference between conflict and peaceful conditions. This data suggests that fighting erupted within Israel-Palestine 21.21% of the time and each rival upheld peace, albeit somewhat unstable, 78.79% of the time.¹¹⁶ The **Tabulated Data** and corresponding **Frequency of Negative Peace** figures below lists the statistics and analysis for these results. Although these results do not resolve or assuage the difficulties afflicting the continuing Israel-Palestine hostilities, the data surprisingly supports the argument for the prevalence of peace even with Israel-Palestine and reframes an optimism for stabilizing towards self-sustaining peace. This interpretation helps mute negativity and selection bias – specifically toward the short, intensive

¹¹⁶ “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline”; “Data on Casualties.”

tragedies of conflict over the more frequent absence of violence – that distracts from a logical assessment and a grounded approach. Put more simply, Blattman argues that “enemies prefer to loath one another in peace” over the devastating impact of warfighting.¹¹⁷

Conflict Period	Start Date	End Date	Duration
Arab Revolt Mandatory Palestine	April 19, 1936	August 26, 1939	1207
1948 Arab-Israeli War	May 15, 1948	January 7, 1949	240
Suez Crisis (1956)	October 29, 1956	November 7, 1956	10
Six-Day War (1967)	Jun 5, 1967	June 10, 1967	6
Yom Kippur War (1973)	October 6, 1973	October 25, 1973	19
1982 Lebanon War	Jun 6, 1982	September 1, 1982	87
2006 Lebanon War	July 12, 2006	August 14, 2006	33
Gaza War (2008-2009)	December 27, 2008	January 18, 2009	23
Gaza Conflict (2012)	November 14, 2012	November 21, 2012	8
Gaza War (2014)	July 8, 2014	August 26, 2014	49
Gaza Conflict (2021)	May 10, 2021	May 21, 2021	12
Israel-Hamas War (2023-present)	October 7, 2023	April 25, 2025	566
First Intifada	December 9, 1987	September 13, 1993	2100
Second Intifada	September 28, 2000	February 8, 2005	1600

Figure 6. Tabulated Data on Major Conflicts Between Israel-Palestine¹¹⁸

Total Days	28,104
Days of Conflict	5,960
Days of Negative Peace	22,144
Frequency of Negative Peace	78.79%
Frequency of Conflict	21.21%

Figure 7. Frequency of Negative Peace Versus Active Conflict between Israel-Palestine¹¹⁹

This analysis adopts John Galtung’s definition of negative peace. Negative peace denotes the absence of violence between peoples, whereas a positive peace represents a more stable peace in which all opposing parties have resolved structural violence and provided a more

¹¹⁷ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 16–17.

¹¹⁸ Calculated from UNOCHA data “Data on Casualties”; “Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Timeline.”

¹¹⁹ Derived from Figure 1 data.

holistic solution to inequities.¹²⁰ In other words, positive peace enshrines the “attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.”¹²¹ Although it is optimistic to consider the frequency of negative peace throughout the history of Israel-Palestine, a positive peace aligns with a sustained, stable concord between Israelis and Palestinians. The Oslo Accords peace process is the best historical example of a transformation towards positive peace between the Israelis and Palestinians as various attitudes, institutions, and structures re-shaped in such a way that ensured long-term sustainability of peaceful conditions. Positive and negative will become useful when considering long-term peace following the Israel-Hamas war.

2. The Economic Costs of Israel-Palestine Conflict: An Insufficient Deterrent

If conflict is relatively infrequent between Israel-Palestine and yet negative peace has generally pervaded over time, then the October 7th attack represents a bargaining breakdown in that existing condition. Another assumption from the Blattman model is that the costs of war repel parties from resorting to violence. Initial reactions to the October 7th attack would suggest that Israeli deterrence failed or the detriments of escalation were insufficient. However, research of the Israel-Palestine situation indicates exorbitant damages for both sides when they break out into conflict. For example, a RAND study approximated that the costs of an Israel-Palestine conflict in 2015 would impose upon the Palestinians 46B USD in damages over ten years, which was more than three times the occupied territories’ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the time. In contrast, a two-state solution and peaceful resolution would increase average per capita income of Palestinians by 36% and increase GDP by 123B USD over the same time period.¹²²

¹²⁰ Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” 183–86.

¹²¹ “Culture of Peace and Peacebuilding.”

¹²² Ayer et al., *The Costs of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 19.

If Hamas viewed the struggle with Israel in more peaceful terms, there would be reasonable opportunities and benefits available. However, Hamas prepared for the October 7th raid based on their own reasons and interests. Hamas viewed October 7th as rational in their terms, disregarding long-term downsides or a dispassionate cost-benefit analysis. This stark contrast between costs-benefits suggests that Hamas either lacked perfect information on this calculus or determined the economically devastating repercussions of assailing Israel were worthwhile based on other factors. For example, external factors such as Iranian sponsorship of Hamas could have encouraged Hamas' audacity. Furthermore, the emerging Abraham Accords materialized balance of power issues for Hamas. In other words, Israel had increasingly less incentive to accommodate Palestinian issues let alone the interests of Hamas. Just like other Arab-Israeli normalization treaties, the Abraham Accords facilitated Israeli disengagement from the Palestinian question and further degraded Palestinian political power. These issues help contextualize the strategic interests of Hamas and clarify the roots of their surprise attack. Applying Blattman's framework, Hamas executed the October 7th offensive based on commitment problems, unchecked interests, intangible incentives, uncertainty, and misperceptions. Furthermore, a framework for strategic terrorism helps explain how Hamas leverages terrorism to achieve its strategic interests.

B. Commitment Problems – Israeli Settlements and the Abraham Accords

The Oslo peace process and its failure at Camp David demonstrates how hopeful Palestinians lost trust in a promised peaceful equilibrium and eventually recognized the reality of the Israeli one-sided repression as Israeli disengagement policy formulated. The expansion of Israeli settlements and introduction of the Abraham Accords increase this power imbalance. The Abraham Accords, formalized in 2020 under the Trump administration, represent a series of

normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. These Accords flaunted the previous proclamation by the Arab League in 2002 for the Arab Peace Initiative, which conditioned Israeli normalization upon progression of Israel-Palestine peace process and Palestinian issues. The Abraham Accords and Arab state normalization with Israel posed an outsized threat to Hamas political power in that it nullified previous agreements that required integration of Palestinian issues prior to normalization and consequently omitted the Palestinian cause from negotiation efforts.¹²³ This also represented a “closing window” for Hamas political control and a tangible challenge to its authority and relevance, a common indicator of commitment problems.¹²⁴ This closing window archetype suggests that Hamas has incentives to attack Israel in an attempt to prevent the mounting pressure against its weakening platform.

