Prospects for and Obstacles to Achieving a Viable Palestinian State:

What Can an Actor with Inferior Power Capabilities Do in a Graduated Prisoner's Dilemma?

Martin Beck

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What Can an Actor with Inferior Power Capabilities Do in a Graduated Prisoner's Dilemma?

By Martin Beck *

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1. Introduction

From the vantage point of the naïve observer, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the foreseeable future is highly likely. First, in the 1950s and 1960s, the right of national self-determination had become widely accepted not only in theory but also to a high degree in practice as indicated by the worldwide process of decolonization. There can be no doubt that a Palestinian people exists since even Israel, which was reluctant to approve this fact in the period between the start of the occupation in June 1967 and the Oslo Peace Process in September 1993, officially recognized the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the representative of the Palestinian people in the "Declaration of Principles". Moreover, there can be no doubt that the occupation regime installed by Israel contradicts the principle of national self-determination.

Second, there is a recent trend of global democratization. In 1974, the "third wave"[1] started with the "Revolution of the Carnations" in Portugal and rapidly spread over most continents (indeed with only one major exception, the Middle East). Moreover, with the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States of America (USA) as the only left superpower decided to put the promotion of democratization on its foreign-policy agenda. Although there is absolutely no guarantee that the establishment of a Palestinian state would bring democracy and freedom to its people, it is evident that Palestinian national self-determination is a necessary precondition for such a development. Note that the Palestinians were not granted the chance for a truly democratic system by the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the course of the Oslo Peace Process. The reason behind this is not the fact that the PA, which was elected in free polls in 1996, actually established an authoritarian system. Rather, the very

[1] Samuel P. Huntington 1991: *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late 20th Century*, Norman, Okla.: Oklahoma University Press.

architecture of the Oslo Peace Process contradicted basic democratic principles since the Israeli occupation power preserved the main components of sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, such as control of more than 50% of the territory, borders, and foreign affairs. In other words, the political body elected by the Palestinian people in democratic elections was deprived of instruments which are essential for a democratic system. To put it in a nutshell, prolonged Israeli occupation in Palestine contradicts the global trend of democratization.

Finally, the Palestinians have not suffered the fate of some "forgotten", people whose potential right of self-determination is more or less ignored by the international community, e.g. the Sahrawis and the Kurds in the Middle East. As recently as March 15, 2002, with Resolution 1397, the United Nations' Security Council proclaimed the aim of establishing a Palestinian nation state, something thus officially approved as an important goal of the world community including the USA.

Thus, the optimism of our naïve observer that there will be a Palestinian state soon is based on some good arguments. Yet, at the same time, there are strong counter-arguments all of which are related to the fact that Israel to date prevented all Palestinian efforts to grant national self-determination to the Palestinians. Note the difference between the terms "Palestinian State" and "national self-determination of the Palestinians". Although there are some exceptions, the overwhelming majority of the political actors of Israel as well as its people are not opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state as such.[2] The PA elite was forced to acknowledge the important difference between founding a Palestinian state and the realization

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[2] According to Ephraim Ya'ar's and Tamar Hermann's summary of a poll conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center at Tel Aviv University in fall 2002, 58% of the Israelis would accept a Palestinian state negotiated with the Israeli government (**http://spirit.tau.ac.il/socant/peace/peaceindex/2002/files/ nov2002e.doc**, August 31, 2003).

of Palestinian self-determination through the establishment of a viable state, when Yasir Arafat discovered several times that his unilateral announcement to proclaim a Palestinian state was not a menace to Israel. Finally, Arafat refrained from doing so because Israel would have simply recognized such a state in the borders of areas A (and B), i.e. in the patchwork carpet already administered by the PA.

