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The Israeli-Palestinian Violent Confrontation 2000-2004:

From Conflict Resolution to Conflict Management

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Acknowledgments

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Preface

The violent confrontation which erupted between Israel and the Palestinians in September 2000 developed into a continuing low-intensity conflict which has claimed a steep price in blood on both sides, caused serious economic damage, and raised the level of mutual enmity and mistrust to heights that all but preclude dialogue. The sense of impasse and the failure of the efforts to end the confrontation or reduce its intensity led researchers of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies to reexamine Israel's modes of conflict management over the past four years. The goal is to propose a conceptual framework which offers conflict-management alternatives of a more controlled character, thus facilitating the transition from management to resolution. The Palestinians' conflict management, which also merits an in-depth examination, is not addressed here even though it is a major consideration in Israel's management of the conflict.

The Institute's researchers felt that both the Israeli conception of managing the conflict and the strategies that were adopted in the past four years were inadequate. The high casualty rate and the economic and political price paid by Israel constitute an enormous sacrifice, and in addition our moral principles are constantly being tested as never before. Manifestly, a new and more creative way of thinking about this confrontation is urgently needed.

Four initial insights concerning the outcome of the conflict have emerged from statements made by the political and military levels and from the public and media discourse in Israel:

1. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not conducive to a military solution.

2. Management of the conflict has played itself out in the present format and cannot end the confrontation or moderate it substantially.

3. The sides are not yet ripe to resolve the conflict, only to manage it by means of limited or partial political arrangements aimed at reducing its intensity and diminishing its damage. However, even here third-party assistance will likely be needed, owing to the residual hostility and mutual mistrust.

4. As long as Israel believes that it has "no partner" on the Palestinian side for a political and security dialogue, it will pursue (in coordination with the United States) a unilateral management strategy to enhance its security, by means such as the separation fence and the disengagement plan.

In September 2003, as part of its effort to develop new conceptual modalities, the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies initiated the creation of a "think group" to analyze the situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group reexamined the underlying assumptions and the strategies of managing the confrontation and set out to formulate principles for alternative conflict-management strategies, consistent with the evolving risks and opportunities.

The group, which held its first meeting on November 3, 2003, is multi-disciplinary in character and consists of experts from a range of fields: Prof. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal, Dr. Yossi Ben-Ari, Prof. Tamar Herman, Mr. Ephraim Lavie, Prof. Ruth Lapidoth, Mr. Reuven Merhav, Dr. Kobi Michael, Dr. Yitzhak Reiter, Prof. Ezra Sadan, Prof. Dan Zakai, and Dr. Yiftah Zilberman. Meeting regularly once every few weeks, the group engaged in a dynamic process of disseminating background and position papers, and of meetings of sub-teams which developed ideas and drew up documents.

The following subjects were examined and analyzed:

1. Israel's conception and basic assumptions in the Oslo process (until the Taba talks, January 2001).

2. Israel's conception and basic assumptions during the period of the confrontation, beginning in September 2000, and their implications and consequences.

3. The process of Israel's management of the violent confrontation.

The conceptual underpinnings having been laid with regard to the characteristics of the conflict's management from its beginning, the group will examine in the near future the following subjects:

1. The implications of low-intensity conflict management, as in the Israeli-Palestinian case, and the ability to bring it to a decisive conclusion or reduce it substantially in order to enable "bearable life" for both sides.

2.   The implications of unilateral steps as a component in the strategy of managing the present confrontation, such as the separation fence and the disengagement plan (including the evacuation of settlements).

3.   The possibilities of joint management of the conflict, involving limited Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, in order to reduce or terminate the confrontation, this to be done by means of initial confidence-building measures, partial agreements, or interim agreements.

4.   Mixed initiatives and international intervention as a means of managing the conflict (a trusteeship regime in evacuated areas, the stationing of foreign forces for policing, and supervision and control over unilateral or bilateral moves).

5.   Implications of the transition from the conflict's management to its resolution by means of existing or proposed initiatives — the Geneva Initiative, the Road Map, or others.

The present paper analyzes two aspects:

(1) The Israeli conception and basic assumptions in the Oslo process.

(2) The Israeli conception and basic assumptions during the present Israeli-Palestinian confrontation (from September 2000). The paper considers the sources and validity of these assumptions, describes the patterns of activity that stemmed from the conception, and addresses the implications of the actions taken for both sides.

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Prof. Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov
Head, Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies

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Chapter One: The Israeli Conception
and the Basic Assumptions of Israeli Policy
in Relations with the Palestinians, 1993-2000

After long years of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which in the terminology of international conflict studies can be described as intractable[1] and which was marked by a multitude of violent acts — peaking in the Lebanon War (1982) and the intifada during 1987-1993 — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) decided to launch a political process aimed at resolving the conflict. This process was a breakthrough which was made possible largely in the wake of the emergence of a new Israeli conception holding that it was possible, under certain conditions, to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The new conception, which was developed by the political echelon under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and of the Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, was fundamentally revolutionary and at odds with the conventional Israeli conception, which maintained that the conflict was not ripe for resolution but only for management, and even then mainly by violence. The new conception evolved gradually and in the course of a lengthy learning process, against the background of the intifada, the Gulf War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Madrid Conference, and the failure of the Washington talks (between Israel and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation representing the territories). The new conception was based on the following assumptions:[2]

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[1]   Daniel Bar-Tal, "Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case," *International Journal of Conflict Management,* 9 (1998), pp. 22-50. Also published in *Megamot*, 39(4), (1999), pp. 443-491 (in Hebrew).

[2]   The assumptions were defined and articulated on the basis of a large number of sources which were available to us and which we drew on to write this chapter. They include interviews from the research project of the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which addressed the question, "What Went Wrong in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process?" See also: Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations 1999-2001* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001); Pursuing Peace: The Peace Speeches of Prime

(1)   The Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be decided by military means.

(2)   Israel does not want to continue ruling the Palestinians and wants to separate from them.

(3)   A political process with the Palestinians is a vital Israeli interest and is possible only with the PLO, headed by Yasser Arafat.

(4)   The PLO and Arafat are willing to enter a political process and can be negotiating partners for a political settlement in the light of the strategic changes that have occurred in their positions, namely: abandonment of the principles of the "armed struggle" and the "phased doctrine"; readiness to recognize Israel and reach agreement on the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders based on United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338; and solution of the refugee problem on the basis of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194. Israel was aware of (and rejected) the Palestinians' conditions concerning the right of return and Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, but hoped that these were maximal positions on which

Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1995); Danny Rubinstein, Robert Malley, Hussein Agha, Ehud Barak and Benny Morris, *Rashomon Camp David* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2003); Itamar Rabinovich, *Waging Peace: Israel and the Arabs, 1948-2003* (Tel Aviv: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir, 2004); Ron Pundak and Shaul Arieli, *The Territorial Aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian Final Status Negotiation*, Peres Center for Peace, 2003; Uri Savir, *The Process* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1998); Yagil Levy, *The Other Army of Israel: Materialist Militarism in Israel*, Tapuah Series (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2003); Moshe Ya'alon, "Force preparation for a limited conflict," *Maarakhot*, 380-381 (December 2001), pp. 24-29; Gershon Hacohen, "'Test of the outcome' as a test of tendencies," *Maarakhot*, 383 (May 2002), pp. 12-15; Yair Hirschfeld, *Oslo: A Formula for Peace - From Negotiations to Implementation* (Tel Aviv: Rabin Center and Am Oved, 2000); Gal Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way' — Development of the campaign in the Central Command 2000-2003," *Maarakhot*, 393 (Feb. 2004), pp. 26-31; Raviv Drucker, *Ehud Barak: The Failure* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2002); Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See it: The Collapse of the Oslo Process and the Violent Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003); Ronen Bergman, *Authority Given* (Tel Aviv: Miskal — Yedioth Ahronoth and Hemed Books, 2002); Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004); Yossi Beilin, *Manual for a Wounded Dove* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2001); Ran Edelist, *Ehud Barak: Fighting the Demons* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth and Zmora-Bitan, 2003).

the Palestinians would show flexibility during the negotiating process, knowing Israel was unable to accept them.

(5) The PLO is ready to accept Israel's position that the political process must be gradual and conducted in stages, with the problematic issues — such as the status of Jerusalem, the refugee problem, the borders, the settlements, and the security arrangements — to be discussed at the stage of the final-status settlement.

(6) An interim settlement can be achieved without third-party participation — that is, without mechanisms of supervision, verification, oversight, and control — with the form of the permanent settlement left open.

(7) Israel's strength and the PLO's political weakness will accord Israel enhanced bargaining positions in the negotiations.

(8) The PLO's commitment to abstain from and prevent terrorism will make it possible to transfer to its hands the burden of the war against Palestinian terrorism.

(9) Mutual trust can be created in a continuing peace process.

(10) The establishment of a Palestinian Authority will bring about responsible behavior by the Palestinians, as a governing authority and formal institutions create a quasi-state which immediately "has something to lose" and therefore will negotiate with Israel responsibly on a "fair compromise."

Following the signing of the Oslo accord, Israel did not fundamentally change its basic conception vis-à-vis both the Oslo process, the PLO and its leader, Arafat, even though in the Israeli perception Arafat and the Palestinian Authority did not fully honor their commitment to abstain from violence and to thwart terrorism by Palestinian organizations.[3] At the same time, Israel was generally satisfied with

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[3]   In the Palestinians' perception, the Israeli side did not fulfill its commitments within the Oslo process framework either, especially in regard to continued building in the settlements and the ongoing increase in their population, and because the additional interim stages of the original accord went largely unimplemented.

the security cooperation between the sides[4] — its evaluation was that Arafat was committed to the political process and to the solution of two states for the two nations.

This conception did not basically change, at least not outwardly and officially, during the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, despite the violent events that followed the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel, in September 1996, when Palestinian policemen for the first time used weapons they had received from Israel against the IDF, and despite the slowdown in the negotiations. On the basis of this basic approach and its underlying assumptions, Israeli governments signed interim agreements entailing the transfer of powers and territory to the Palestinian Authority. The negotiations with Arafat and his staff continued during the tenure of Ehud Barak as Prime Minister, at the Camp David conference in July 2000 hosted by US President Bill Clinton, and in the Taba talks the following January.

The validity of this conception, which as noted was formulated during the period of the Rabin government, was largely undermined after the Camp David summit, when Barak blamed Arafat for the failure to reach an agreement and asserted that the Palestinian leader was not a partner for peace negotiations.[5] At the same time, Barak's policy reflected a duality in Israeli policy, as negotiations with the Palestinians continued until January 2001 despite his complaint about the "absence of a partner." Barak cited a series of developments — the failure to

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[4]   This was the view of the Shin Bet security service, which was responsible for cooperation with the intelligence bodies of the Palestinian Authority aimed at foiling terrorism. Shin Bet policy relied largely on conveying intelligence alerts and reports to the Palestinian intelligence organizations so they would act to thwart attacks. The Shin Bet tended to show a certain understanding for the Palestinians' passivity. However, this policy was harshly criticized by senior officers in Military Intelligence and in the IDF in general, who insisted that Arafat and the Palestinian security apparatuses were not doing all they could and should be doing: see Aluf Benn and Eitan Rabin, "MI director: 'Lebanonization in Gaza. Arafat not likely to act against terrorism'," *Haaretz* (Dec. 5, 1994); Aluf Benn, Eitan Rabin and Sammy Sokol, "Shahak: 'Doubts about security arrangements based on coordination with Palestinian police'," *Haaretz* (Sept. 29, 1996).

[5]   Nitzan Horowitz and Aluf Benn, "Barak sends letter to Clinton announcing that he is leaving Camp David," *Haaretz* (July 20, 2000); Nitzan Horowitz and Yossi Verter, "Camp David fails… Barak: Vision of peace not dead," *Haaretz* (July 26, 2000); Lally Weymouth, "Stream of Life," interview with Ehud Barak, *Newsweek* (May 6, 2002); Ehud Barak, "Israel needs a true partner for peace," *New York Times* (July 30, 2001); Ehud Barak, "More an actor than a leader," *Newsweek* (May 12, 2003); Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 6, 2002).

achieve a permanent settlement at Camp David, the eruption of the violent confrontation in September 2000, and Arafat's refusal to accept Israel's far-reaching proposals and the Clinton blueprint verbatim — as proof of Arafat's unwillingness to accept an historic compromise which was needed to reach a solution of two states for the two nations.

Some of the Israelis who participated in the Camp David talks formed the impression that the two basic tests for the Palestinians' true intentions in regard to resolving the conflict were the Temple Mount and the right of return. During the summit and in the subsequent negotiations they found that the Palestinians were not interested in resolving the conflict in accordance with Israeli expectations — not only because they showed no readiness to compromise on Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, and the return of the refugees, but also because they declined to accept Israel as a Jewish state with a legitimate right to exist in the region, because Israel's establishment had done them a grave and irreparable wrong.[6]

It is noteworthy that members of the Israeli delegation later expressed differing opinions about the Camp David talks.[7] Since then, a great deal has been published about the conference, not least by several of the participants, showing large disparities in the description of the events and the reasons for the outcome.[8]

[6]   Ari Shavit, interview with Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 14, 2001); Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 6, 2002).

[7]   Jeremy Pressman, "Visions in Collision — What Happened at Camp David and Taba?" *International Security*, vol. 28 (2003), pp. 5-43.