Building upon the previous discussion on Israeli settlements, the Abraham Accords commingle with the commitment problem of the settlements to perpetuate a greater power imbalance between Israel-Palestine. Baqai and Mehreen argue that the Accords “buried the two-state solution in spirit,” with Palestine as the “ultimate victim.”¹²⁵ The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies notes that the Accords have not facilitated progress on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and instead normalized the Israeli occupation, crowding out attention to Palestinian statehood or interests.¹²⁶ This further exacerbates the pre-existing commitment problem, incentivizing Israel to renege on future cooperation. From 2020 to 2025, Israeli settlements continued to grow from around 671,000 in 2020 to an estimated 843,000 in 2025, representing an

¹²³ Soroczyński, “The Impact of the Abraham Accords on the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002,” 65–71.

¹²⁴ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 126.

¹²⁵ Baqai and Mehreen, “Abraham Accords.”

¹²⁶ El Kurd, “Assessing the Abraham Accords, Three Years On.”

annual growth rate of about 4.65%.¹²⁷ This data shows that the commitment problem of Israeli settlements only persisted while the Abraham Accords galvanized the overall issue.

C. Unchecked Interests – The Internal Contestation Model and Principal-Agent Problems

1. The Internal Contestation Model – How Hamas Rallied Support through Violence

Hamas pursued the October 7th attack in order to spoil internal and external political dynamics. In an inversion of Hamas’ peace-breaking efforts during Oslo, Pearlman’s internal contestation model provides insights into why Hamas broke peace with a calculated offensive:

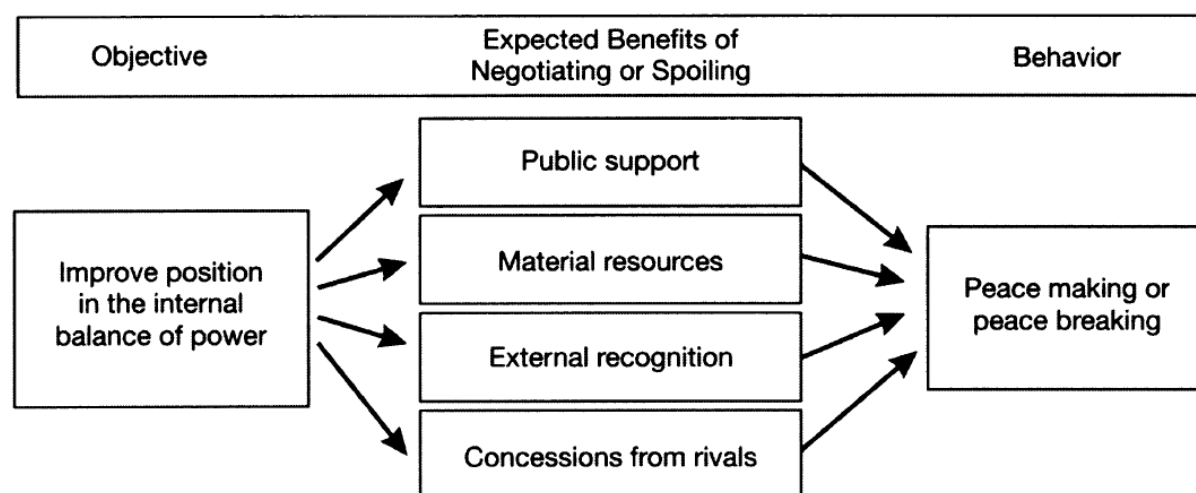


Figure 8. Internal Contestation Model (Pearlman 2009 model)¹²⁸

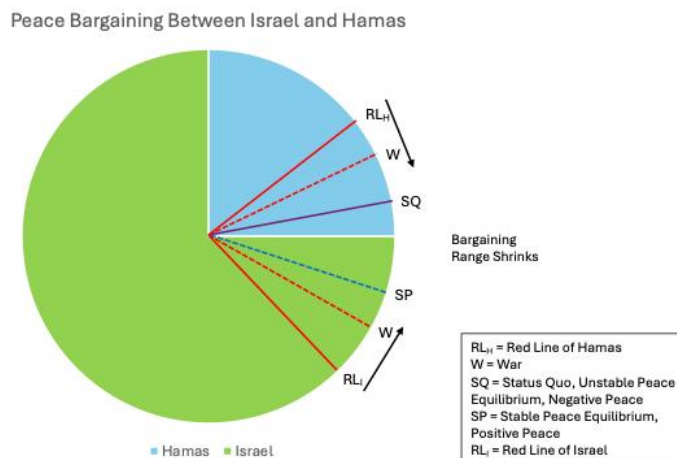
This model shows how inter-factional and intra-factional motivations affect Hamas decisions to wage war. In addition to disrupting policy against Israel, actors were equally motivated through their struggle over representation of the Palestinian cause. In early October 2023 prior to the attacks, Arab Barometer surveyed that Gaza experienced an unemployment rate of 45% and aid

¹²⁷ “Population”; AP, “West Bank Settler Population Grew by Nearly 3% in 2023 — Report.”

¹²⁸ Pearlman, “Spoiling Inside and Out,” 84.

reliance of 80% of the population. Although Hamas had softened its language in a new 2017 charter and publicly stated its focus on political matters, its main strategy continued to focus on attacking Israel in order to ease the imposed blockade and earn concessions rather than establishing independent political or economic programs. According to the same Arab Barometer survey, in Gaza only 23% of respondents had great trust in Hamas and 52% had no trust at all in Hamas. Nearly 80% of the population considered the economic situation in Gaza and the West Bank dire.¹²⁹ Another poll indicated that trust in Hamas was declining from 29% in 2021 to 22% in 2023.¹³⁰ These vulnerabilities within Hamas-controlled Gaza exposed competition against its influence and intergroup conflict. The figure below shows how the unchecked interests of political fractionalization can lead to a shrinking of the bargaining range:

Israel-Hamas Unchecked Interests and Intangible Incentives



Sources: Lecture slides "3. Unchecked Leaders and Uncertainty" p. 7-23 and "6. Intangible Incentives" p. 9-25, *Why We Fight* Ch 2 and 3

Figure 9. Israel-Hamas Bargaining Pie Chart under Unchecked Interests

¹²⁹ "Survey Offers a Window into Palestinians' Views Ahead of the Hamas Attack"; Hummel, "The Road to October 7."