It is much easier to define what would not be a viable Palestinian state than to determine what would be. A definition of a viable Palestinian state based on objective criteria, such as "economic independence" suffers from several shortcomings.[3] On the one hand, the resulting definition of a viable Palestinian state would be too broad since, from an economic point of view, the control over the holy sites of Jerusalem (Al-Haram Al-Sharif) would not be a major issue. Yet, few Palestinians would agree to deal with the issue of the holy sites of Jerusalem as a question of minor importance. The problem of this finding can hardly be solved without introducing criteria lacking objectivity such as "cultural viability". On the other hand, at the same time the resulting definition would be too narrow. It is doubtful whether even a Palestinian state endowed with sovereignty over the whole of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip plus a land corridor could ever enjoy economic independence in the strict meaning of the term. Yet, there can be little doubt that the leadership of the PA and a clear majority of Palestinians would accept such a political entity as viable. Indeed, there are some examples of states that proved to be viable although they could never survive without major external funding, such as Jordan.

My conclusion from this brief discussion on the term viability is that—in the present case—a subjective dimension must be part of the definition. Obviously, two extreme points mark the ends on a continuum of different Palestinian would-be states. The first extreme

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[3] According to my knowledge, the first scholar who attempted to determine the features of economic viability of a Palestinian state in a systematic way was George T. Abed 1990: *The Economic Viability of a Palestinian State*, Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies.

point is a state comprising areas A (and B) which would be considered by few, if any, Palestinians as viable. The other extreme point is defined as a sovereign Palestinian state on the whole of the Palestinian Territories conquered by Israel in 1967, which would be considered by the leadership of the PLO and the Palestinian people as viable. Between these two extreme points an indefinite amount of potential Palestinian would-be states could be constructed on the drawing board, some of which would be considered by the Palestinian side as viable whereas others would not.

Possibly, the distinction between the establishment of a Palestinian state and a viable state restrains the optimism of our naïve observer. Yet, my assumption is that he or she will not yet have become pessimistic. Therefore, it is my task to make clear as precisely as possible what inhibits Israel and the PLO from agreeing upon a political entity that would be considered as a viable Palestinian state by the Palestinian side. Broadly speaking, the reason why by now Israel has been reluctant to accept a viable Palestinian state is related to differences in positions of Israel and the PLO on the territorial extension and the degree of sovereignty for that state. Since Israel has been prevailing over the PLO in the conflict for 36 years by now, the first task of this paper is to clarify the structure of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, it must be analyzed what means are at the disposal of Israel in order to counter the factors making our naïve observer optimistic that a (viable) Palestinian state will be established soon. To put it in a nutshell, we have to understand the nature - or better, the basic structure - of the conflict between the PLO and Israel as well as the latter party's pillars of power enabling it to prevail over the former. Since precision is of utmost importance for this task, it will be based on mathematical tools as provided by game theoretical insights (Chapter 2).

The second task of this paper is to ask what strategies are available to the Palestinians to succeed in their aim of gaining statehood. On the one hand, Israel's success in preventing a viable Palestinian state from coming into being is based on its superior power position vis-à-vis the PLO. On the other hand, all past and present - and

most probably all future - Palestinian strategies to achieve a viable state have been based on the logic of challenging Israel's superior power capabilities. As a consequence of the fact that Israel enjoys superior power capabilities particularly in terms of armed forces, economics, politics, and diplomacy, the Palestinian side may try to challenge Israel in one or several of these fields. In principle, in all fields a radical or a moderate approach may be pursued. For instance, in the field of diplomacy a radical approach would mean that the Palestinian side would try to acquire power capabilities balancing or even outweighing those of Israel. Yet, due to the fact that the power gap between Israel and the PLO is extraordinarily huge in this and other fields, actual past and present—and most probably also future—strategies of the Palestinian side have resorted to the moderate approach of reducing the relative power gap vis-à-vis Israel. Palestinians have been attempting to take advantage of the fact that superior power capabilities are not always and under all circumstances applicable in dealing with a specific conflict, i.e. control over resources does not necessarily equal control over results. For instance, the fact that the European Union sometimes prevails over the USA in trade conflicts is, among other things, due to the latter party's inability to use its superior military capabilities in dealing with these conflicts. An obvious example of the case to be analyzed here is that whatever kind of military strategy the Palestinian side embarks on, Israel cannot use its nuclear power arsenal to counter it (Chapter 3).