[8]   Gilad Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*; Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*; Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 6, 2002); personal interviews within the framework of the Davis Institute; Ari Shavit, interview with Dan Meridor, *Haaretz Magazine* (March 2003); conference on "The Camp David summit 2000 — What went wrong? — Lessons for the future" (Tel Aviv University, June 16-18, 2003), lectures by Ehud Barak, Danny Yatom, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Gilad Sher, Dan Meridor, Yisrael Hasson, Yossi Ginossar, Martin Indyk, and Aaron Miller. See also Danny Rubinstein et al., *Rashomon Camp David*; Menahem Klein, *Shattering a Taboo: The Contacts Toward a Permanent Status Agreement in Jerusalem 1994-2001* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2001); Yoram Meital, *Peace in Tatters — Israel, Palestine and the Middle East* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2004), pp. 33-45; Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors," *New York Review of Books* (August 9, 2001); Arie Kacowicz, "Rashomon in Jerusalem: Mapping the Israeli Position in the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process 1993-2001," paper presented at the conference, "Assessing the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations 1993-2001" (Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem); Acram

Nevertheless, a survey of the comments made by the majority of the participants shows that even though certain agreements were in fact reached during the negotiations, failure to reach a settlement was due largely to the dispute over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.[9] Afterward, however, the political echelon intimated to the Israeli public that the major issue in dispute was the Palestinians' position concerning the right of return. Israeli officials construed this as reflecting the Palestinians' unwillingness to arrive at a two-state political solution and explained that the reason was Arafat's commitment to the phased doctrine. It followed that the violent confrontation was planned and initiated by the Palestinians and constituted an existential general war.[10]

Arafat and the Palestinian negotiating team argued, for their part, that Barak's proposals at Camp David were insufficient and unworthy and were part of an Israeli-American conspiracy aimed at imposing an unjust and unfair settlement.[11] In their perception, Israel, with the connivance of the United States, had tried to dictate a solution tailored exclusively to the Israeli interest, and its proposals at Camp David would not enable the creation of a durable state. From their point of view, the fact that they rejected Barak's proposals does not mean that they are unwilling to resolve the conflict but that they are unable to accept an agreement

Hannieh, "The Camp David Papers," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 30 (2001), pp. 75-97; Dennis Ross, "Camp David: An Exchange," *New York Review of Books* (September 20, 2001); Charles Enderlin, *The Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East 1995-2002* (New York: Other Press, 2003).

9   Menahem Klein, *Shattering a Taboo: The Contacts Toward a Permanent Status Agreement in Jerusalem 1994-2001*; Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, pp. 228-235; Aluf Benn, "No change in Palestinians' positions," *Haaretz* (Sept. 1, 2001); Danny Rubinstein, "Temple Mount top item," *Haaretz* (June 21, 2004); Khalil Shikaki, "New Thinking about Jerusalem," presentation at conference in Washington D.C., www.centerpeace.org (Sept. 5, 2000); Pressman, "Visions in Collision."

10   Amos Gilad, "Evaluation of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," in Bar-Siman-Tov, *As the Generals See It*, pp. 39-48; Yosef Kuperwasser, "Identity of the other: Complexity of the structure of the Palestinian society," ibid., pp. 27-37; interview with Ariel Sharon, *Maariv Magazine* (Sept. 5, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with Ariel Sharon, *Haaretz Magazine* (April 13, 2001).

11   Acram Hannieh, "The Camp David Papers"; Abu Mazen, "We went to Camp David so no one would say the Palestinians refuse to negotiate," *Haaretz* (Aug. 9, 2001); Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "How Barak torpedoed the Camp David talks," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (July 20, 2001); Tracy Wilkinson, "Blame for Camp David talks' failure takes a twist," *Los Angeles Times* (July 29, 2001).

that does not meet the following strategic goals: (1) establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders which does not tolerate restrictions on its independence, apart from security arrangements; (2) Arab Jerusalem as the Palestinians' capital (including sovereignty on the Temple Mount); and (3) a solution of the refugee problem based on U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194.[12]

In retrospect, it appears that Israel's demand for the "termination of the conflict" under its terms was construed by the Palestinians as an attempt to subjugate the Palestinian narrative to the Israeli narrative. Any such "subjugation," from their standpoint, was not a viable political option.[13] This Israeli demand shifted the discussion by the two sides from the outcome of the 1967 war to that of the 1948 war. The political crisis thus reflected, at a very high level of intensity, the clash between the two national narratives. Barak strove to bring about the end of the conflict and the end of the Palestinians' claims, in return for far-reaching concessions that reflected the outcome of the 1967 War: establishment of a Palestinian state, ceding of the majority of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip (including the Jordan Rift Valley), uprooting of settlements, and the division of Jerusalem. However, at Camp David, as in the negotiations that followed, the Israeli side became acquainted with the Palestinians' determination not to resolve the conflict, as this entailed only a solution to the outcome of the 1967 war.

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[12]   This policy position of the Palestinians is permanent and overt and has not changed since its adoption by the 19th Palestinian National Council, in November 1988.

[13]   Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 416. The Israeli argument is that the Palestinians' insistence on achieving justice ruled out the possibility of reaching a settlement, as they sought not a solution but justice (Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 475, 497). Justice means setting right the "historic wrong" that was inflicted on the Palestinians by Israel's very establishment. See also Gilad, "Evaluation of developments," p. 40; and Yosef Kuperwasser, "The Palestinian vision — A state in all of Palestine," *Haaretz* (June 23, 2004). The Palestinians maintain that they will never be able to accept that the events of the 1948-1949 war were just. At the same time, the Palestinian mainstream is apparently ready, for lack of any other choice, to accept the war's outcome and reach an agreement on a settlement, but as it will not be "just" it will also not be final and absolute. They draw a practical distinction between a "just settlement," which includes a sweeping and full realization of the right of return but is not practicable, and a possible settlement which will address the outcome of the 1967 war and will at most recognize the historic wrong but will not realize the right of return in practice. However, the Israeli side, by insisting that the Palestinians declare the conflict terminated, implicitly asked them to acknowledge that the 1948-1949 war and its outcome were just, which is a position the Palestinians will never be able to accept.

Chapte Two: A New Israeli Interim Conception: From the Start of the Intifada until the End of the Barak Government

The failure to achieve a permanent settlement, compounded by the eruption of Palestinian violence at the end of September 2000, gradually produced a change in the Israeli conception. In the first stage, until the Barak government was voted out of office (February 2001), a kind of interim conception was articulated in order to address both the failure of Camp David and the continuing negotiations process as well as the Palestinian violence. The task of Israel's policymakers was to come up with a new political-strategic conception which would allow the negotiations to continue but deny the Palestinians political gains through violence, yet also allow for restrained military activity to ensure that the confrontation was contained within boundaries offering reasonable security for the country's citizens but did not harm the chances of the political process.

It was made clear to the army that the policy of containment was not intended to vanquish the Palestinians or bring about their collapse, developments which were liable to end the political process and lead to the conflict's inter-nationalization.[14] One of the reasons for the decision to pursue the political process was the security establishment's assessment that Arafat wanted an agreement if his terms were fulfilled within the Palestinians' narrow parameters of flexibility. Moreover, the political and security echelons also believed that the most effective means to stop or reduce the violence was through the political process. This approach was backed by the premise that the violent confrontation with the Palestinians was not resolvable by military means and that even if they endured a severe mauling the resulting calm would be short-lived and their "minimum conditions" for peace would remain unchanged.[15]

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[14]   Major General Moshe Ya'alon, deputy Chief of Staff, "Victory and decision in a limited conflict," *Iyunim bebitahon leumi* (July 2001), p. 80.

[15]   Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 329-330, 360, 426. An underlying reason for the recommendation of both the Israeli intelligence community and the National Security Council

Formulating this conception coherently was rendered highly problematic by its many internal contradictions. The policymakers, headed by Barak, felt utterly frustrated by the failure of the Camp David summit and placed the blame on Arafat. Nevertheless, the political process continued, now "under fire." It is noteworthy that Barak later admitted that the post-Camp David negotiations were conducted primarily for domestic political needs, even though he himself had lost all faith in Arafat's intention to reach an agreement.[16] In addition, the multiplying acts of terrorism made it difficult both to continue the negotiations and keep the military response moderate under the containment policy, in accordance with the directives of the political level.[17]

The success of the new conception, which integrated a political process with a controlled response to the Palestinian violence, depended largely on the process's prospects of success and on the ability to contain the military confrontation. However, the lack of rapid progress toward a settlement despite intensified negotiating efforts, combined with heightened violence, rendered this conception unviable.

Israel's willingness to proceed with the negotiations even after the eruption of the intifada derived in part from the initial evaluation of most elements of the Israeli intelligence community that this was a popular uprising which Arafat had not planned in advance.[18] The Israeli intelligence assessment of possible violence

that the political process be continued was the assumption that the negotiations themselves would help abate the violence.

[16]   Ehud Barak, lecture at Tel Aviv University at the conference on "The Camp David Summit (2000) — What went wrong? — Lessons for the future" (June 16-18, 2003).

[17]   Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 318-319; Ben Caspit, "The intifada two years on — Part 1," *Maariv* (Sept. 6, 2002); Ben Caspit, "The intifada two years on — Part 2," *Maariv* (Sept. 13, 2002); Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 349; Beilin, *Manual for a Wounded Dove*, pp. 256-257; personal interviews by Kobi Michael with Yossi Sarid, Amnon-Lipkin-Shahak, and Gilad Sher.

[18]   However, there is a contradiction here, which should be emphasized, between the assessment which foresaw — given a breakdown in the political process and failure to achieve a settlement — the outbreak of a violent but limited uprising which would be controlled from above, and the eruption of the intifada from below. The research bodies of the Shin Bet, Military Intelligence (MI) and the Foreign Ministry agreed that the confrontation was a popular eruption from below, which Arafat exploited for his own purposes but which then lurched out of his control. However, senior levels in

antedated the Camp David summit and was based on the apprehension that the disparities between the sides about the final-status agreement might lead the Palestinians to declare an independent state unilaterally, sparking a limited conflict. This assessment was one of the factors that prompted Barak, according to his own account, to try and reach a settlement with the Palestinians — in order to avert violence.[19]

However, according to assessment sources within the intelligence community, the background to the violence that erupted in September 2000 was the ripening of conditions for the outbreak of a popular uprising against both the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Their appraisal was that the Palestinian public was increasingly restive in the face of the centralism and corruption of the Palestinians' self-rule government, along with accumulated bitterness at the Oslo process, which had failed to ameliorate the economic situation or alleviate the sense of occupation — in the form of restrictions on movement and a constant Israeli military presence — while enabling continued building in the settlements, land expropriations, and the building of bypass roads. In July 2000, when it became clear to the Palestinian public that no agreement that would remove the occupation had been reached, a process began to gel akin to that of 1987, accompanied by a feeling of the need to help the leadership breach the political deadlock. In large measure, then, the events of September 2000 were an expression of distress and

MI were disinclined to accept this conclusion and held instead that Arafat initiated, guided, and controlled the violence: Yossi Melman, "Dispute between Shin Bet and MI on Arafat's part in the disturbances," *Haaretz* (Nov. 16, 2000). The director of MI, Major General Amos Malka, told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on November 21, 2000, that the events in the territories were shifting from a **popular uprising** (stone throwing, demonstrations) to **popular resistance**, characterized by a lower level of civilian involvement and increased terrorist activity. See: Gideon Alon, "MI chief: Arafat will continue with terrorism," *Haaretz* (Nov. 22, 2000); Major Michael, "Has Arafat returned to the armed struggle strategy?" *Maarakhot*, 381 (December 2001), p. 6; Akiva Eldar, *Haaretz* (June 10, 11, 2004); Alex Fishman, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 11, 2004); Yoav Stern, interview with Ephraim Lavie, *Haaretz* (June 13, 2004); Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004); Danny Rubinstein, "Mistaken evaluation proves self-fulfilling," interview with Matti Steinberg, *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004); Yoel Esteron, *Haaretz* (June 23, 2004); Amos Malka, "Retroactive rewriting," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 30, 2004).

[19]   Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 6, 2002).

frustration on the part of the majority of the Palestinian public toward both the PA and Israel.[20]

September 28, 2000, the date on which Ariel Sharon, the chairman of the Likud party, paid a controversial visit to the Temple Mount, is usually considered the start of the violent confrontation known as "Al-Aqsa Intifada." Agitated by the event, the Palestinians initiated disturbances which required the intervention of the Israeli security forces. The next day, in the course of the riots, seven Palestinians were killed and about 300 wounded; a few dozen policemen were injured on the Israeli side. In the days that followed, the disturbances spread to various places in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and even into Israel. The security forces, who were prepared for a violent confrontation initiated by the Palestinian Authority's security organizations, responded with great force to quell the unrest. The Palestinians sustained heavy losses:[21] 141 Palestinians were killed

[20]   Dr. Matti Steinberg, an adviser to the head of the Shin Bet at the time, told Danny Rubinstein in an interview, "The intifada did not result from a decision reached up above; it stemmed from a mood that swept through the Palestinian public. The Palestinians felt as though they had reached a dead end due to the failure of the Camp David summit. Their economic and personal circumstances worsened. The PA frameworks collapsed. Corruption was rampant. These structural circumstances took hold; they awaited a pretext to erupt," "Mistaken evaluation proves self-fulfilling," *Haaretz* (June 16, 2004); Ami Ayalon, a former head of the Shin Bet, said in a lecture entitled, "The dream shattered: An analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process," "Al-Aqsa Intifada was initially an unplanned popular phenomenon which did not operate according to a defined political goal. The uprising was aimed against Israel, against the entire political process, and even against the Palestinian Authority," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, p. 11; Amos Malka, the director of MI at the time, noted in his article, "Retroactive rewriting," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 30, 2004), "There is no unequivocal evidence that Arafat ignited the conflagration in September 2000" and that "it is more likely that it erupted from below." In an interview to *Haaretz*, Malka said, "… When the confrontation erupted, Arafat thought he was going towards something far more limited, which would have a shock effect… Within two or three days, Arafat was unable to go against the street," Akiva Eldar, "His true face," interview with Amos Malka, *Haaretz* (June 11, 2004); and see also talks given by Ephraim Lavie, who at the time was chief of Central Arena in Military Intelligence's Research Division, on "The Palestinian society in the wake of the intifada"; at the Peres Center for Peace (May 18, 2003); at the Dayan Center (Jan. 29, 2004); at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University; and at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (June 21, 2004).