¹³⁰ "Palestinian Perception of Governance," 9.

The October 7th attack therefore had a rallying effect of shoring up political support for Hamas. A survey of Palestinians in June 2024 showed two-thirds of respondents supported the Hamas-led October 7th attack. Furthermore, 40% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza preferred Hamas governing them with a 6% increase over the previous three months and doubling of support prior to October 7th.¹³¹ These polls indicate the consolidation of public support and political power that Hamas experienced as a result of the attack.

Finally, the Iranian external support of Hamas engenders a principal-agent problem that encourages warfare. Iran has provided significant funding to Hamas with estimates of about 100M USD annually in 2023 that ballooned from the levels of 20M USD – 30M USD in 2010.¹³² Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar requested 500M USD over two years from Iran in 2021 to train an additional 12,000 fighters.¹³³ Iran supplied Hamas with weapons such as Iranian made AM-50 0.50 caliber anti-material rifles, MANPADs, and Kornet anti-tank missiles that were employed during October 7th.¹³⁴ Iran trained Hamas fighters in Iran, Syria, and Lebanon with Hezbollah in motorized paragliders and mortar attacks.¹³⁵ A New York Times report details minutes of ten Hamas meetings from January 2022 to August 2023 seized by the IDF that showed Hamas sought Iranian and Hezbollah support, particularly in a July 2023 meeting in Lebanon with a senior Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander. The report found that Iran and

¹³¹ Stern, “A Pollster Sheds Light on Palestinian Attitudes toward the U.S., Israel and Hamas.”

¹³² Hummel, “The Path to October 7.”

¹³³ Warrick, Mekhennet, and Morris, “Captured Documents Reveal Hamas’s Broader Ambition to Wreak Havoc on Israel.”

¹³⁴ Hummel, “The Path to October 7.”

¹³⁵ Robbins, “Hamas Used Iranian-Produced Weapons in October 7 Terror Attack in Israel”; Hummel, “The Path to October 7.”

Hezbollah were supportive of the attack and Hamas proceeded without their full involvement to preempt Israel's new air-defense system.¹³⁶

This strategic coordination and direct planning with Iran create a principal-agent problem with Iran as the principal and Hamas as the agent. The principal sponsors the agent to conduct terrorism or proxy warfare against its rival. Through research of state sponsorship of terrorism, Berkowitz determined that rivalry is a crucial factor in making a principal-agent relationship worthwhile.¹³⁷ Berkowitz modelled empirically state sponsorship of terrorism. The paper found that the principal leverages proxy warfare especially when the strategic benefits of weakening the enemy state are high and the perceived risks of international reputation loss and domestic dissatisfaction remain low.¹³⁸ Effectively, Iran can pursue its strategic interest of defeating the state of Israel while Hamas benefits in achieving its own goals and defrays the cost of warfare with Iran's sponsorship. This principal-agent problem acts as an unchecked interest of external influence that similarly stimulated Hamas' October 7th attack.

D. Intangible Incentives – Emotional Decision-making, Expressive Utility, and Religion

There are intangible factors that drive Palestinian violence. There are times when violence is intrinsically valuable such that it will offset costs of committing violence. A 2020 Joint poll survey found that 36.9% of all Palestinians and 54% of Gazans preferred “armed struggle against the Israeli occupation” over unarmed struggles or peaceful resolutions.¹³⁹ This opinion poll corroborates Gazan preferences for armed resistance that is driven by intangible incentives.

¹³⁶ Bergman, Rasgon, and Kingsley, “Secret Documents Show Hamas Tried to Persuade Iran to Join Its Oct. 7 Attack”; “Iran Responds to ‘Secret Documents’ Linking Tehran to Hamas’ Oct. 7 Attack.”

¹³⁷ Berkowitz, “Delegating Terror,” 725.

¹³⁸ Berkowitz, 709, 733–35.

¹³⁹ “Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll (2020).”

Resistance and revolution in defiance of authority can represent self-actualization and provide intrinsic benefits to the individual. Timur Kuran named this phenomenon “expressive utility” in which high-risk protestors and violent resisters act out of non-instrumental rewards separate from rationality.¹⁴⁰ Ullman-Margalit and Sunstein posit that indignation can “lead the disadvantaged to disrupt an otherwise stable situation” of inequity or perceived injustice, emphasizing a zero-sum consideration and “nothing to lose” perspective.¹⁴¹

Pearlman argues that emotions can drive resistance as well. A sense of anger can lead an attack agent, such as Israel, committing a demeaning offense against Gazans as justification for their resistance. This emotional stimulus emboldens actors such as Hamas to have a high sense of control and optimism while evaluating low-risk and increased openness towards resistance.¹⁴² This can explain why Hamas would focus on the short-term losses of an Israeli blockade and value the benefits of a large-scale terrorist attack over the long-term damaging effects of a protracted war with Israel.

There are other incentives such as glory, status, vengeance, pleasure in agency, and righteous action that motivate October 7th. In October 7th recordings,¹⁴³ Hamas fighters expressed exorbitant glee when they chopped up victims and gunned down innocents. The emotive¹⁴⁴ proclamations of “Alahu Akbar” symbolize the glory, salvation, pleasure in agency, and righteousness that every Palestinian fighter feels in retaliation against their oppressor.¹⁴⁵ These emotions and states derive from this expressive utility. The figure below shows how intangible

¹⁴⁰ Pearlman, “Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings,” 389.

¹⁴¹ Pearlman, 393.

¹⁴² Pearlman, 392.

¹⁴³ *Recorded Hamas Terrorist Calls Father With Murdered Woman’s Phone to Celebrate The Oct. 7 Massacre.*

¹⁴⁴ Pearlman, “Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings.”