Although a general framework for strategies potentially available to the Palestinians will be developed in chapter 3, detailed discussion will be limited to strategies actually pursued by political actors in Palestine. Thus, the final task of this paper is to discuss whether and to what degree the Palestinian side has neglected potentially promising strategies. The chosen perspective will draw attention to the fact that, due to the huge power gap between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, the latter party could try to make up for this disadvantage at least in part by embarking on a comprehensive strategy, i.e. a way to combine approaches challenging Israel's superior power capabilities in more than one field, thereby also triggering synergetic effects (Chapter 4).

2. The Structure of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

2.1 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict as a Graduated Prisoner's Dilemma

A conflict may be defined as a positional gap between two or more actors on a certain issue. In the present case, Israel and the PLO differ on the establishment of a Palestinian state. The best way to understand the chances and obstacles for the actors of a conflict in finding an agreement is to grasp the situation structure of the conflict, which can be examined in a precise methodological way by applying game theory. The situation structure is determined by the combined preferences of the actors. In the present case, the PLO aims at establishing an independent state on the whole of the Palestinian Territories conquered by Israel in 1967, i.e. East Jerusalem (Al-Quds), the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, Israel insists, first, on maintaining its rule over more or less extended parts of the Palestinian Territory, and, second, on curtailing the sovereignty of the Palestinian State.[4]

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict as described above shares the characteristics of a graduated prisoner's dilemma.[5] Although a compromise is possible, actors exposed to this situation structure will find it very difficult to reach an agreement. In order to understand why, one should start with an examination of the problems actors are facing in an "ordinary"—as opposed to a graduated—prisoner's dilemma. In an "ordinary" dilemma situation, both actors would be better off if they cooperated (i.e. there would be peace between Israel and Palestine) since the alternative is mutual

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[4] Martin Beck 2002: *Friedensprozeß im Nahen Osten. Rationalität, Kooperation und politische Rente im Vorderen Orient*, Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag [*Peace Process in the Middle East. Rationality, Cooperation, and Political Rent*], Chapter 4.

[5] See Duncan Snidal 1985: "Coordination Versus Prisoner's Dilemma. Implications for International Cooperation and Regimes", in: *American Political Science Review* 79.4, pp. 923-942.

defection (e.g. the situation since Al Aqsa Intifada of using force and counter-force). At the same time, both actors have strong incentives not to cooperate for three reasons. First, they would prefer to get the whole cake instead of sharing it (i.e. a sovereign Palestinian state over all the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel in 1967 or prolonged Israeli occupation, respectively). Second, both actors are hesitant to cooperate since they are scared that the other actor will cheat on them (e.g. if the PLO accepted a demilitarized Palestinian state in exchange for Israel granting military non-interference to Palestine, Israel would be suspicious that Palestine would nonetheless strengthen its military capabilities and Palestine would be suspicious that Israel would take advantage of Palestine's military impotence by exerting physical power over it). Third, both actors are hesitant to cooperate because they fear that the other could use its benefits from cooperation in the future against it (e.g. Palestine would be scared that Israel could use its improvement of relations with the Arab World in order to marginalize Palestine; Israel would be afraid that Palestine could use the advantages of statehood in order to challenge the legitimacy of Israel in the future).[6] Therefore, it is difficult to reach an agreement in dilemma situations. Yet, since non-cooperation inflicts harm on both parties, there is a certain chance that they will succeed if they find ways to control their mutual lack of trust (e.g. Palestinian demilitarization could be verified by early warning stations and Israeli non-interference in internal Palestinian affairs could be guaranteed by a powerful third actor) and the problem of relative gains (e.g. Israel and the PLO could agree upon a free trade zone, resulting in mutual harm if they used resources against each other).