[21]   Ben-Ami, in his book *A Front Without A Rearguard*, notes (p. 319): "The IDF High Command had a different agenda; the spirit of its commanders projected exploding rage which ultimately led to the expansion of the vicious cycle of violence, instead of reducing it."

and about 500 wounded by the end of October, and another 186 were killed and about 540 wounded in November-December; 82 Palestinians were killed and 700 wounded in the first three months of 2001.[22]

In the first months of the confrontation the violence was manifested largely as mass disturbances in which Israeli security forces clashed with Palestinians. Terrorism in this period mainly took the form of Palestinians opening fire on Israeli vehicles in the West Bank, the murder of Israelis in the areas of the Palestinian Authority, and ambushes of IDF soldiers. Acts of terrorism in public places were rare. The first suicide bombing attack — in which three people were murdered in Netanya — was perpetrated on March 4, 2001. By the end of October 2000, 11 Israelis (civilians and soldiers) had been killed and one wounded; in November-December 2000, 31 Israelis were killed and 84 wounded; and in the first three months of 2001, 28 Israelis were killed and 98 wounded.[23]

The shift in the Israeli attitude toward the intifada occurred in December 2000, in the light of the escalating violence. The military dynamics which developed transformed the popular uprising into a full-fledged armed conflict. The armed elements in Fatah-Tanzim, and afterward in Hamas and the other organizations, seized the initiative in the violent confrontation, which expanded to encompass attacks on civilians and security forces on the roads, shooting at settlements and IDF bases, and terrorist attacks in Israeli population centers. One view in both the Israeli political and security establishments was that the IDF's excessive reaction might have contributed to the escalation. The army, which as noted had prepared for the possibility of a violent eruption in which the Palestinian security forces would take part, conducted the war on the basis of purely military considerations, without paying sufficient attention to the political side. The army abandoned its strict adherence to the policy of containment, in the spirit of the political echelon's guidelines, and thereby contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The IDF's

[22]   Data from the Internet site of the Palestine Red Crescent Society: www.palestinercs.org. According to IDF data, 129 Palestinians were killed by the end of October, another 170 in November-December, and 67 in the first three months of 2001. See Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *The Seventh War: How We Won and Why We Lost the War with the Palestinians* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2004), p. 401.

[23]   Data from the Internet site of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs: www.mfa.gov.il.

excessive reaction was intended not only to contain the confrontation but to force the Palestinians to surrender. The goal was to punish them for engendering the violence and to teach them a lesson they would never forget — that violence would not advance their political goals — and bring them to the negotiating table weak and debilitated.[24] The major result was the failure of the containment policy. This is reflected most tellingly in the large number of Palestinians killed, and this, in turn, contributed to an undesirable escalation of the violence because the Palestinian organizations were intent on equalizing the "balance of blood." These developments were compounded by the weakening of the Palestinian Authority, the prelude to its disintegration.[25]

In its first stage, during the period of the Barak government (until February 2001), the two sides treated the violent confrontation as a "bargaining conflict" — that is, not necessarily as a zero-sum conflict but as a struggle by the Palestinians to improve their bargaining position in negotiations.

At the same time, the Palestinian leadership set no specific goals for the intifada, which indeed sprang from below. Initially, Arafat utilized it to try to pressure Israel into showing greater flexibility in negotiations "under fire" and in

[24]   Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 368; Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 319-321. Ben-Ami maintains that the army's reaction was in some cases ten times greater than what had been authorized, or than the spirit of the authorization, which was usually reductive in character (p. 321). At the beginning of October the balance stood at 75 Palestinians who had been killed and four Israelis. Initially, the ratio of fatalities stood at 20:1. See: Caspit, "The intifada two years on — Part 1," *Maariv* (Sept. 6, 2002); and "The intifada two years on — Part 2," *Maariv* (Sept, 13, 2002); Reuven Pedatzur, "The IDF's contribution to the escalation," *Haaretz* (June 30, 2004). Shaul Mofaz denies these allegations. The IDF, he says, did not cause the escalation, and the feeling that it did stems from the fact that it had prepared for a confrontation and that this took the Palestinians by surprise: Alex Fishman, interview with Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (January 30, 2004).

[25]   Caspit, "The intifada two years on — Part 1," *Maariv* (Sept. 6, 2002); and, "The intifada two years on — Part 2," *Maariv* (Sept, 13, 2002); Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 319-322; Gal Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way'," p. 28. The Palestinian armed groups grew stronger and became the dominant elements in setting the agenda and conducting the affairs in their society, while the PA's ministries and security organizations, the symbols of the Oslo process, were marginalized and gradually lost their ability to function: Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).

an effort to extract concessions beyond what Israel offered at Camp David. The goal was to force Israel to recognize the Palestinians' rights in accordance with U.N. Resolutions (194, 242, 338), such that any agreement would be based on a recognized international source of authority and not be dependent on the asymmetrical situation between the two sides. Subsequently, when the negotiations were stopped after the Israeli proposals and the Clinton document were retracted, creating a political vacuum, the confrontation snowballed until neither side could control it any longer. With no prospect of returning to the negotiating table in this state of affairs, the Palestinian leadership sought to exploit the confrontation to internationalize the conflict along the lines of Kosovo — international intervention, including multinational peacekeeping forces — thus also depriving the United States of exclusivity and increasing European involvement.[26] The Islamists, though, uninterested in these goals of the official leadership, set out to yoke the confrontation to its ideological agenda of armed struggle and no settlement with Israel.[27]

At the outset of the confrontation Israel's declared goal was to proceed with the negotiations despite the violence, with the aim of achieving a final-status settlement, while trying to restore calm as quickly as possible. Israel, that is, sought to contain the violence and avert an escalation that was liable to spark a regional conflagration and/or internationalize the conflict. Accordingly, Israel respected Palestinian sovereignty in Area A and the IDF did not operate there systematically

[26]   Shai Feldman, "The October violence: An interim assessment," *Strategic Assessment* (Tel Aviv University, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, vol. 3, no. 3, November 2000).

[27]   See Yael Yehoshua, "On the conflict between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority," MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series No. 143, July 18, 2003, at www.memri.org/bin/articales.cgi? Page=archive&Area=ia&ID=IA14303. The article discusses the differences between Hamas and the PLO/PA in regard to the struggle against Israel: Hamas advocates the liberation of all of Palestine, which according to the organization's charter is Waqf Islamic land — meaning that none of it can be ceded — whereas the PLO seeks to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel; as for the means to achieve the goal, Hamas believes jihad is the only solution to the Palestine question. See also: Arnon Regular, "Hamas decries Arafat remarks to *Haaretz*: Validates refugees' expulsion," *Haaretz* (June 22, 2004). According to the report, senior figures in Hamas sharply criticized Arafat after he told the paper that he recognizes the fact that Israel is a Jewish state and that the Jews have an attachment to the Western Wall, supports a settlement based on the transfer of 98 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians, and acknowledges the unfeasibility of returning all the Palestinian refugees to their homes and land.

(until Operation Defensive Shield, in the spring of 2002). The security forces were directed to act in a manner that would accord the political level maximum flexibility in conducting negotiations with the Palestinians.

This stage can be summed up as the failure of the Israeli attempt to crystallize a two-pronged conception — continuation of the political process combined with a policy of containment to cope effectively with the violence — which led to a change of government. Barak's policy was characterized by duality as regards the rationale for conducting negotiations under fire and the possibility of achieving a settlement with the Palestinians. It may be this duality that accounts for the political echelon's inability to compel the military to carry out an effective containment policy.[28] The biting criticism, from both the political opposition and the public at large, also undercut the legitimacy of conducting negotiations under fire. The criticism was especially seething during the Taba talks, which were held in the shadow of the election campaign in Israel. Significant progress was reportedly made in the talks, but they were broken off amid a mutual promise to complete them in the future.[29]

The public criticism and the need to assuage public opinion (on the eve of the elections) after the failure to obtain a political agreement induced the political echelon to pin sole blame for the collapse of the peace process and for initiating the violence on the Palestinians. The political leaders reiterated more forcefully the complaints they had voiced against the Palestinian leadership after the failure of Camp David.[30] Much of the public accepted these arguments as the unvarnished,

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[28]   Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, reports that he spoke to Barak about the need for him to flex his muscles with the army, "which is behaving like a state within a state," p. 397. According to Ben-Ami, Barak sent a double message: "Both to continue with the talks… and to deepen and extend the military response to Palestinian violence," p. 402. Ultimately, Barak failed to get the military level to internalize the political message: "This was especially pronounced in his inability to make the High Command part of his peace policy," p. 468.

[29]   David Matz, "Why did Taba end?" *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 10 (2003), issue 3, pp. 96-105, and issue 4, pp. 92-104; Pressman, "Visions in collision."

[30]   Ari Shavit, interview with Ehud Barak, *Haaretz Magazine* (September 6, 2002); Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 416; Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 377, 445, 447, 455-456, 463-476.

unchallengeable truth, though others viewed them as an excuse by the political level to shake off its responsibility and make Arafat the villain.[31]

Be that as it may, the underlying rationale of the new Israeli policy — that the Palestinians must not be allowed to make political gains by means of violence — also failed. The fact is that in the negotiating process, which narrowed the gaps between the two sides' positions, the Palestinians obtained additional significant Israeli concessions between the Camp David conference and the Taba talks. Concurrently, as noted, because of the Palestinian Authority's noncooperation in containing the violence, and the Israeli political echelon's limited control over the military in managing the confrontation with the Palestinians, the level of violence rose and the Israeli public's feeling of security deteriorated. The public lost its confidence in the Barak government, in both its ability to achieve a political settlement with the Palestinian Authority and to provide security.

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[31]   Daniel Bar-Tal and Keren Sharvit, "Psychological foundations of the Israeli Jews' reactions to Al Aqsa Intifada: The role of the threatening transitional context," in V.M. Esses and R. Vernon (eds.), *Why Neighbors Kill: Explaining the Breakdown of Ethnic Relations* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, in press).

Chapter Three: The New Conception in the Period of the Sharon Government and Its Assumptions

The political conception

Following the change of government in Israel, in February 2001, and more especially after the elections of February 2003 (after the dissolution of the national unity government), a new policy conception gradually evolved concerning the political process and on dealing with the violent confrontation. Effectively, as compared with the Barak period, there was greater accord between the evolving political conception and the military-strategic conception and the operational conception on the ground. The changes in the political conception had a direct impact on the other two conceptions. A series of developments — despair at the political process, the cessation of the process, the surging terrorism and its rising human cost, the limited effectiveness of the military in dealing with the terrorism, and the events of September 11, 2001 in the US — were deeply influential in the articulation of the three conceptions: political, military-strategic, and operational.[32]

The leading advocates of a new political conception were Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer (Labor) in the national unity government and his successor, Shaul Mofaz, after the dissolution of the unity government. They inherited Barak's assessments that the Palestinians were not yet ripe to resolve the conflict and were responsible for the failure of the political process, because there was no partner on their side for Israel to talk to. Yet throughout 2001, the official intelligence appraisals maintained that Arafat and the Palestinian leadership were still interested in achieving their goals through negotiations.[33] However, Barak's explanations, although inconsistent with the official intelligence assessments, perfectly matched Sharon's outlook. Sharon had opposed the Oslo process all along, viewing it as a threat to Israel's security and

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[32]   Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way'," p. 28.

[33]   Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 387-389, 459.

very existence, and had supported the settlement enterprise unreservedly.[34] Sharon and Mofaz objected to the concessions Barak had offered the Palestinians at Camp David, in the Clinton plan, and at Taba. Mofaz, during his tenure as Chief of Staff, not only expressed explicit opposition to those concessions, but also sharply disputed the political echelon's containment policy and in effect did not implement it in letter or spirit.[35]

The basic assumptions of the new policy reflect mainly the policymakers' belief system and their attitude toward the political process and the character of the Palestinian violence, a set of beliefs which was reinforced by the military echelon.[36] The new political approach was grounded in basic assumptions which were very different from those of the Oslo process:[37]

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[34]   Ariel Sharon, "Oslo accord is seed for war," *Yedioth Ahronoth Magazine* (Feb. 4, 1994).

[35]   Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 387-389; Levy, *The Other Army of Israel*, p. 398; Sher, *Just Beyond Reach*, p. 367; Caspit, "The intifada two years on — Part 1," *Maariv* (Sept. 6, 2002); and "The intifada two years on — Part 2," *Maariv* (Sept, 13, 2002). For Mofaz's public criticism of the government, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Mofaz-Ya'alon dispute led to Mofaz-Sharon dispute," *Haaretz* (Oct. 15, 2001).

[36]   The disagreement between former senior officers in Military Intelligence — Amos Malka, Amos Gilad, and Ephraim Lavie — as manifested in *Haaretz* in June 2004, indicates that the change in the basic assumptions was not the product of a change in MI's official assessments concerning the Palestinians. Its importance lies more in the realm of MI's professional ethics, as well as in the relations between the political level and the intelligence community. The point is that MI's senior officers apparently spoke in two voices — "on the record" and "off the record." The "off the record," oral assessments more closely matched the positions of the political level and ostensibly accorded them the intelligence imprimatur. In fact, both Barak and Sharon formed their approach toward the Palestinians on the basis of their own set of beliefs and assessments, and not according to the written or oral appraisals of MI. Defense Minister Mofaz even noted that Amos Gilad's assessments were correct and accurate: *Army Radio* (June 13, 2004).