¹⁴⁵ “Hamas Massacre: Documentation of Crimes Against Humanity.”

incentives can shrink the bargaining range even such that compromise is abhorrent and incompatible to this group:

Israel-Hamas Unchecked Interests and Intangible Incentives

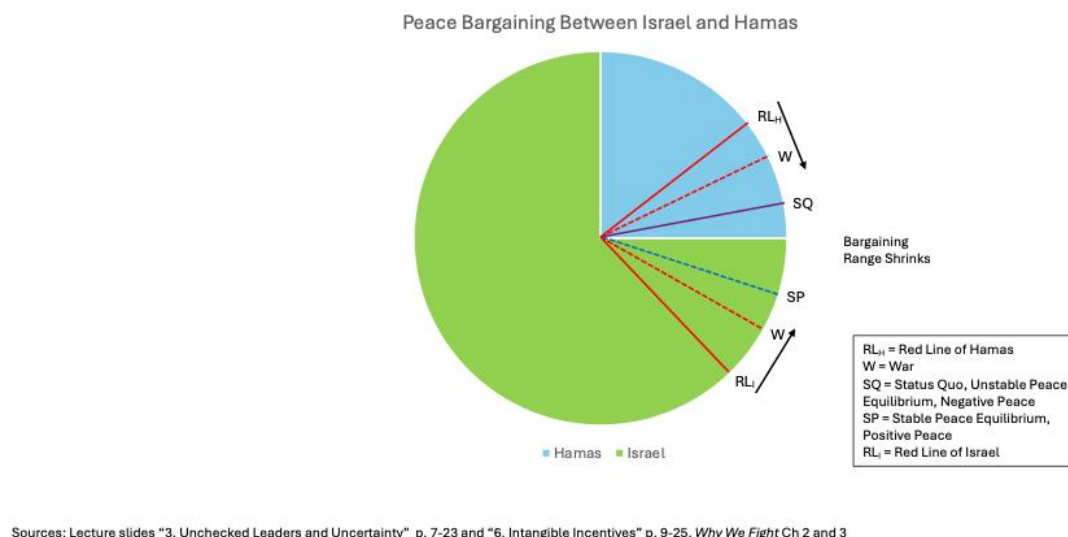


Figure 10. Israel-Hamas Bargaining Pie Chart under Intangible Incentives

Parochialism cultivated by society or political leadership can heighten these intangible incentives and dampen the discouraging costs of war.¹⁴⁶ Institutions such as education and humanitarian aid networks that act as pseudo-government structures in Palestine wield considerable influence over Gazans and a collective viewpoint. For example, the European Union and the United Kingdom found radicalizing material within Palestinian primary schools – in the PA controlled West Bank and Hamas controlled Gaza – that encourage violence against Israel and Zionists in terms of liberation.¹⁴⁷ Further UN Watch reports into the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) found that international staff participated in the imprisonment

¹⁴⁶ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 88.

¹⁴⁷ "Palestinian School Curriculum."

of captives and extremist violence during October 7th. The report found that the UNRWA Teachers Union and Hamas leaders actively promoted terrorism and support for resistance against Israel.¹⁴⁸ These reports indicate a widespread acculturation of armed resistance that manifests in these heightened senses of glory, salvation, pleasure in agency, and righteousness.

There is also a religious dimension to this attack. The Hamas Charter explicitly lists that the Israel-Palestine territory is a waqf in Article 11, an Islamic religious trust endowed for charitable causes and holy worship.¹⁴⁹ The naming of the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood is a call for jihad, hearkening a religious intonation to seize back sovereign control of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Bearing religious and historical significance for the Muslim World, this mosque represents the first mosque built by Umayyad caliphs in the holy land and the site for Mohammed's miraculous Night Journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, where Mohammed ascended into heaven.¹⁵⁰

Promoting religious incitements, Islamist leaders encourage suicide attacks against Israelis to become a martyr and reap heavenly rewards. This religiosity mixes with emotional exultation of defeating their Israeli oppressors, as demonstrated by a recording from an October 7th attacker. The assailant calls to his parents over WhatsApp with a sense of pride and excitement: "Look how many I killed with my own hands! Your son killed Jews...Dad, I'm talking to you from a Jewish woman's phone. I killed her and I killed her husband. I killed ten with my own hands...I am the first to enter under the protection and help of Allah...There's no going back – it's either death or victory. My mother gave birth to me for the religion, Allah."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ "The Unholy Alliance: UNRWA, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad," 5–6.

¹⁴⁹ "The Charter of Allah: The Platform of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas)."

¹⁵⁰ Faruqi, "Al-Isra' Wal-Mi'raj."

¹⁵¹ Murray, *On Democracies and Death Cults*, xvi; *Recorded Hamas Terrorist Calls Father With Murdered Woman's Phone to Celebrate The Oct. 7 Massacre*.

Hamas reinforces these religious undertones and intangible incentives with financial rewards of “martyr funds.” Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin asserted in 2001 that Hamas disbursed between 2M USD and 3M USD to the families of prisoners and suicide bombers. According to a 2001 report from the Israeli government, the families received an initial lump sum payment between 500 USD and 5,000 USD with monthly stipends of 100 USD with higher scaled payments to families of Hamas members.¹⁵² Since 2003, the PA and the PLO have only enhanced this financial incentive for extremism more broadly with a 140M USD annual budget and similar incentive programs.¹⁵³ These payments lessen the individual costs for conflict and encourage participation in armed resistance, yielding greater recruitment for Hamas. This shows how Hamas blended economic incentives with intangible incentives to launch its October 7th attack.

E. Uncertainty and Misperceptions – Palestinian Prospective Future and Projection Bias

When the Camp David Accords failed in 2000, Palestinians lost hope for statehood and reverted to armed resistance since the Second Intifada. A driving uncertainty is the unknown future for Palestinian self-determination and statehood. This creates negative attitudes and expectations in regards to their perceived future. Previous sections discussed how misperceptions and embedded negative belief systems degraded empathy, open-mindedness, and mutual trust between Israelis and Palestinians. In a joint Israeli-Palestinian opinion poll in 2020, the results found that 90% of Palestinians and 79% of Israeli Jews viewed the other side as unreliable.¹⁵⁴ Such uncertainty promulgates projection bias wherein one overestimates how much the future self will share the same beliefs as the current self, causing one to make short-sighted decisions.

¹⁵² Levitt, *Hamas*, 59.

¹⁵³ “Financially Rewarding Terrorism in the West Bank.”

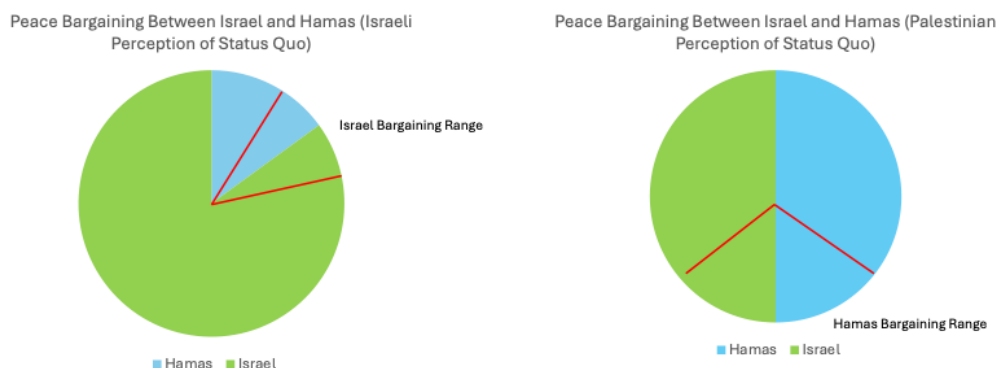
¹⁵⁴ “Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll (2020).”

Palestinians are more incentivized to make short-sighted decisions, adjusting their expected utility function because they consider limited potential for their future selves and value vengeance against their Israeli oppressor. This projection bias created a “toxic mix with vengeance and uncertainty” in which the Palestinians are spiteful victims that remain uncertain about Israeli willingness to bargain and support a Palestinian future.¹⁵⁵

These levels of mutual uncertainty create complications for stable peace and in actuality encourage war as a tool to balance the scales, especially if such an attack could lead to advantages. Hamas calculated that October 7th would be a worthy retaliation against the increasingly aggressive Netanyahu government policy and would be less risky than acquiescing to the status quo. The pie chart below shows the impact of uncertainty upon Hamas:

Israel-Hamas Uncertainty and Misperceptions

Both pie charts represent the “effect” of uncertainty and misperceptions



Sources: Lecture slides “3. Unchecked Leaders and Uncertainty” p. 26-35 and “7. Intangible Incentives and Misperceptions” p. 4-30, *Why We Fight* Ch. 4 and 6

Figure 11. Israel-Hamas Bargaining Pie Chart under Uncertainty and Misperceptions

¹⁵⁵ Shook, “Week 4 Lecture: Origins and Developments of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict.”

On the Palestinian side, Hamas perceives itself stronger based on its success over the past 30 years and prefers launching a terrorist attack to better its own position.

F. Hamas' Strategic Terrorism

One of the principal reasons that Hamas executed its October 7th attack is that the organization viewed the invasion as strategically logical to their interests. Strategic terrorism is an approach employed by Hamas to achieve their objectives. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines terrorism as “the unofficial or unauthorized use of violence and intimidation in the pursuit of political aims.”¹⁵⁶ Terrorism is a political tool that can influence individuals or governments to respond in ways that achieve their strategic aims.¹⁵⁷ Kydd and Walter argue that terrorist groups are too weak to surpass conventional military means of their opponents and resort to terrorism as a mode of costly signaling, instilling fear within government and their constituents such that it changes their political behavior favorably.¹⁵⁸ The framework of strategic terrorism helps us understand how Hamas acted rationally in its own self-interest when conducting October 7th.

Hamas executed its October 7th attack because it sought terrorist strategies of provocation, attrition, and spoiling in order to maintain the status quo of their political power and challenge Israeli policy. A provocation strategy aims to trigger the enemy to respond with overwhelming force and deteriorate their own legitimacy, thus radicalizing the population and aligning them towards terrorist goals. In attrition, terrorists attempt to impose considerable costs long term if the enemy continues a certain policy. Hamas calculated that Israel would pursue an aggressive offensive in Gaza and its militant group could attrit this conventional force through

¹⁵⁶ Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*.

¹⁵⁷ Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 50.

¹⁵⁸ Kydd and Walter, 50.

complex defense within urban warfare and a counter propaganda campaign, which has largely proceeded to this day. On the other hand, a spoiler strategy implements terrorism to disrupt peacemaking processes such as the Abraham Accords for their own interests.¹⁵⁹

Statements from senior Hamas leaders following the assault corroborate this terrorist strategy clearly. For example, the Hamas Political Bureau Member Ghazi Hamad stated on November 1st, 2023 “We will repeat the October 7 attack time and time again until Israel is annihilated.” These words indicate that Hamas views October 7th as part of a greater perpetual struggle against Israel and their long-term goal of destroying this state – an example of regime and territorial change – will be achieved through slow attrition. The language is also provocative and strong-headed in an attempt to ensure a strong Israeli response out of its fears of insecurity and to reinstate the importance of Hamas in this struggle.¹⁶⁰ Israel has since pursued a muscular ground operation to neutralize Hamas and played into Hamas’ goals of provocation.

As a result, the Israel-Hamas war has spiked international criticism against Israel and bolstered public support for Hamas itself. A global poll from January 2024 reported that the percentage of people viewing Israel favorably dropped 18.5% and 42 out of 43 countries polled had witnessed a decrease in support.¹⁶¹ The Ismail Haniyeh, the former Hamas Political Leader, expressed in October 2024 that October 7th “was a response to decades of Israeli oppression...it was necessary to raise an alarm in the world to tell them that here there is a people who have a cause and have demands that must be met.”¹⁶² Haniyeh’s verbiage indicates how Hamas wanted to centralize Israeli oppression onto the global agenda and Hamas’ impactful role in advocating for the Palestinian cause, effectively regaining momentum for Hamas as a political organization.

¹⁵⁹ Kydd and Walter, 50–51.

¹⁶⁰ “Hamas Official Ghazi Hamad.”

¹⁶¹ Gordon, “New Polling Shows How Much Global Support Israel Has Lost.”

¹⁶² “What Is Hamas and Why Is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?”

The attack also has the effect of spoiling Arab normalization with Israel through the Abraham Accords.¹⁶³ This framework of strategic terrorism encapsulates Hamas' decision-making.

V. Pathways to a Durable Peace Settlement

A. Establishing Security and Stability

1. The Need to Re-Establish Deterrence

Israel must re-establish deterrence in the region before peace bargaining. Despite widespread calls for a ceasefire, De Mesquita argues that Israel only has the option to contain and deter Palestinian violence. David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, stated that “We must straighten the [Israelis’] backs and demonstrate that those who attack them will not get away unpunished, that they are residents of a sovereign state which is responsible for their safety”, a fervent dedication towards national defense of Israel that persists.¹⁶⁴ At the very least, Israel must neutralize Hamas’s offensive capability. This requires the elimination of Hamas military capability with humane and discriminate targeting and proper civilian harm mitigation. Israel should not engage in a forever war, provoking an insurgency, or damaging its international reputation unnecessarily. As such, Israel should focus on degrading Hamas’ military capacity to a threshold where political compromise is cheaper than continued fighting. This military approach would also seek to return the remaining 58 hostages as of May 12th, 2025.¹⁶⁵

In the event that Hamas or an equivalent emerges as the dominant Palestinian faction, Israel will have to consider re-implementing a disengagement policy from the 2000s – heavy military defense surrounding the Palestinian borders – or investing in a long-term peace-making

¹⁶³ Levitt, “The War Hamas Always Wanted.”