[37]   The premises cited here derive from a number of sources, including: Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*; press interviews with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz and his deputy, Moshe Ya'alon, and later interviews with Ya'alon in his capacity as Chief of Staff; interviews with Ehud Barak and Shlomo Ben-Ami; the talks delivered by IDF major generals which appear in *As the Generals See It*, edited by Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov; and the addresses delivered by Prime Minister Sharon at the Herzliya Conferences of 2002 and 2003.

◆ Even though Israel did not officially withdraw from the Oslo process, in practice the political process ceased to exist because of the military confrontation, and hence also because of the absence of a negotiating partner.

◆ Even though Israel effectively adheres to the principle of two states for the two nations, such an arrangement in the short or intermediate term is of dubious feasibility, as the Palestinians have in effect rejected it.

◆ The Israeli proposals to the Palestinians at Camp David and Taba and in agreeing to the Clinton blueprint are no longer binding on Israel after the Palestinians spurned them and launched a violent struggle.

◆ The Palestinian violence was defined as a clear violation of the Oslo process and the renewal of the political process was made conditional on the complete cessation of the violent struggle.

◆ Not only did Arafat cease to be a legitimate and worthy partner for a political process, he also became an obstacle to peace: his removal is now a precondition for renewing the political process.

◆ Israel is ready to negotiate with a different Palestinian leadership, one which dissociates itself from terrorism and fights it, while implementing democratic reforms in accordance with President George W. Bush's speech in June 2002.

◆ In the absence of any prospect to resolve the conflict, Israel will focus on managing it, with the goal of terminating it or reducing it significantly, while denying the Palestinians any military or political achievement in the confrontation.[38]

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[38] According to Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, the commander of the Judea-Samaria Division and formerly the military aide to Barak and Sharon and as such involved in the political directives issued by the two Prime Ministers for managing the conflict, neither Barak nor Sharon talked about achieving a military decision of the conflict. At the same time, whereas Barak talked about reducing the violence, Sharon ordered its stoppage: Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).

These basic premises drew on the political viewpoints of at least some of the leaders of the political level, as expounded for years,[39] and were based on the new interpretation given by senior assessment officials of the intelligence community to the Palestinian positions in the Oslo process and more especially to the Palestinians' goals in the violent confrontation. The Palestinians were now perceived as an adversary and an enemy with malicious intentions, and little faith was said to have been placed in their talk of peace from the beginning:

◆ Arafat does not accept Israel's existence as a Jewish state and therefore will never sign off on the termination of the conflict, not even if all his conditions are met. Arafat never explicitly mentioned an independent Jewish state existing alongside the Palestinian state but spoke about Israel in vague terms.[40] Not even the achievement of his four strategic goals — an independent state, the 1967 borders, East Jerusalem as the capital, and realization of the right of return — will induce him to declare the end of the conflict and the finality of the Palestinians' claims.[41]

◆ Arafat continues to adhere to the "phased theory" and his goal is "Greater Palestine," to be achieved through the Palestinians' demographic advantage.

[39]   Nehama Douek, "Netanyahu: If the Likud wants to commit suicide, let them keep up the internal strife," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Sept. 29, 1993); Benjamin Netanyahu, statement in the Knesset, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Sept. 22, 1993); "Liar and inciter," editorial, *Haaretz* (Dec. 29, 1998); Bina Barzilai, "There will be no vote there," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Oct. 19, 1993); Ariel Sharon, "Oslo accord is seed for war," *Yedioth Ahronoth Magazine* (Feb. 4, 1994); Nahum Barnea, "Real time," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Sabbath Supplement (Dec. 29, 2000); Michael Karpin and Ina Friedman, *Murder in the Name of God: The Plot to Kill Yitzhak Rabin* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1999); Benjamin Netanyahu, *A Place in the Sun* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 1995); James Bennet, "Sharon's wars," *New York Times* (Aug. 15, 2000).

[40]   Gilad, "Evaluation of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (according to Amos Gilad, there was no reason from the outset to treat Arafat's peace intentions seriously when Israel signed the Oslo accord with him, as he never concealed his strategic policy vision to establish a Palestinian power from the Mediterranean to the desert, encompassing also Jordan); and see also: Akiva Eldar, *Haaretz* (June 10, 11, 2004); Alex Fishman, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 11, 2004); Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004); Dan Shilon interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv Magazine* (Jan. 4, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002).

[41]   Kuperwasser, "Identity of the other: Complexity of the structure of the Palestinian society," pp. 33-34.

Arafat's positions in the negotiations and his statements challenging Israel's moral right of existence and the Jewish national attachment to the Land of Israel, in contrast to the Palestinian people's historic right to the land, reflect not only a religious-historical approach but a plan of action.[42] Indeed, his approach is realistic and he is acting on the basis of political-diplomatic understanding, but his strategic vision is to establish a Palestinian power from the Mediterranean to the Iraqi desert, thanks to demographic superiority which will give the Palestinians control of the area.[43]

◆ Arafat views the violent struggle as a cardinal means to promote his national goals. He made a strategic decision to launch a campaign of terrorism alongside a political-diplomatic route.[44] However, that route has exhausted itself and has even become dangerous from the standpoint of the Palestinian interest. Accordingly, the idea of the "armed struggle" has not been abandoned and is again becoming a paramount tool to achieve political goals,[45] as part of a strategic move to implement the "phased doctrine."

◆ Arafat is a terrorist and the Palestinian Authority is an entity that supports terrorism. The Palestinian security establishment is an organization of state terror. Arafat is activating the terrorism directly, through his security organizations, which receive their salary from the PA — the Tanzim, Preventive Security, General Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and Force 17 — and indirectly by insinuated authorization to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other groups to execute terrorist attacks.[46]

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[42]   Jonathan Halevi, "The Palestinian point of view vis-à-vis the resolution of the conflict," *Maarakhot*, no. 383 (May 2002), pp. 16-25; Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004).

[43]   Stern, ibid., p. 45.

[44]   Ibid., p. 43.

[45]   Kuperwasser, "Identity of the other: Complexity of the structure of the Palestinian society," p. 32; Yaakov Amidror, "The components of Israeli strategy in the war against Palestinian terrorism," *National Security*, no. 2-3 (Sept. 2003), pp. 13-23.

[46]   Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv Magazine* (Jan. 4, 2002); Amos Malka, "The regional system facing the test of stability," in Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *As the Generals See It*, pp. 20-21; Yoav Stern, interview with Amos Gilad, *Haaretz* (June 15, 2004).

◆ The violent confrontation with the Palestinians is no longer the result of a popular uprising but a genuine war in which the Palestinians are trying to achieve their political goals by means of violence. This is a war of no choice that was forced on Israel — an existential war which can brook no compromises ("a war for our home"), the continuation of the War of Independence and Israel's most important war since then.[47]

Summing up this section, it can be noted that the conception holding that Arafat was not interested in an agreement and therefore turned to violence and was not a partner for a political process — a conception first voiced by the political level in Israel after the Camp David summit — was adopted by the new government without a renewed examination and became part of the basic assumptions of the new policy approach. In the events related to the cessation of the political process and the escalation of the conflict senior intelligence officials found justification for the reasons cited by the political level for the non-attainment of an agreement and the outbreak of violence. As such, they gave backing to the conception that was adopted by the political echelon.[48]

With the new basic assumptions as the foundation, an updated conception was fashioned holding that there was deep doubt about the feasibility of achieving a permanent settlement entailing two states for the two nations. Within a few months this conception was adopted by all the political and military decision makers and by public opinion. Senior personnel in the intelligence assessment agencies maintained that even though Arafat's malicious intentions had only been exposed in the later stages of the Oslo process, at Camp David, and in the Arafat-initiated

[47]   Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002).

[48]   Gilad, "Evaluation of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict"; on the phenomenon of the shifts in intelligence assessments as backing for the political level, see: Gabi Sheffer, "Breakdown of strategic thought," *Haaretz* (June 5, 2001); Aluf Benn, "MI as government propagandist," *Haaretz* (Feb. 6, 2003); Doron Rosenblum, "Who needs conceptions," *Haaretz* (June 25, 2004); Reuven Pedatzur, "Caution — determined intelligence services," *Haaretz* (Feb. 2, 2004); Uri Bar-Yosef, "Internal check in MI," *Haaretz* (June 14, 2004); Matan Vilnai, "The failure belongs to the political level," *Haaretz* (March 31, 2004); Uzi Benziman, "When the army takes off its uniform," *Haaretz* (Dec. 7, 2004); Ran Edelist, "MI at your request," *www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-1579249,00.html* (Jan. 24, 2002).

confrontation afterward, from an intelligence standpoint his conspiratorial intentions had been discernible from the very start of the process, but the political echelon's moves were not made known to the intelligence community.[49] Similarly, Israeli intelligence also predicted accurately Arafat's intention to torpedo the Camp David summit and launch a violent confrontation, but the political echelon ignored the warnings, unlike the IDF, which heeded the warnings and deployed for the violent events in time.[50]

However, the enshrinement of this conception — that the Palestinians rejected the Israeli offers because they do not recognize Israel's existence — is countered by contradictory testimonies. For example, senior intelligence personnel are skeptical and incredulous about the character of the assessments that were produced for the political level and constituted a form of professional backing for government policy on the Palestinian issue.[51] For example, according to former

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[49]   Amos Gilad says Israel paid a steep price because of the political echelon's disregard of the intelligence assessments. He maintains that for years the political leadership refused to acknowledge Arafat's declared political vision for the establishment of "Greater Palestine," which would encompass Jordan, and by its attitude brought about the present situation: Gilad, "Evaluation of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," pp. 39-40, 44.

[50]   Ibid., pp. 39, 41, 44; Amos Gilad, address at the international conference of the Academic College of Netanya (June 23, 2003). In this talk Gilad said: "Arafat's negative influence stems from two connected factors: his belief that every peace [agreement] must include the right of return such that, combined with the demographic trends, every peace process will bring about Israel's disappearance within decades. This assessment was presented to the government as an intelligence appraisal before the Camp David conference… I have to note with satisfaction, on the one hand, that the army accepted this, but I am not sure that the government or the Prime Minister accepted it. What the Prime Minister at the time [Barak] said today [at the conference] comes in the wake of what actually transpired, which could have been foreseen then with great accuracy. Excuse me for speaking honestly here."

[51]   In his article "Retroactive rewriting," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (June 30, 2004), Amos Malka noted in this connection: "It was here that the 'conspiracy' fashion developed… Gilad and other senior officers began to argue that 'even if Arafat were to get everything he is asking for he would not sign…' — a very popular sentence at the time, but without foundation. I did not articulate this line, because it was not supported by intelligence, but this fashion gained a foothold among leaders"; see also Uzi Benziman's article concerning biased intelligence: "Good tidings for year 57," *Haaretz* (April 30, 2004); and Ofer Shelah, "The sad tale of Amos and Amos," *www.ynet.co.il* (June 11, 2004); Dan Rabinowitz, "One thing remains on the national screen," *Haaretz* (June 30, 2004); Shlomo Gazit, "Return of the conception," *Maariv* (June 14, 2004).

Military Intelligence (MI) director Amos Malka, there was a substantive disparity between MI's official, written assessments and the oral assessments given to the political level. The official assessments spoke of the intention of Arafat and the political level to arrive, by negotiations, at a settlement of two states for the two nations, and viewed the intifada as a popular uprising from below, whereas the spoken assessments reflected a completely different conclusion.

These viewpoints became part of a lively public discourse, which was critical of the research work of MI[52] and challenged the validity of the new conception. Academics, security experts, and senior figures who had participated in the negotiations termed it simplistic and superficial, and adduced more complex explanations for the failure of the political process and the eruption of the violence.[53] They maintain, among other points, that the leaders of the two sides deviated from the central channel of the negotiations — to resolve the problems of 1967 concretely — and moved instead to the impossible task of coping with the problems of 1948-1949, which involve the national narratives of the two peoples. They also point out that the negotiations themselves did not fail but were stopped (because of the elections in Israel) before the attempts to examine the final latitudes of mutual flexibility within a comprehensive package deal could be completed. They are sharply critical of the political vacuum created by Israel and the United States

[52]   See Aluf Benn, "MI as government propagandist," *Haaretz* (Feb. 6, 2003); and Ran Edelist, "MI at your request," www.ynet.co.il/articles/1,7340,L-1579249,00.html (Jan. 24, 2002).

[53]   A number of symposia have been held on the subject in the past year, such as: "The Camp David summit (2000): What went wrong? — Lessons for the future" (June 16-18, 2003); and "From conflict resolution to conflict management: The Israeli-Palestinian violent conflict" (Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, June 21, 2004). In addition, academics, publicists, and negotiation participants have published books and articles on the subject. See: Meital, *Peace in Tatters — Israel, Palestine and the Middle East*; Daniel Dor, *Newspapers Under the Influence* (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2001); Daniel Dor, *Behind Defensive Shield* (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2003); Klein, *Shattering a Taboo: The Contacts Toward a Permanent Status Agreement in Jerusalem 1994-2001*; Dan Rabinowitz, "End of the conflict or on and on repeatedly?", in Adi Ophir (ed.), *Real Time: Al Aqsa Intifada and the Israeli Left* (Tel Aviv: Keter, 2001), pp. 33-45; Yoav Peled, "Don't be right, be smart," in Ophir (ed.), *Real Time*, pp. 46-56; Tanya Reinhart, "The peace that kills," in Ophir (ed.), *Real Time*, pp. 57-68; Uzi Benziman, "Good tidings for year 57," *Haaretz* (April 30, 2004); Ben Caspit, "The army will decide and authorize," *Maariv* (Sept. 13, 2002); Yossi Beilin, *Manual for a Wounded Dove*; Danny Rubinstein, "The way down to Camp David," in Yehuda Meltzer (ed.), *Camp David 2000 — What really happened there?* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronoth, 2003), pp. 16-63.

(February 2001). They reject the conspiracy theory attributed to Arafat and wonder how it sits with his unwillingness to accept the bulk of the 1967 territories and await another round from the status of a state, or with his rejection of Israeli proposals for a partial solution, which could have advanced the "phased doctrine." These experts are also skeptical about the notion that Arafat triggered the intifada as a planned move which was aimed at imposing the "right of return" on Israel in order to implement the "phased doctrine," noting instead its roots as a popular uprising. They do not consider Arafat solely responsible for the prolongation and escalation of the intifada; rather, various elements played a part in the situation that was created, including Israel's military reaction.[54]

The military-strategic conception

The basic premises of the new political conception naturally nourished the strategic-military conception as well. Now, with the negotiations moribund and the military confrontation defined as a genuine war,[55] Israel's military-strategic approach was aimed directly at the Palestinian Authority as a responsible governmental body which was associated with the terrorist organizations. The military-strategic goal was to bring about the rapid end of the Palestinian violence or reduce it to a level that would deny the Palestinians any military and political achievement and would burn into their consciousness the lesson that they could never make military or political gains by means of terrorism. The goal was thus defined as changing the mindset of the Palestinians (and in effect of all the Arabs) and getting them to

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[54]   Akiva Eldar, "His true face," interview with Amos Malka, *Haaretz* (June 11, 2004). In the interview Malka described how the senior security level in Israel helped fan the flames. He noted that in the first month of the intifada the IDF fired 1.3 million rounds, terming this a strategic statistic showing that Israeli soldiers fired incessantly, meaning that the IDF shaped the "height of the flames." See also: Reuven Pedatzur, "The IDF's contribution to the escalation," *Haaretz* (June 30, 2004); Doron Rosenblum, "Apocalypse again," *Haaretz* (May 20, 2004).

[55]   Nahum Barnea, "Real time," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Sabbath Supplement (Dec. 29, 2000); Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv Magazine* (Jan. 4, 2002); Ari Shavit, interview with Ariel Sharon, *Haaretz Magazine* (April 13, 2001); Yaron London, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Aug. 13, 2004).

internalize deeply that "terrorism and violence cannot defeat us, will not make us fold. If this deep internalization is not achieved at the end of the confrontation, we will have a strategic problem and an existential threat to Israel. If that [lesson] is not burned into the Palestinian and Arab consciousness, there will be no end to their demands of us."[56]

According to this conception, it was crucial for Israel to restore its deterrent credibility, which had suffered in a series of events going back to the beginning of the last decade: the non-response in the Gulf War, Israel's participation in the Madrid Conference against its will, concessions in the Oslo accord in the wake of the first intifada, handing over Hebron to the Palestinians in the wake of the violence triggered by the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel, and the withdrawal from Lebanon.[57] It was therefore essential to overcome the terrorist threat as quickly as possible.[58] Arafat's malicious intention to liquidate Israel, exposed at the moment of truth, attested to the concrete threat Israel faced. That threat had to be eliminated at any cost, by means of Israel's military superiority and the society's endurance. This was the only effective option, a policy that was essential in order to prevent any future Palestinian threat to Israel's existence. The strength of the IDF must be relied on to prevent the Palestinians from implementing their vicious plans.

Henceforth, the mission of thwarting the malicious intentions of Arafat and the Palestinian Authority would be perceived, by both the political and the security levels, as synonymous with "burning into the Palestinians' consciousness" Israel's military superiority and the lesson that political goals could be achieved not by force, only through a political process. Implanting this lesson would reduce the terrorism threat in the present and prevent a Palestinian threat to Israel for many years to come. In addition, when negotiations resumed on the final-status agreement, the Palestinians would have to pay a political price and emerge with fewer achievements than they could have extracted from Israel in the previous round of

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[56]   Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); and see also: Dan Shilon, interview with Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz, *Maariv Magazine* (Jan. 4, 2002); Ya'alon, "Victory and decision in a limited conflict," pp. 75-81.

[57]   Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); Amidror, "The components of Israeli strategy in the war against Palestinian terrorism," p. 3.

[58]   Gilad, "Evaluation of developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," p. 48.

talks. For the first time the political and security echelons defined Palestinian terrorism itself as an existential strategic threat to Israel. The security establishment was directed to eradicate the terrorist organizations, including the Palestinian security units that were engaged in terrorism.[59]

Already in the first stages of the interim agreement, following the suicide bombing attacks in early 1995, and more especially in the wake of the violence initiated by the Palestinian Authority after the opening of the Western Wall Tunnel in September 1996, the IDF was required to adapt itself to a new form of combat against the Palestinians, known as "low-intensity conflict." Given the existence of a self-governing Palestinian political authority with armed security units, this bore some resemblance to inter-state conflicts. Drawing on operational lessons from the Western Wall Tunnel events and other violent clashes (including the events on "Naqba Day," May 15, 2000, when the Palestinians mark the "calamity" of Israel's establishment), the IDF prepared for a possible confrontation with the Palestinian Authority's security forces, triggered, in one scenario, by the failure of the political process. The army formulated a conceptual framework for conducting a "low-intensity conflict" through a process defined as "operational configuration planning," aimed at shaping a future reality that would optimally serve the political-strategic goal. In line with this methodology, a comprehensive conceptual framework was devised, linking the level of political goals to that of tactical activity and enabling compatibility between a number of levels on the scale (nine in all), from the political level to the soldier at the checkpoint.[60]

In drawing up the operational guidelines for the conflict's management, the military echelon set two overriding goals:

◆   To serve Israel's political aims[61] by means of military accomplishments that will shape the reality on the ground[62] and influence the consciousness of the

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[59]   Ya'alon, "Force preparation for a limited conflict," p. 26.

[60]   This description of the military level's policy and its conflict deployment is taken from the article by Moshe Ya'alon, then the Deputy Chief of Staff, "Force preparation for a limited conflict," pp. 24-28; Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002); and Bergman, *Authority Given*, pp. 31-32.

[61]   The stumbling block lies in the absence of clear definitions by the political level of the desired political goals and achievements. As a result, the political directives to the military were vague and

Palestinians to make them understand that the war they planned and fomented will not produce any political achievements. After three and a half years of violent confrontation, the army changed its conception to some extent. Even though the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Moshe Ya'alon, continued to maintain that terrorism could be eradicated completely, the army's primary tactical goal appears to have been to reduce terrorism substantially so that the public could go about its business tolerably and the political level could make decisions without the pressure of terrorism. At the same time, the conception of instilling in the other side the recognition that it would make no political gains by means of terrorism remained intact.[63]

◆ To ensure the relevance of the military force in a "low-intensity conflict" by means of preparation and equipment and by adjusting its combat doctrine to the specific parameters of the conflict.

had to be interpreted by the army in order to create the context and the relevance for utilizing military force. Moshe Ya'alon, in an address at a seminar on "Relations between the political level and the military level in a reality of asymmetrical conflicts" (Maltam OTRI, Operational Theory Research Institute, Feb. 24, 2003), stated, "To request that the political level issue a clear directive to the military level is naïve." See also Yoav Limor, interview with Major General Yitzhak Eitan, head of Central Command, *Maariv* (March 29, 2002), in which Eitan said, "That is the nature of the relations between the political level and the military level in Israel. We have never received a clear mission, and interpretations and attempts were required to understand the directive."

[62]   Shaping the reality by means of military operations did not necessarily serve the goals intended by the political level, which were not defined clearly in any event.

[63]   Ben Caspit, interview with Major General Moshe Kaplinsky, *Maariv* (May 25, 2004); Avi Tzur, "From the start of the confrontation I have maintained that the terrorism can be eradicated," interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Halohem* (August 2004). See also the remarks of the outgoing deputy Chief of Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, who was averse to describing the campaign against the Palestinians as a "military victory." In his view, "The achievement in the war is to bring the terrorism to a tolerable level. There is no regular victory in the war against Palestinian terrorism. The IDF brigade commanders in the field will tell you the same thing. We will not stop the terrorism without cooperation with the Palestinians, which is nonexistent" (Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, we didn't win," *Haaretz*, Oct. 1, 2004). See also Amir Oren (*Haaretz*, April 30, 2004), who wrote that the army "has lost is passion to conduct [the Hebrew word also means "to triumph over"] the orchestra. It is making do with producing certain sounds from its instruments and returning the baton to the government. It is committed to a tactical victory ('overcoming the enemy in battle') but distinguishes between this and two higher levels. One of them is a 'decision in the campaign' and above it is 'victory in the war.' With tangled formulations the IDF is trying to deny the expectation that it will be victorious."

"Think teams," at the level of the General Staff and the territorial commands, held numerous discussions about the new method, analyzing complex aspects of the conflict such as the other side's ideology, regional and external influences, and military and physical elements of the battlefield. A theoretical framework of knowledge about the confrontation with the Palestinians was developed, which was reflected in appropriate new terminology. For example, it was understood that the essence of the fighting in the conflict was over Israeli, Palestinian, and international "consciousness": "Operatively, the campaign for the consciousness of the Palestinian population… was the central campaign…"[64] It was further understood that the Palestinian adversary was using the weapon of terrorism to undermine the endurance level of the Israeli society. Within their society the Palestinians were out to forge the ethos of a war of liberation, while in the international arena they worked to delegitimize the Israeli struggle against terrorism. With this in mind, the Israeli military reached the conclusion that modes of action on several fronts were necessary: to strengthen the Israeli public's feeling that it could endure in the confrontation; to act against the Palestinians in order to show them that violence would not produce gains; and, at the same time, to obtain international legitimization for the IDF's methods.

The **"limited armed confrontation"** that was forced on Israel requires the integrated and coordinated management of the campaign, entailing the greatest possible coordination among the many elements involved: political, military, economic, humanitarian, diplomatic, and informational. This war also required social resilience, giving rise to cohesiveness and a high level of endurance by the general public.

Based on the theoretical and conceptual framework it formulated, the IDF defined the battle for the "realms of consciousness" as follows:

◆ Configuration boundaries — Powerful external elements, such as the policy of the United States, Europe, and the Arab states vis-à-vis the conflict, impinge on the configuration of forces. The army has no influence over them, but they can influence the army's boundaries of operation. It follows that military planners, even at field commander level, must be familiar with and understand these considerations and foresee their impact.

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[64] Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way'," p. 30.

◆ Campaign boundaries — Referring to phenomena and processes which affect the campaign and which the army can influence in numerous ways. For example, whether the Palestinians achieve anything by embarking on the path of violence is related to the battle for consciousness. This cannot be measured at the level of individual events, but the aggregates — of IDF-initiated actions, of preventive activity, and of the outcome of encounters — all shape the understanding on both the Israeli and the Palestinian side about whether Palestinian violence can be productive. Shaping Palestinian consciousness in this context is highly significant also because it addresses one of the basic components of the Palestinian decision to launch the armed confrontation in this particular form. The Palestinians' point of departure was that violence foments change. Neutralizing this conception might influence their total approach to continuing the confrontation and to the political solutions that are meant to terminate it. It is important to bear in mind that the army is not operating alone in striving to shape the boundaries of the campaign in a manner desirable to Israel. There is a great deal of parallel activity by a variety of bodies, on both sides, though in some cases it is not all coordinated toward the same end.

◆ Coordination boundaries — For senior commanders, at the level of chief of territorial command or on the General Staff, a grasp of only their own sphere of activity is insufficient. They must have an understanding of the inter-connections and the mutual influences that exist between the developments in the configuration boundaries and the campaign boundaries and the tactical activity conducted in their arena. A more discerning view is necessary; for example, to distinguish between different elements in the Palestinian camp and the various motivations for their activity.

◆ Shaping — Determining directions of activity through which the army can influence events in desirable ways. Collating all the existing knowledge about the rationale of the bodies involved in the conflict and converting it into understandings relating to the possible directions of development and to the developments that Israel is aiming for. The result is a shaping strategic idea at the General Staff level, or an operative idea at the territorial command level.

◆ Political directive — The political directive is both the product of the political echelon's worldview and a derivative of the ongoing dialogue between the

political and military echelons. The powerful dynamics of the situation thus oblige continuous and ongoing dialogue between the two levels, in order to ensure that the method of force application will be relevant.

◆ Culture of discourse — The culture of discourse encompasses the different military levels and its aim is to translate the strategic and systemic concepts into operational ideas and plans. The field levels must be aware of the operational idea and also of various constraints, in order to avoid mistakes concerning the type of action that is needed.

◆ Moral values — In view of the singular character of the confrontation, which involves considerable friction with a civilian population, it is essential to instill moral values for managing the conflict and uphold them rigorously.

◆ Force preparation — Force preparation is based mainly on developing new strategic ideas and on articulating an up-to-date operational conception, since past experience is not always relevant to the new and evolving reality.[65]

The military level's approach to implementing the overriding goals it undertook in the confrontation is graphically illustrated by the attitude toward the field commanders. They were required to avoid applying the tactical situation appraisal in their sector simplistically and to be aware of the diverse forces at work in the areas of the Palestinian Authority (the Palestinian leadership, the street, the various organizations), each of which has its own "agenda" and rationale, including goals and constraints. This was necessary "so that we can attain the achievements in the realm of consciousness in which we are interested, as an instrument to reach our political goals."

Moreover, understanding the rationale of the adversary's configuration would facilitate the planning of effective military activity and avert a situation in which the military force being utilized was not relevant. This conceptual model in regard to the army's role and aim in the "limited conflict" was enshrined in the IDF's training doctrine.[66] In accordance with this approach and with the new conceptual

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[65]   Ya'alon, "Force preparation for a limited conflict," pp. 24-33.