¹⁶⁴ Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 2014, 168.

¹⁶⁵ “Swords of Iron.”

strategy, whereby Israel-Palestine negotiates an equitable resolution.¹⁶⁶ Re-establishing the national defense of Israel is relatively easy. The harder road is to entreat and compromise to ensure a long-term peace dividend. Research shows that “thirty-one peace accords out of thirty-eight signed between 1988 and 1998 failed to last more than three years”, showing the uphill battle in ensuring this solution.¹⁶⁷ A return to hardening Israeli defense will ensure an unstable peace equilibrium – an undesirable outcome for all parties – and eventually provoke Palestinian violence against Israel once again.

2. Pathways to Peace Intervention Tools

The framework from *Why We Fight* provides some tools for peace that could stabilize peace and discourage further violence. These tools include interdependence, checks and balances, rules of enforcement, and interventions. Interdependence constitutes strengthening intergroup ties between the warring factions through various methods such as technology, prosocial interactions to create a shared identity, and economic relationships. Checks and balances institute a power restraint on unchecked leaders and elites within each society in order to mitigate principal-agent problems. Rules and enforcement include institutions, such as the United Nations or other smaller scale, localized organizations, that can facilitate information exchange and negotiations between the parties. This structure also punishes and rewards violent behavior in order to offset incentives or malignant effects that initially stimulated conflict. Finally, interventions can range from mediation by outside parties, peacekeeping missions, and other socio-economic programming to prevent conflict resumption. Targeting these methods

¹⁶⁶ Bueno de Mesquita, “American Geopolitical Strategy and the Israel-Hamas War.”

¹⁶⁷ Pearlman, “Spoiling Inside and Out,” 79.

towards the underlying factors of the Israel-Palestine conflict, the parties can sustain a strong peaceful resolution.

3. Interdependence: Changing Attitudes and Belief Systems through Interactive Conflict Resolution and Prosocial Interactions

Another encouraging approach to the resolution process is interactive conflict resolution based on social-psychological analysis and attitude theory. Interactive conflict resolution involves problem solving debates between unofficial parties to lighten the tangible stakes and promote flexibility in negotiations. With over forty decades of involvement in the Israel-Palestine peace process, Kelman et al advocate for direct negotiation, especially at the substate or below the political level, to encourage mutual trust and cooperation in finding a solution. Kelman posited that changing attitudes within the Israeli and Palestinian society prior to the Oslo agreement resulted from “the evolution and diffusion of ideas about the possibility of negotiating an agreement that would meet the fundamental needs and safeguard the vital interests of both parties.”¹⁶⁸ The attitude changes allowed for the negotiation process.

The Oslo Accords were a peace break-through because the process transformed incompatible belief systems. The public compromise and cooperation convinced Palestinians and Israelis that the other does not have to be a threat, but rather can become partners in peace. The hope of a sanctioned peace process unfroze prior negative attitudes and fostered openness to new solutions. Kelman argues that over 20 decades of interactive conflict resolution opened Israel and the PLO to the Oslo process. This effort allowed each party to incorporate the other side’s perspective and grow empathic. The interaction also decreased zero-sum calculations and developed compromising opportunities. Research by Shnabel and Halabi amongst Israeli Jews

¹⁶⁸ Kelman, “The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and Its Vicissitudes,” 291.

and West Bank Palestinians suggested that affirmation of respective agency leads to positive effects and increases prosocial tendencies,¹⁶⁹ indicating the power of mutual dialogue that creates interdependence between groups. The “thinking the opposite” approaches previously mentioned also re-calibrate assessments based on arguments against anchored beliefs and induce empathy that eases the negotiation process.¹⁷⁰ These interdependence tools curb the excesses of misperceptions, uncertainty, and unchecked interests such that each party has more predictable outcomes and therefore trust during the peace process.

4. Peacekeeping and Civil-Military Coordination as a Transitory Measure

A peacekeeping force and civil-military coordination to reconstruct war-torn regions can address the uncertainty, misperceptions, and intangible incentives pervasive in the Israel-Hamas environment. An important primary step in de-escalating the Israel-Hamas war is promoting security and mitigating humanitarian abuses. Peacekeeping missions are essential in mitigating conflict and creating an environment conducive to peace negotiations. These peacekeeping operations lead to less armed conflicts, fewer civilian and combat deaths, fewer mass killings, longer periods of post-conflict peace, and fewer repeat wars as compared to regions without a peacekeeping mission based on peer-reviewed research.¹⁷¹

Due to conflicts of interest between the UN and Israel, it would be optimal that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) deploy a peacekeeping mission from its Civil-Military Coordination (CMC) cell. The CMC mission set focuses on coordinating with civil populations, governments, non-government organizations, and military units that would be essential in transition from military campaigning towards a re-stabilizing reconstruction effort. This

¹⁶⁹ SimanTov-Nachlieli, Shnabel, and Halabi, “The Power to Be Moral.”

¹⁷⁰ Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 126–27.

¹⁷¹ Walter, Howard, and Fortna, “The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace.”

peacekeeping force should include NATO members and incorporate Arab League country militaries that can provide their own military staff officers. The force should not include Israeli Defense Force or PA security forces, but can coordinate and collaborate alongside these militaries. The peacekeeping mission would seek to assist civilian protection, ensure safe distribution of aid with trusted NGOs, and enable long-term stabilization. The peacekeeping mission should have rules of engagement that allow escalation in order to enforce order and security against increasing violence. The peacekeeping force can also monitor both sides commitments within a peace deal, supervise disarmament of armed groups, encourage mutual trust, and reduce other factors that perpetuate violence such as uncertainty, speculation, fear, and anger.¹⁷²

B. Peace Negotiations and Post-Conflict Reconciliation

1. Peace Negotiations that Leverage Mediation and Private Space for Compromise

Israel-Palestine should pursue peace negotiations heavily mediated by external powers, such as the US or other Arab nations, in closed doors settings. Although the US is often relied on in these endeavors due to its superpower stature, the Arab state of Morocco could effectively lead the mediation because this country boasts a majority 70% Arab population and rich Jewish history, having migrated a quarter million diasporic Jews to Israel since its founding and once represented the largest Jewish homeland in the Arab World. In order to be successful, the US and other superpowers may have to still be involved to structure the negotiation and incentive the mediator, but Morocco would pose as a potentially more neutral mediator in this process.