[66]   Colonel Shmuel Nir (Samo), *The Limited Conflict* (Training Doctrine, 2001), p. 44: "In a war it is the army that is the decisive factor in practice, and in a limited conflict the army has a decisive

framework, the IDF examined the campaign against the Palestinians and its results not only quantitatively (number of weapons seized, bomb factories destroyed, and wanted individuals arrested) but also from the point of view of its effects on the Israeli and Palestinian societies. For example, the combat in the Palestinian cities and refugee camps was judged not only from the usual military point of view but also in terms of fighting resolve, volunteer spirit, and the ability of the Israeli public, as it faced a concrete threat, to remake itself into a mobilized fighting society.[67] In this way, the IDF believes, it was made clear to Hezbollah and to the combatant Palestinians that the Israeli society is invincible. It is not a weak society, as the leader of Hezbollah supposed (he likened it to tenuous "spider webs"),[68] but is capable of producing an effective and determined fighting force if attacked, thus creating an unmistakably potent impact which is meant to influence future strategic tendencies.

While this mode of thought acknowledges that there is no absolute military answer to the terrorist threat, the military activity is intended mainly to create the systemic effects and the strategic tendencies which will shape the boundaries and substance of the political discussion. Based on the IDF's "updated" conception and new mode of thought, the "configuration boundaries" and the "campaign boundaries" were formulated, as was the manner of force activation in the "low-intensity conflict" against the Palestinians. The main features of the conception guiding the army in the conflict were outlined by the Chief of Staff:[69]

◆ "The limited confrontation" — This type of conflict, which constitutes the predominant "nature of war" in the present, is occurring in many places, including Israel.

◆ Constant strengthening of the deterrent image — It is essential to constantly strengthen Israel's deterrent image vis-à-vis those who are engaged in a

influence. In a limited conflict the army is required to utilize to the full its abilities to wear down the adversary in order to achieve the political goal and prevent the adversary from wearing us out."

[67]   Gershon Hacohen, "'Test of the outcome' as a test of tendencies," pp. 12-15.

[68]   Ari Shavit, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Haaretz Magazine* (Aug. 29, 2002).

[69]   Address by Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, "Israel's security challenges," at a memorial evening for Moshe Dayan (Tel Aviv University, Nov. 16, 2003).

"limited armed confrontation" against Israel (and toward others as well) by demonstrating high military capabilities in the war against terrorism and especially in the precision preemptions. Exacting a price will instill in the adversary the recognition that nothing will be gained by violence.[70]

◆ Limiting the violence in order to prevent escalation and the internationalization of the conflict. Until April 2002 the struggle against terrorism was relatively controlled, in order to prevent the expansion of the war and, as a result, its possible internationalization. Military activity was more reactive than initiating.

◆ Integrated and coordinated campaign — Managing a "limited armed confrontation" such as was forced on Israel requires coordination among the many elements involved — political, military, humanitarian, diplomatic, and informational — and necessitates social resilience that gives rise to cohesion and a high level of endurance.

◆ Maintaining "purity of arms" — The IDF is fighting only against terrorism, not against the Palestinian people.

Operational patterns

The change in the conceptions, both political and military-strategic, led also to the formulation of a pattern of operational engagement that was consistent with the new conceptions. The army classified different stages and different patterns of

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[70] Ya'alon's approach was also expressed in later comments, when he said that Israel's unilateral pullout from the Gaza Strip, within the framework of the Prime Minister's disengagement plan, would create a "tailwind" for terrorism. On March 7, 2004, during a visit to the Gaza Strip after a failed terrorist attack at Erez Junction, Ya'alon said, in reply to a reporter's question, that he could not rule out the conclusion that the talk about disengagement was leading to heightened terrorism. In another comment Ya'alon stated that "the terrorist activity might stem from the talk about disengagement" (*Yedioth Ahronoth*, March 7, 2004). It should be emphasized that a year earlier Ya'alon made a similar comment about the possible evacuation of Netzarim at the height of the confrontation ("under fire"): "The evacuation of Netzarim will not spare us the need to station a battalion but will engage a division. I am saying that in my professional security perception I know what evacuation under fire means. It is not a case of sparing the need for a battalion, but in fact of needing another division" (*Maariv*, March 14, 2003).

engagement: the containment stage (September 2000-beginning of 2001), the stage of leverage or ongoing continuous pressure (2001), the stage of the systematic dismantlement of the terrorism infrastructures (January-March 2002), the stage of the counter-blows of Operation "Defensive Shield" (March-April 2002), the stage of security control of Operation "Determined Path" (June 2002-May 2003); and the stage of regularization and operational stabilization (second quarter of 2003 and afterward).[71] The transition from one stage to the next was related to the change of political leadership in Israel, the cessation of the political process (the shift from the first to the second stage), the escalation of terrorism and especially of the suicide bombings, the assessment that the pattern of coping with Palestinian violence was ineffective, and the events of September 11, 2001, in the United States.

The first operational stage, from September 2000 until the beginning of 2001, which was categorized as containment, ended after the Israeli general elections of February 2001. This stage, which proceeded in conjunction with the continuation of the political process, sought primarily to reduce the violence in the hope of returning to political arrangements. The army did not implement the government's containment policy in its letter and spirit. At the same time, full Palestinian sovereignty was respected in Area A, in accordance with the political directive formulated by the Prime Minister and Defense Minister, Ehud Barak.[72]

The change of political leadership in the wake of the elections and the cessation of the political process, combined with burgeoning terrorism and the concomitant expansion of Israeli military activity, led to a change in the political-strategic directive and the adoption of a new pattern of military coping: "leverage" (*minuf*, in IDF argot) or "ongoing continuous pressure." In this stage, which lasted throughout 2001, the operational conception continued to be based on the premise, which was clearly reflected in the official intelligence assessments that were presented in written form, that the Palestinians were interested in reaching a political settlement of two states for the two nations. However, the strategic goal was to put a stop to the violence by coercing the Palestinian Authority not only to wash its

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[71]   Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Path'," pp. 27-28.

[72]   Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004).

hands of terrorism but also to enlist in the battle against it. The Palestinian Authority was perceived (even without an official declaration) as an adversary (not an enemy) and as a governmental establishment bearing direct responsibility for the acts of terrorism and violence originating from its territory.

The "leverage" was intended to generate unrelenting, continuous, measured, graduated, and controlled pressure on the Palestinian Authority in order to compel it to fight terrorism, while at the same time not denying Palestinian sovereignty or targeting the PA's civilian apparatuses.[73] The targets were structures, positions, and checkpoints of the PA forces. The systemic element was realized tactically by means of repeated penetrations — in the form of time-limited raids and encirclements — in PA areas in all sectors. Initially limited in scale, these operations were gradually expanded to the point where they included the use of warplanes in the West Bank and a brief takeover of a Palestinian city (Tulkarm, for one day).

This pattern, which as noted lasted throughout 2001, changed due to the following developments: (1) escalation resulting in 185 Israelis killed (March-December 2001) and reaching its peak in the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi on October 16, 2001. The killing was an act of revenge for the liquidation by Israel of Abu Ali Mustafa, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. This period also saw a dramatic increase in the number of suicide bombings (35 successfully carried out and another 16 thwarted from March-December 2001);[74] (2) the evaluation that the leverage strategy was ineffective; and (3) the attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States.

The first two developments helped bring about the assessment that the Palestinian Authority was not susceptible to leverage and would not fight terrorism, and therefore Israel had to wage this campaign by itself, while adopting a new operational mode: the "systematic dismantlement of the infrastructures of terrorism throughout the area."[75] The third development was of crucial importance in providing domestic and international legitimacy for an expanded, unrelenting,

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[73] A detailed description of the "leverage" strategy appears in Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way'," pp. 28-29.

[74] The number of casualties is from the Foreign Ministry's web site and the number of terrorist attacks and preventions from the IDF web site.

[75] Hirsh, ibid.

systematic mode of operation which was intended to vanquish Palestinian terrorism by military means.

Thus the Palestinian Authority, already perceived as not being a potential partner to renew the political process, was, as of December 2001, defined as a supporter of terrorism which used its security organizations for terrorist missions.[76] Even though at this very time Arafat ordered a cease-fire and also managed to begin implementing it in practice,[77] the Israeli government placed no credence in

[76]   Aluf Benn, "Sharon: Arafat is like the Taliban," *Haaretz* (Oct. 19, 2001); Lee Hockstader, "Palestinian Authority described as terrorist," *International Herald Tribune* (March 1, 2002).

[77]   During 2001 Arafat in fact tried to restore calm on a number of occasions, directing his security chiefs and the Fatah leadership to maintain a cease-fire. However, the decision-makers in Israel reacted to these moves with skepticism and disbelief. In the wake of the suicide bombing attack outside the Dolphinarium discotheque on the Tel Aviv beachfront (June 1, 2001), Arafat for the first time urged his nation in his voice, in Arabic, via television and radio, to bring about calm and a cease-fire. See: Malka, "The regional system facing the test of stability," p. 22; "Test of intentions," editorial in *Haaretz* (June 4, 2001); Amir Oren, "Intelligence assessment: Partial respite," *Haaretz* (June 4, 2001); Dan Margalit, "Between Peres and Mofaz," *Haaretz* (June 18, 2001); Gideon Alon, "MI chief: Arafat will play at height of flames," *Haaretz* (June 20, 2001); Danny Rubinstein, "Arafat: Cease-fire applies to all Israelis including settlers," *Haaretz* (June 24, 2001). Following the Al Qaeda attacks in the United States, Arafat again called for quiet in order to be placed on the United States' list of the "good guys" and be part of the coalition Washington was putting together to wage war on international terrorism. Arafat called for an immediate cease-fire and for restraint even in the face of Israeli operations and hoped that international pressure would bring Israel back to the political path so that the sides could progress in line with the Mitchell Report. See: Danny Rubinstein, "Palestinians don't want to become international foe," *Haaretz* (Sept. 15, 2001); Amira Hass, "Expectation of political reward heightens support for cease-fire," *Haaretz* (Sept. 23, 2001). On December 16, 2001, Arafat went on Palestinian television and on the Voice of Palestine to announce that the PA would punish anyone who violated his cease-fire orders and all those who engineered suicide bombings and the firing of mortars. This produced a significant process of quiet, which lasted about three weeks but was terminated by the IDF's targeted assassination of Raed Karmi, a Tanzim militia leader from Tulkarm. The Tanzim leaders branded this an act of betrayal by the Israelis and accused them of exploiting the cease-fire to carry out the operation. This event radicalized Fatah's attitude toward the conflict and had far-reaching consequences for the continuation of the conflict and its escalation. It was a watershed in the attitude of the non-religious organizations (Fatah and the various "Fronts"), which now also began to carry out suicide bombings. As a result, Arafat's ability to call for calm and enforce it was gravely weakend. See: Danny Rubinstein: "Arafat speech — for the first time: An explicit, dramatic call on television," *Haaretz* (Dec. 17, 2001); Amos Harel, "MI: Arafat steps up actions against terrorist organizations," *Haaretz* (Jan. 1, 2002). On the killing of Raed

his efforts and decided to dismantle the PA's security apparatuses. This was especially consequential for the choice of operational targets (the refugee camps in Jenin and Nablus), including targets in Area A, without consideration for Palestinian autonomy, and for the duration of the operational activity. In short order the systematic dismantlement of the terrorist infrastructures turned out to be not effective enough.

In the first three months of 2002, 173 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks — a record number in such a brief period — while the Palestinians sustained 372 killed. Twenty-eight suicide bombing attacks were perpetrated and 11 thwarted in this period. This dramatic surge, which peaked with the suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya on the eve of Passover, prompted the government to launch Operation "Defensive Shield," which began on March 29, 2002, two days after the hotel attack. The operation was intended "to vanquish the Palestinian system which supports and nourishes the terrorism." Carried out simultaneously in all the Palestinian cities apart from Jericho and Hebron, and subsequently in rural areas as well, the operation was classified by Israel as a "strike" (*mahaluma*): "an effort to break the adversary's operational logic and create conditions for a different situation." [78]

The harsh blow to the terrorist infrastructures, the elimination of the Palestinian security presence from the cities, and the creation of a convenient security situation for ongoing preventive operations — including security control on the ground and Arafat's physical isolation — were all evaluated as "a relevant form of conclusive decision in a limited conflict." In practice, however, "an opportunity for a political process or for transferring control to other Palestinian hands" was not created and it soon turned out that a concrete conclusive decision was not achieved, either.[79] The one-time strike in the form of "Defensive Shield" proved effective only in the short term.

Karmi and its consequences, see: Amos Harel, "The boundaries of the definition of the 'ticking bomb'," *Haaretz* (Jan. 16, 2002); Amira Hass, "Fatah accepts yearning for revenge and blocks demand for democratization," *Haaretz* (Jan. 20, 2002); Danny Rubinstein, "The liquidations as a boomerang," *Haaretz* (Jan. 21, 2002); and see also Harel and Issacharoff, *The Seventh War*, pp. 165-188.

[78]   Hirsh, "From 'Molten Lead' to 'Another Way'," p. 30.

[79]   Ibid.

In the following three months (April-June 2002), 130 Israelis were killed (including soldiers who fell in the operation) along with 371 Palestinians. Seventeen suicide bombings were perpetrated in this period and 21 were thwarted. In these circumstances, the decision was made to persist with the ongoing operational activity, including full control on the ground, in order to suppress the terrorism. The stage of security control, codenamed "Determined Path" (June 2002-May 2003), was thus aimed primarily at forestalling terrorism, especially suicide bombings. This was accompanied by activity aimed at molding the general Palestinian consciousness and thereby dissuading the Palestinian public from supporting terrorism. In the second quarter of 2003 an additional strategic move — known as "regularization" — was introduced, which involved setting permanent security arrangements, notably the building of the separation fence.[80] Throughout the entire period major efforts were made to thwart suicide bombings, with the effectiveness of the targeted assassinations becoming more pronounced from July 2002. In the period from July 2002 to June 2004, 49 suicide bombing attacks were carried out and 343 prevented.[81] These efforts also included targeted assassinations not only of the terrorists themselves but also of those who were behind the attacks.

The military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians, it should be noted, functions as a cycle of terror, in which each side influences the activity of the other. Thus, the terrorist attacks affected the mode and intensity of Israeli security activity, but that same activity influenced Palestinian violence. For example, the assassinations of Raed Karmi and Abu Ali Mustafa ratcheted up the level of Palestinian terrorism; and the mass-terror attack on the Park Hotel in Netanya spawned Operation "Defensive Shield."

In many cases, the cycle of terror syndrome is partially attributable to the fact that the Israeli political echelon focuses on dealing with the immediate problems of terrorism — especially the suicide bombing attacks, because of their brutal results — but evades long-term strategic planning, which entails decisions of state policy. As a result, the military echelon is frequently compelled to fill in the

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[80]   Ibid.

[81]   IDF, "Suicide bomber attacks carried out vs. attacks prevented," at www.idf1.il; Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004); Amos Harel, "From 40 terrorist attacks per quarter to 5: How terrorism is prevented," *Haaretz* (April 8, 2004).

conceptual blanks left by the political level in regard to strategic policy. This phenomenon was exacerbated after the eruption of the violent confrontation, and more especially after its escalation, when the military level reached the conclusion that the existing conceptual lexicon contained no effective answer for coping with a protracted conflict. The military, therefore, believed it had the duty to develop an alternative and improved conceptual system. In the absence of clear political directives, the military echelon also largely assumed the role of the political echelon in shaping the conflict environment, including the level of violence.[82]

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[82] Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Ibal Giladi, head of Strategic Planning in the IDF, *Maariv* (Jan. 2, 2004).

Chapter Four: Interim Balance-sheet: Political and Security Deadlock with Adherence to the Basic Assumptions and the Conception

A lengthy perspective will be necessary before it is possible to make a comprehensive accurate cost-benefit assessment based on Israel's conception of conflict management in the four years of violence that began at the end of September 2000. However, despite the absence of the necessary perspective, such an assessment is essential, especially in the light of the Prime Minister's decision to adopt a new policy of conflict management, which includes the building of a separation fence and a disengagement plan. Up to a point, this can be seen as the start of a new chapter in Israel's policy of conflict management and perhaps even as a new management paradigm. The problem is that this paradigm appears to be based largely on the basic assumptions which were described above, some of which, at least, are of dubious validity.

The political echelon's perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with its central basic assumptions, is the paramount factor guiding the conception of the conflict's management. Within a relatively brief period (1993-2001) the political conception changed twice in a fundamental way. The first dramatic paradigmatic change, which made possible the Oslo process, rested on the basic assumption that not only could the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be resolved gradually and in stages, on the basis of two states for the two nations, but that Israel also had a vital interest in such a process. The failure of the Oslo process and the Palestinian-initiated violence — led gradually to the second paradigmatic change (after the elections of February 2001), based on a different underlying assumption, namely that in the present stage there was no prospect of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict due to the absence of a Palestinian partner, and therefore Israel's only available option was to manage the conflict unilaterally in order to bring about a rapid end to the Palestinian violence, while denying the Palestinians any military or political gains.

The changes in the level of Palestinian violence, particularly the advent of the suicide bombings, became a central factor in Israel's perception of the confrontation

and influenced its political, military-strategic, and operational conceptions. As long as the Palestinian violence was perceived as a popular uprising or as aimed at improving the Palestinians' bargaining position in the political process, it was not defined as a genuine strategic threat to Israel; accordingly, the countermeasures were limited to containing and reducing the violence so it would not sabotage the political process. However, the military did not implement the containment policy in the spirit of the political level's directives,[83] resulting in unwanted escalation. After the February 2001 elections in Israel, with the cessation of the political process and the escalation of the confrontation, the violence was perceived as being directed by the Palestinian Authority and as constituting a strategic threat to Israel's security and existence.

Accordingly, in the first stage of the confrontation, the Israeli goals focused on reducing the violence and denying the Palestinians any military or political achievement, in the hope of reaching a political settlement. In the next stage the aim was to put a stop to the violence by means of a military decision, based on the recognition that the Palestinians were not a partner for negotiations and that no real prospect of resuming the political process existed, because Arafat was intent on destroying Israel.[84]

From Israel's point of view, management of the violent conflict with the Palestinians produced only partial political-military success. It is noteworthy that the military confrontation was forced on Israel at a time when the government was ready to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians, on its terms, based on two states for two nations. In the period under discussion, Israel succeeded in preventing the Palestinians from realizing their goals: to establish a Palestinian state in accordance with their preferential conditions, to expand the conflict to a regional level by getting additional Arab actors to join the cycle of violence, and to internationalize the conflict by getting the world community to station forces in the region. However, Israel was unable to reduce the motivation of the combatants

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[83]   Ben-Ami, *A Front Without A Rearguard*, pp. 318-319.

[84]   Alex Fishman, interview with Brigadier General Gadi Eizenkot, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 11, 2004). Fishman quotes Eizenkot, as saying, "I was involved in writing the political directive… Both of them defined parameters that were quite similar. Sharon made a change in one matter: he defined a goal of stopping the violence, whereas Barak spoke of reducing the violence."

on the other side to persist with the confrontation or to prevent Hezbollah and Iran from financing the terrorists and smuggling weapons, ammunition, and sabotage expertise into the territories.

The Palestinians, for their part, believe that despite their tremendous disadvantage in force relations they were able to prevent Israel from achieving its goals in the confrontation by realizing its superiority and thereby imposing its terms for an agreement. Moreover, they construe the disengagement plan as an Israeli admission of failure and as their victory. Thus, a "strategic deadlock" has been generated between the two sides. They are stuck in a "mutual hurting stalemate"[85] and lack the ability to develop a formula to terminate the confrontation and renew a peace process of some sort. This situation compelled Israel to adopt a strategy of unilateral disengagement, which does not necessarily hold out genuine expectation of bringing about a change in the violent conflict.

The events of September 11, 2001, accorded Israel international and above all American legitimacy to make a quantum leap in the patterns of its military response to terrorism (including the re-conquest of West Bank cities and placing Arafat under lengthy siege). The Bush administration accepted Israel's rejection of Arafat as a legitimate partner for the political process and presented its program of reforms (June 2002) to the Palestinian Authority as a condition for the renewal of the political process. At the same time, the Road Map, the successor to the Bush initiative, is less convenient for Israel and in the future might become an international diplomatic framework to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The confrontation has exacted a terribly high price. As of September 19, 2004 (according to the IDF web site), 989 Israelis had been killed (694 civilians, 295 members of the security forces) and 6,709 wounded (4,711 civilians and 1,998 members of the security forces) in 22,406 attacks, attempted attacks, and violent incidents.[86] Despite the steep price in blood and an economic cost of NIS 50 billion, the Israeli society did not crack and succeeded in maintaining a relatively high

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[85]   William I. Zartman, "Ripeness: The hurting stalemate and beyond," in Paul C. Stern and Daniel Druckman (eds.), *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War* (Washington: National Academy Press, 2000), pp. 225-250.

[86]   According to the Shin Bet, 1,017 Israelis were killed and 5,598 were wounded, *Haaretz* (Sept. 28, 2004). See also www.idf1.il.

level of cohesion, deriving from the recognition and conviction of most Israelis that the Palestinian Authority was not a partner for negotiations and was exclusively responsible for the outbreak of the violence and its escalation. Still, the price of the confrontation is indeed intolerable, and as yet there has been no success in ensuring the security of Israel's citizens.[87] Moreover, during the four years of the conflict poverty in Israel increased substantially and the social gap grew to worrying dimensions.

It bears noting that over time a not inconsiderable minority emerged in Israel who were critical of the Sharon government's policy.[88] They advocated the renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians and were the source of various initiatives for realizing that option, in conjunction with public figures and leaders from the Palestinian mainstream (examples are "The People's Voice" and the Geneva Initiative). In addition, various protest movements developed, including refusal to serve in the territories even among army elites such as Air Force pilots and Sayeret Matkal reconnaissance unit.

The paradigmatic shift, which, in the absence of a Palestinian partner or while the designated partner was Arafat, rejected any possibility of resolving the conflict and renewing the political process, left violence as the only option. This ruled out

[87]   See the remarks of Shin Bet chief Avi Dichter at the Herzliya Conference (2003), "There is life after terror," www.herzliyaconference.org/_Articles/Article.asp?ArticleID= 1031&CategoryID=170.

[88]   Daniel Bar-Tal, "It is important to be a dove, but it is as important to know why people become doves," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology (Berlin: July, 2002); Adi Ophir (ed.), *Real Time*; Ze'ev Schiff, "Who won, who lost," *Haaretz* (Aug. 8, 2003); Ofer Shelah, interview with Yisrael Hasson, *Yedioth Ahronoth Magazine* (Oct. 31, 2003); Akiva Eldar, "Failure of the policy of force," *Haaretz* (Feb. 9, 2004); Ben Caspit, "Reformulating the victory," *Maariv* (May 25, 2004); interview with four former Shin Bet chiefs, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Nov. 14, 2003); Ari Shavit, interview with Ephraim Halevy, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 5, 2003); letter of refusal to serve signed by 27 pilots, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Sept. 28, 2003); Tzadok Yehezkeli, interview with Brigadier General Ilan Paz, head of the Judea and Samaria Civil Administration, *Yedioth Ahronoth Magazine* (Jan. 23, 2004); Avihai Becker, "Things you see from there," *Haaretz Magazine* (Dec. 5, 2003); Ari Shavit, interview with Avraham Burg, *Haaretz Magazine* (Nov. 14, 2003); Uzi Benziman, "Quack medicines," *Haaretz* (Aug. 24, 2003); "Force without restraint," editorial, *Haaretz* (March 16, 2003); A.B. Yehoshua, "For the good of the border," *Haaretz Magazine* (Feb. 28, 2002); Michael Ben Yair, "The seventh day of the war," *Haaretz* (March 3, 2002); Ehud Barak, "Separation within four years," *Yedioth Ahronoth* (April 5, 2002); David Landau, "Threat and survival," *Haaretz* (Sept. 6, 2002).

the possibility of examining other conflict management options, such as interim settlements or other political arrangements which are less than conflict resolution. Beyond this, Israel's focus on Arafat and his personality as a fundamental cause of the conflict befuddled understanding of the roots of the crisis and created the impression that his ouster would remove all the obstacles. Another consequence of this approach was that political and social contexts in which the confrontation developed were partially ignored,[89] as were the dangers stemming from the absence of a political horizon and the implications of the continuing blow to the PA's infrastructures and its security structure. The destruction of the Palestinian Authority demolished the possibility of a partner for a settlement.

True, Israel succeeded in reducing substantially the scale of the Palestinian violence, especially the suicide bombings, and thereby greatly diminished the number of fatalities. This is a very important tactical achievement, though it is not yet a situation that necessarily enables the Israeli society to pursue a "tolerable life."[90] Overall, Israel did not succeed in deciding militarily the confrontation with the Palestinians in a manner that put an end to their violence. Despite the high price paid by the Palestinians, they refused "to surrender." Israel did not succeed in "burning into the consciousness" of the Palestinians the lesson that violence does not serve their goals and indeed is counterproductive. Instead, their feeling of having "nothing to lose" was intensified and their motivation to continue the violence was heightened — motivation which induces many Palestinians to enlist in the service of violence. Israel failed, then, in persuading the broad Palestinian public that the continuation of the violence hurt them and ruled out any possibility

[89]   Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Mike Herzog, *Maariv Magazine* (Aug. 27, 2004). Herzog is quoted as saying, "If you want to offer an in-depth evaluation you also have to be familiar with the society, the frames of mind, the poetry, the literature — and not only with what is happening within the leadership and the security organizations. I think all the intelligence apparatuses in Israel have an identical problem and that none of them goes deeply enough into this subject of what is really happening there internally, around the Palestinian psyche. On this subject we definitely fall short."

[90]   The number of suicide bombings declined from 60 in 2002 to 26 in 2003 and 13 in 2004 (as of Sept. 1). The number of Israelis killed fell from 452 in 2002 to 214 in 2003 and to 97 in 2004 (as of Sept. 1). On these statistics, which were provided by the Shin Bet chief, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, we didn't win," *Haaretz* (Oct. 1, 2004).

of improving their situation and that their leadership, under Yasser Arafat, was distancing them from any prospect of realizing their political aspirations.[91]

In addition, the Israeli policymakers (both political and military) appear to have miscalculated the Palestinians' long-term level of endurance in the violent confrontation. This is due in part to a lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding needed to wage a "low-intensity conflict" against a people seeking independence, and in part to the deliberate failure to create a political horizon which might provide incentives to end the violence or moderate it significantly. The conclusion is that the political and military-strategic basic assumptions about the possibility of achieving a conclusive military or political decision were unrealistic.

Although the major interest of the Israeli political echelon at the outset of the confrontation was to contain it and prevent its spread, the opposite result was achieved. One reason for this was the harsh and highly intensive military response in the first stage of the confrontation, when it was a distinctly popular uprising (the extremely high number of Palestinian civilian casualties induced more Palestinians to take part in the violence). Beyond this, it appears to be impossible to contain a confrontation fomented by an insurgent nation without also generating political expectations.