Many researchers advocate that secrecy is essential to maintain negotiation integrity and achieve compromises. It is for this very reason that Kissinger established a back channel with

¹⁷² Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 231–32.

Dobrynin to communicate openly with the Soviet Union and ease negotiations over the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT).¹⁷³ There are various benefits of maintaining secrecy such as enabling more open communication between official negotiators, avoiding controversy publicly, and limiting political risks. Exposure to publicity and thus public scrutiny constrains the negotiators and can bound agreements to outside demands. Other recent examples are the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action treaty between US-Iran¹⁷⁴ and the reduction of Libyan chemical weapons by Qaddafi in this century.¹⁷⁵ The leak by Al-Jazeera of the Palestine Papers in January 2011 while the PA tried to negotiate with Israel showed the detrimental and hindering effects of publicity.¹⁷⁶ Due to the extreme international scrutiny and complicated sensitivities of the Israel-Palestine quagmire, a stable peace would not be won without secret talks.

2. Addressing Final Status Issues and Achieving Compromise in the “Land for Peace” Model

The peace process should address final status issues such as right of return, borders, security, settlements, and Jerusalem. Although these issues are subject to negotiation, each party will have to compromise and maintain flexibility from their respective reference points or preconceived notions of a “fair deal.” The Camp David Summit cultivated this flexibility by ensuring Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat that offers could be made without a commitment, which stimulated creative bargaining offers and liberated negotiators from anchoring to their reserve options.

¹⁷³ Moss, *Nixon's Back Channel to Moscow*.

¹⁷⁴ Burns, *The Back Channel*.

¹⁷⁵ Tucker, “The Rollback Of Libya's Chemical Weapons Program.”

¹⁷⁶ “The Palestine Papers.”

A negotiated settlement should also determine appropriate land borders and proffer significant funding to rebuild Palestinian territories.¹⁷⁷ Shaul Arieli from the Israeli Policy Forum suggested Israel-Palestine boundaries where 77.77% of the settlers are absorbed through annexation while Palestine is compensated with land swaps, requiring 150,000 settlers that live outside the zone to be evacuated and resettled in Israel.¹⁷⁸ Similar to the Marshall Plan, the international community would establish a monetary fund for Palestine and Israel that compensates Palestinians not returning to their original homeland and Israeli settlers for their relocation costs. Another feasibility concern in establishing an international reconstruction fund is that various other competing issues ranging from the Ukraine War, climate change, domestic policy, and decreasing foreign policy investments particularly in the US could limit funding. However, the funding of reconstruction and military peacekeeping missions can facilitate stabilization of the Middle East region and incentive investment with this peace dividend.

If there are concerns about UN involvement in the solution, another option would be the international community could conduct a bidding process to formulate a specialized trusteeship backed by this new monetary fund that focuses on evidence-based aid distribution and development programming. Since there is a collective action problem of Israel and Arab nations shirking responsibility for Palestine's reconstruction, Axworthy et al recommend establishing a trusteeship that would develop post-conflict Palestinian civil administration and transition into a formal state within 15 years.¹⁷⁹ The UN or the elected international aid organization could execute this trusteeship function. The trusteeship would provide technical assistance and advisory roles to organizations like the PA and PLO to transform this institutional capacity.

¹⁷⁷ Piekrash, "Solution Series - Part 1."

¹⁷⁸ Yglesias, "The Two-State Solution Is Still Best."

¹⁷⁹ Axworthy, Manulak, and Rock, "A UN Trusteeship for Palestine."

While Palestinians could still receive humanitarian aid as refugees, the goal would be through UNHCR and other development organizations to create a functioning government system as opposed to fueling aid dependency. In order to mitigate protracted timelines, the trusteeship should establish a phased hand-back from the international organization to local Palestinian authorities at approximately three to five years increments. Moreover, the Palestinian Authority could establish local oversight boards to check international rule and further develop its self-governance.

The international community could consider dissolving the UNRWA to support funding of an Israel-Palestine reconstruction fund due to its complicity in October 7th and violation of neutrality. Several UN Watch reports and the UN sanctioned Colonna Report outlined the neutrality infractions of UNRWA. Former general counsel for the UNRWA James Lindsay commented that the Colonna Report, a UN commissioned report and investigation into UNRWA involvement into October 7th, divulged significant mismanagement at the aid agency over many decades, Hamas terrorist ties within its staff, and limited response to control future neutrality infractions. Some of these infractions include antisemitic, anti-Israel, and pro-violence education materials for Palestinian children.¹⁸⁰ The UN Office of Internal Insight found that nine schoolteachers worked directly with Hamas during October 7th and the UNRWA Commissioner General terminated their contracts.¹⁸¹ However, there should at least be greater reforms and punishments upon UNRWA to maintain its viability.

One of the largest UN organizations, UNRWA has 30,000 employees and 1.5B USD annual budget.¹⁸² The UN could liquidate the programming of UNRWA and transition

¹⁸⁰ Lindsay, "Evaluating UNRWA After the Colonna Report | The Washington Institute."

¹⁸¹ "Investigation Completed."

¹⁸² "The Unholy Alliance: UNRWA, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad An Investigation into the Secret Ties Between Terrorist Organization and the UN's Largest Aid Agency," 3.

custodianship to a more neutral international organization. As a part of this process, the UN should dissolve the UNRWA and transfer its mission to the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR). The friction points include that UNRWA has a greater operational scope than UNHCR by providing long-term assistance and camp support for generational refugees, while the UNHCR focuses on rapid resettlement. Furthermore, nearly 123 member states from the UN oppose abolishment of UNRWA.¹⁸³ However, the transition of UNRWA to UNHCR becomes more feasible as the trusteeship and burgeoning Palestinian government fill the void left by UNRWA. As such, the implementation plan should develop a phased approach in transferring responsibilities and assets from UNRWA to the interim self-government and UNHCR respectively.

Furthermore, there should be a conditioned plan that phases out permanent and generational refugee status of Palestinians following the establishment of a Palestinian state and official citizenship. As a part of this process, the trusteeship and Palestinian government functions would implement repatriation of the Palestinian diaspora. It is important to note that Palestinians will likely not be able to return to their original pre-1948 homes and will have to repatriate within the newly established Palestinian state. Israel could work with Palestine on accepting Palestinians into its country based on negotiations.

3. Incentivization towards Peaceful Resolution

To incentivize beyond “peace dividends”, the negotiations should specify incentives to bring the negotiating parties to the table. Foremost, the international community should reward any mediator for succeeding in a stable peace compromise. Some tangible incentives could

¹⁸³ Wintour and Editor, “Israel’s Plan to Ban Unrwa from Accessing Gaza Marks New Low in Its Relations with UN.”

include the process of providing EU and NATO membership to Morocco along with its benefits. Part of the international monetary fund could be obligated towards development within the mediating party's country as an incentive. Furthermore, the US could elevate this country to an official ally, which opens free trade agreements, greater military partnerships, and greater mutual security guarantees. States like China or the EU could also offer advantageous trade deals and direct investment into Morocco. These bundled benefits would be conditioned on a signed agreement and could have time horizons with greater included benefits as Israel-Palestine subsist as stably peaceful countries without a conflict breakout.

As discussed through examples such as Israeli settlements or military strength, Israel has limited incentive to negotiate from its position of strength. However, external parties and international institutions can motivate the compromising process. For example, the resolution could incorporate normalization with Arab nations regionally to resume the progress of the Abraham Accords. Based on recent polling, an absolute majority of Israelis (62%) and Palestinians (65%) would choose a regional peace deal that includes a two-state solution paired with Arab-Israeli normalization as opposed to a regional war between Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, and possibly Iran.¹⁸⁴ Another incentive for Israel would be either imposed sanctions on Iran and other countries for its support of the attack or requiring restitution from these countries for the war damages. The purpose of the sanctions would be to target proxy forces bank accounts and financial networks to deter spoiling aggression and regrouping.

Finally, the international community could incentivize Israel through security guarantees that include a formal Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) implemented by the appointed peacekeeping force. The intent would be to transfer non-state actor war material

¹⁸⁴ "Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll (2024)."

into official Palestinian armories and provide transitory training for a Palestinian military. There could be a demilitarized zone or conditional steps in the DDR process to ensure Israel's national security. If Israel or Palestine are concerned about terrorist spoilers that disrupt the peace process, conditional repression is an effective enforcement mechanism to deter detractors. Following its narcotics internal war with FARC, the Colombian government warned drug lords to reduce violence or face extradition to the US.¹⁸⁵ The intent of conditional repression is to internalize the costs of violence for potential detractors by publicly announcing punishments. These tools would be useful to address spoilers such as militant extremists or expansionist Israeli settlers, addressing concerns of commitment problems and unchecked interests.

On the Palestinian side, the negotiations would offer incentives by offering statehood, increased territorial control, and resolution of some permanent status issues. The peace dividends would include economic integration and foreign direct investment as Palestine becomes more included within international and regional relations. Previous sponsors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran would transition from predatory relationships to more mutually beneficial partnerships. The new international monetary fund and trusteeship would provide essential assistance in creating a functioning Palestinian government that earns the public trusts and checks internecine violence. The Palestinian government must include all political factions and develop fair institutions to ensure representation, otherwise spoilers and splinter groups will seek to undermine the development process. The peacekeeping mission or multilateral military forces could provide world-class military training and equipment to ensure Palestine has an equal share in the balance of power and can defend itself from incursions. This increased interdependence between Israel and Palestine would only ensure a more peaceful and stable environment. A negotiated

¹⁸⁵ Blattman, *Why We Fight*, 242–45.

settlement that inculcates all these interests and addresses the root causes of violence will more likely promulgate long-term peace.

C. Optimistic Outlook for a Peaceful Path

In the book entitled *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, Harvard psychologist Steve Pinker argues that over the long term the world has become more peaceful and challenges a pessimistic view of human nature. Pinker cites data that compares 33 active conflicts in the world in 2013 as opposed to 50 active conflicts at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, representing a 40 percent decline in war-waging in this twenty-year period.¹⁸⁶ Pinker also lists homicide, genocide, rape, and capital punishment decreasing over the past centuries. In his accompanying Ted Talk, Pinker emphasizes the humanitarian revolution, importance of central states, civilizing of human behavior, female empowerment, and economic interdependence.¹⁸⁷ His reflections upon long-term historical trends parallel conclusions from Blattman's framework. Moreover, Pinker's perspective provides an optimistic reframe on the prevalence of peace and aspiration towards such outcomes despite their thorny obstacles.

In the same way, the Israel-Palestine conflict is long overdue for a positive outlook and reframe towards positive peace. Although the Oslo Peace process faltered, the sheer amount of progress that Israelis and Palestinians have made in negotiations and relations is considerable. On September 1st, 1967, the Arab League signed the Khartoum Resolution in Sudan that iterated diplomatic policy of the three no's towards Israel following the Six-Day War: no negotiation with Israel, no peace with Israel, and no recognition of Israel. The Oslo Accords would shock those Arab League members on the relative progress. With the Declaration of Principles signed

¹⁸⁶ Pinker, "Has the Decline of Violence Reversed since the Better Angels of Our Nature Was Written," 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Is the World Getting Better or Worse?*

on September 13th, 1993, the PLO became the representative of the Palestinian people and Israel received recognition as a state. The Oslo peace efforts produced monumental results such as an interim government with security forces, withdrawal of the IDF from Palestinian territories, and negotiations around territorial control. During the Camp David Summit, President Clinton even convinced an Israeli Prime Minister and PLO Chairman to compromise on final status issues, which had never been achieved before in Israel-Palestine history.

In a change from its 1967 resolution, the Arab League proclaimed the Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, which conditioned Arab normalization and peace negotiations with Israel over the settlement of the Palestinian question. In July 2002, the US, UN, Russia, and EU created the “road map” for peace that sought to force Israel to freeze its settlements and the PA to counter terrorist movements during the Second Intifada. These are examples of the international community enforcing the bargaining process and imposing costs for spoiling its efforts, essential in the path to peace. There were more peace conferences in 2007 and 2008, 2010, 2013, and 2014 that showed a greater willingness for direct negotiations and a peaceful resolution between Israel-Palestine. Although these negotiations did not ultimately succeed, these efforts enormously contrast the multitude of regional wars between Arab coalitions and Israel in the second half of the 20th century, which neither yielded mutual recognition nor remote consideration of peaceful relations. Although the Israel-Palestine conflict has been continuous and seemingly never-ending, these trends signify incremental transformation in respective positions and therefore hope for a stable peace equilibrium.

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