Israel's hard-handed policy and heavy pressure against the Palestinian population and the security units, most of which were not involved at the start of the confrontation, produced negative results. Feelings of rage and the desire for revenge led to closer cooperation between the terrorist organizations and between them and elements in the Palestinian security forces, which joined the confrontation after being attacked by the IDF. The result was that the suicide bombings reached an unprecedented scale, began to be perpetrated by the non-religious organizations as well — Fatah and the "Fronts" (as noted, the turning point in this regard was apparently the assassination of Raed Karmi in January 2002) — and were

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[91]   According to the IDF, the Palestinians' casualties in the first 42 months of the confrontation (as of April 2004) were 2,720 killed and more than 25,000 wounded: see Amos Harel, "From 40 terrorist attacks per quarter to 5: How terrorism is prevented," *Haaretz* (April 8, 2004). According to the Shin Bet, more than 6,200 Palestinians who were involved in violence have been "removed from combat" since Operation "Defensive Shield" in April 2002, with 940 of them (about 15 percent) killed: see Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, we didn't win,' *Haaretz* (Oct. 1, 2004).

accorded broad social legitimacy in the Palestinian society. As a consequence, the "limited confrontation" lurched out of control of the two sides and became a conflict in which each of them posited comprehensive aims. The situation was compounded by the increasingly strident criticism from the international community, which led to growing pressure on Israel and to diplomatic isolation. Effectively, the only meaningful and genuine external support Israel enjoyed was that of the United States.

Israel's policy of conflict management had the additional effect of breaking down the differentiations within the Palestinian society.[92] The destruction of the Palestinian Authority made it impossible for the Palestinian leadership to control the violence and restrain the more radical forces within Fatah and the Tanzim, as well as in Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Having failed to limit the war, Israel adopted a less discriminate policy of force application and treated all the Palestinian organizations monolithically. Israel's classification of all the organizations as violent and dangerous enemies had the effect of breaking down the differentiations in Palestinian society, leading to organizational and social cohesion, and above all of blurring differences and disputes between relative moderates and extremists.

This policy also limited Israel's freedom of political maneuverability and made a possible dialogue with the more moderate elements, or even the use of divide-and-rule tactics, more difficult. An especially telling effect of the Israeli policy was the elimination of the differentiation and distinction between the central secular national stream (the PLO: the Fatah Tanzim / Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the left-wing Fronts) — which at that stage was fighting against the Israeli occupation and for better terms in the final-status settlement with the aim of establishing an independent durable state in the 1967 borders alongside Israel — and the extreme Islamic stream (Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad), which opposes Israel's existence and advocates an ideological war to the death.[93]

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[92]   Ben Caspit, interview with Brigadier General Mike Herzog, *Maariv Magazine* (Aug. 27, 2004).

[93]   Hassan al-Khashaf, a senior official in the Palestinian Information Ministry, *Al Hiyat al Jadida* (July 18, 2001): "The national and Islamic forces may not agree on the long-term goals, but they certainly agree on the present specific goal of expelling the military occupation and the settlements from the 1967 areas. This in itself is a major point of convergence at this time and place…"

The Israeli policy gradually brought about the destruction of the Palestinian Authority, a rise in the strength of the extremist Islamic stream, and operational cooperation between Fatah, the Fronts, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad in perpetrating terrorist attacks. The continuation of the violent confrontation, combined with the absence of political expectations, eroded the support of the Palestinian street for the political path of the secular national stream and its platform of a two-state solution. The result is liable to be a tilting of the Palestinian position in the direction of one state for the two nations. Already today the basic Palestinian support for the two-state idea is showing signs of crumbling and the danger is that the Palestinian public and leadership will lose interest in such a settlement amid a contrary atmosphere.[94] Such a turn of events would definitely run counter to Israel's national interest.

The complete lack of trust in Arafat and the Palestinian Authority made it extremely difficult for Israel to identify possible security and political opportunities that might reduce the violence. The Palestinians made several efforts in this direction, especially after the events of September 11, 2001 (when, as noted the Palestinian leadership sought to be classified on the list of the "good guys"). However, Israel did not view these attempts as a meaningful change but as empty tactical moves. As a result, no positive dynamic of Israeli moves was generated that would encourage and consolidate attempts to create calm (such as by offering the Palestinian side security and political expectations).[95] This conception made it difficult for Israel to perceive security and political opportunities correctly, such as the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as the Palestinian Prime Minister.

[94]   See the remarks by Prof. Ali Jirbawi, from, Birzeit University, and of Dr. Saeb Erekat on this subject, in an article by Noam Amit, "One state for the two nations," *Maariv Magazine* (Oct. 31, 2003); Martin Kramer, address on "The return of Palestinian intellectuals to the idea of one state for the two peoples" (Netanya: The Liberal College, June 23,2003); and Ephraim Lavie, "The Road Map: Political resolution instead of national narrative confrontation," *Palestine-Israel Journal*, vol. 10 (2003), issue 4, pp. 83-91.

[95]   On December 16, 2001, Arafat ordered a cease-fire and the cessation of the suicide bombings; on January 14, the IDF assassinated Raed Karmi, following which the suicide bombings, including attacks initiated by the Tanzim, were intensified. See note 78, above.

A move toward possible reforms could perhaps have been encouraged in the Palestinian Authority and a dialogue launched aimed at reducing the intensity of the confrontation through good-will gestures (release of prisoners, military redeployment, lifting restrictions on the population).[96] In addition, it might have been possible to exploit the positive potential latent in the Arab peace initiative (March 2002), which the Palestinians adopted and which they presented to the United States as their agreed position. The major importance of that initiative lay in the solution it proposed for the refugee problem: a just and agreed solution according to Resolution 194 of the United Nations General Assembly, without citing the "right of return"; taking the choice of which solution to adopt out of the refugees' hands; and granting Israel veto power in deciding whether a specific quota of refugees would return to its territory. The initiative's significance lay in the fact that the Arabs and the Palestinians were interested in creating a new situation by embarking on the path of a practical solution to the conflict, while continuing its management only.[97]

The new Israeli basic assumption, holding that the Palestinians were not interested in a political agreement of two states for the two nations and that the war with them was existential ("the war for our home"), led to conflict management using violent means, based on "an eye for an eye" strategy, and coercion involving the use of threats, punishments, and deterrence, without any attempt to invoke carrot-and-stick strategies as well. This form of conflict management may have prevented the possibility of bringing about a change in the confrontation's violent character. New opportunities might have been created by adopting strategies such as "reassurance," "conditional reciprocity," and GRIT ("graduated reciprocation in tension reduction").

These three strategies are aimed at offering the adversary inducements and concessions (instead of threats or actual punishment) in order to lower the level of the violent conflict and even end it. "Reassurance" aims to persuade the adversary

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[96]   Yaron London, interview with Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Aug. 13, 2004); Ari Shavit, interview with Ephraim Halevy, *Haaretz Magazine* (Sept. 5, 2003).

[97]   Dr. Matti Steinberg, speaking to the think team of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies; Dr. Elie Podeh at a seminar day at the Truman Institute for Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2003.

that desisting from or reducing violent activity will not harm his status and will not deprive him of assurances made in the past, and that a return to the negotiating table is possible, even if under different conditions. "Conditional reciprocity" makes concessions to the adversary conditional on a prior positive response; for example, putting a stop to violent activity at a particular place or desisting from a certain type of violence will be rewarded accordingly (the possible reward can be made known in advance). GRIT differs from the other two options in that it makes use of a good-will gesture, or a certain concession, in order to encourage the adversary to adopt similar means, without demanding an immediate quid pro quo, with the goal of building confidence which will make possible the weakening of the violent conflict or even its termination. These "carrot strategies" can also be integrated with "stick strategies" (threat and punishment). A variety of such strategies could have been utilized not only vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority as such but also toward relatively moderate elements within it. Although there is no guarantee of success, avoiding their use means forgoing even so much as their examination.[98]

The paramount conclusion that emerges from an analysis of the Israeli conception of managing the conflict in the four years of the violent confrontation is that violent "conflict management" with no political expectation is a negative prescription in every sense for both sides. This type of management conception tends to escalate the conflict with no concrete expectation of its cessation or even its reduction. It results in the perpetuation of the existing despair, brings about a long-term freeze, leads to a hurting stalemate, and plays into the hands of the extremists on both sides. Ultimately, it helps perpetuate the Palestinian conception that violence, with all its risks and its steep price, is the only way to get Israel to accede to demands.

The mode of the conflict's management to date also bears the most serious cognitive-emotional implications for the future of the relations between the two sides. The enmity, hatred, fear, delegitimization, and mistrust between the sides reached unprecedented dimensions, which will make renewal of the political

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[98]   For a discussion of conflict management strategies, see: Alexander K. George, "The need for influence theory and actor-specific behavioral models of adversaries," in Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (eds.), *Know the Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and their Strategic Cultures* (Alabama: United States Air Force Counter-Proliferation Center, 2002), pp. 271-310.

process, or even its control, exceedingly difficult. The result is liable to be the indefinite prolongation of the violent confrontation, with fluctuations in the level of the violence.[99] A management conception which harbors no political expectation and does not offer such an option tends to heighten international pressure and the possibility of external intervention to find arrangements. Furthermore, it also hampers the waging of an effective diplomatic struggle in justification of the position taken in the conflict, and ultimately will generate many doubts about the rightness of the course that was adopted.

Even though Israel is in a serious plight after discovering that it has no absolute response to the security challenge it faces, it must avoid getting into a situation which Yehoshafat Harkabi termed "psychological lock-in."[100] By this he meant becoming attached to a political conception based on underlying assumptions which do not necessarily reflect the political and military developments. Avoiding essential learning processes is liable to perpetuate and even exacerbate the existing distress. However onerous such learning processes may be cognitively and emotionally — because they are a tacit admission of failure — their rejection could prove disastrous.

[99]   Daniel Bar-Tal, "Psychological obstacles to peacemaking in the Middle East and proposals to overcome them," *Conflict and Communication Online*, 4(1). See also "Search for Common Ground: The Potential for a Nonviolent Intifada," www.sfgc.org/documents/SFCGpoll.pdf (December 10, 2003).

[100]   Yehoshafat Harkabi, *War and Strategy* (Tel Aviv: Maarakhot, 1990), p. 555.

Chapter Five: Toward an Alternative Policy for Managing the Conflict

The present conception of "conflict management," which was grounded in the basic assumption that no political settlement was possible due to the lack of a negotiating partner, and which focused mainly on finding alternative modes of military response in order to bring about a military decision of the confrontation, is apparently undergoing a process of change. Both levels in Israel, the political and the military, appear to have internalized the insights stemming from the failure of deterrence to prevent the confrontation and from the inability to decide it militarily. Ze'ev Schiff was indeed correct in saying that "in some instances the Palestinian failure reflects also an Israeli failure. It does not hold out a formula for an end to the conflict and an agreement. It is a failure that deepened the Israeli occupation and Israel's rule over another people and multiplied the bloodshed on both sides."[101]

Conflict management policy, like conflict resolution policy, is the exclusive responsibility of the political level, which is duty-bound to define the political goals and the means to achieve them. Moreover, the political level must ensure full oversight of the implementation of the policy it has articulated. This oversight is essential; failure to implement it is liable to adversely affect the execution of the policy, cause unwanted escalation, and thwart the conflict management policy. If the political level evades taking responsibility for the conflict's management, the military level is compelled to guess its intentions, define the political achievement being sought, "create" the conceptual and situational context within which the military force can be activated, and develop an autonomous conflict management doctrine.

The newly evolving management conception accepts the assessment that no military solution exists for the present confrontation and that only a political solution can end it. However, the conception continues to be grounded in the

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[101]   Ze'ev Schiff, "Sorry, we didn't win," *Haaretz* (Oct. 1, 2004).

assumption that there is no prospect for such a solution in the present stage and therefore the terrorism must be dealt with by unilateral measures. These measures are intended to reduce terrorism and its gains maximally, and diminish Israel's management costs in the different dimensions. Underlying the new conception is the supposition that the present management conception has played itself out (notwithstanding that it brought about a significant reduction in Palestinian terrorism) and is now in the loss column, and that its continuation likely to generate additional costs and losses for Israel, especially given the likely development of undesirable international diplomatic initiatives.

The unilateral withdrawal plan, entailing the evacuation of all the settlements in the Gaza Strip and of four settlements in northern Samaria, is revolutionary. For the first time in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in the Israeli-Arab conflict, too, Israel has adopted a unilateral management strategy based on departure, which includes territorial withdrawal and the evacuation of settlements without a peace process and without the promise of any quid pro quo from the other side. Although this strategy is based on the existing conception, which holds that there is no Palestinian partner for a political process, its adoption will constitute a meaningful change in the conception of the political level. It is a strategy of despair at the possibility of the joint management of the conflict with the Palestinians and at the possibility of promoting political moves, especially the Bush plan and the Road Map. If actually implemented, this strategy could prove far-reaching, not only in terms of the future of managing the conflict with the Palestinians, but also in regard to its resolution.

A unilateral strategy of conflict management constitutes a default choice and is not desirable unless it can encourage the other side to return to a joint framework of conflict management — in other words, mutual shared efforts to reduce the violence and renew the political process. Arafat's death before the implementation of the disengagement plan created a new opportunity with a view to changing the present model of managing the conflict. With Arafat gone, the Israeli claim that there is no Palestinian "partner" is no longer viable, and the disengagement can be used as a coordinated strategy with the Palestinians to put a stop to the violence or significantly moderate it. The development of a coordinated strategy, or even a joint framework of conflict management, can serve as an initial basis for confidence building and for a certain level of security coordination — essential elements for

renewing a political process in any form. The disengagement plan has created a new opportunity for both sides, and Arafat's death in late 2004 might help them act jointly, for the first time in four years, to end a prolonged state of violence and instill new hope for political dialogue.

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