What makes an agreement in an "ordinary"—as opposed to a graduated—prisoner's dilemma much more likely to be resolved is the fact that there is only one cooperative outcome in the former

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[6] For the so-called problem of relative gains see Joseph M. Grieco 1988: "Realist Theory and the Problem of International Cooperation. Analysis with an Amended Prisoner's Dilemma Model", in: *Journal of Politics* 50.3, pp. 600-624.

situation whereas several are possible in the latter. If the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were an ordinary prisoner's dilemma, it would be sufficient for both parties to agree upon peace. An agreement between Israel and the PLO would require much more than this. Here, both parties must also agree on how exactly to divide several crucial disputed items. To be specific, in order to achieve peace, Israelis and Palestinians have not only to forego their most preferred outcomes (i.e. unrestricted occupation and unconditional withdrawal, respectively), but must also find common solutions for complicated divisible issues, such as the degree of sovereignty of a Palestinian state, the distribution of power over Jerusalem, the dismantling or annexation of Israeli settlements and the question of how many Palestinian refugees are allowed to settle where. Thus, it would not be adequate for Israel and Palestine to only resolve the problems of an ordinary dilemma situation, namely overcoming their mutual lack of trust ("Will the other cheat on me?") and the issue of relative gains ("Will the other use its payoffs received from cooperation in order to develop capacities to threaten me in the future?"). They have also to resolve matters attached to a graduated dilemma situation. The latter is much more complicated to deal with peacefully since, contrary to the ordinary variant, there is not one single cooperative outcome ("peace") but several by which the parties are privileged to different degrees (e.g. "All, some or none of the Israeli settlements will be dismantled"). Consequently, power, which does not play any role in an ordinary dilemma situation because there is only one cooperative outcome, may become decisive in a graduated dilemma situation.[7]

Since there is a huge power gap between Israel and the PLO, both actors are "naturally" inclined to resort to positions mutually excluding each other. Israel's awareness of its superior power

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[7] This is the reason why many popular Israeli descriptions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are restricted to the issue of peace, thereby obscuring the fact that Israel's superior power capabilities put it into the position where it can reject an agreement that could otherwise be achieved.

enables it to draw red lines, which it will not cross (in extreme cases, not even for one single step), regardless of the quality of the Palestinian arguments. At the same time, since the Palestinian side is aware of its inferiority in terms of power, it tends to focus on justice, which it will not give up (in an extreme case, not even one single piece of it), regardless whether this results in a total failure of an agreement. This point can best be demonstrated by the example of the refugees issue. Many Israeli actors simply argue that the "right of return" is not acceptable to Israel since it contradicts its national interest, thereby ignoring the moral dimension of the issue (although any outside observer with a tolerable degree of impartiality can hardly ignore that innocent Palestinians were victimized by Israel in the war of 1948/49). On the other hand, many Palestinians simply insist on the "right of return", thereby ignoring the practical dimensions of the issue (although the same outside observer faces major difficulties in understanding why it should be attractive to a descendant of a Palestinian refugee from 1948 to live in Israel instead of getting compensated). In other words, a major problem facing any Israeli-Palestinian agreement is, first, how to tame the Israeli inclination to dictate an agreement that reflects the power asymmetry between Israel and the Palestinian side as well as, second, how to convince the Palestinians to lower their expectations of what could be considered fair under such norms as condemnation of the occupation of foreign territory.

The description of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a graduated prisoner's dilemma does not exaggerate the problems of finding an agreement. Possibly, on the contrary, some scholars may tax me with over-optimism since on both sides, radical political actors exist whose positions create a zero-sum game with virtually no chances for reaching an agreement. On the Palestinian side, some (or even many) Islamist groups are oriented towards the "liberation of Palestine as a whole", including Israel in the borders of 1949. On the Israeli side, some (or even many) organizations of the settlers' movement are opposed to a Palestinian state in general. However, I believe that both radical camps are in a minority position and could hardly prevent the implementation of an

agreement reached by the leaderships of the PLO and the government of Israel. Yet, the growing political importance of the two radical camps significantly intensifies the problem of relative gains since both Israel and the PLO fear that one's own concessions could be used by the extremists of the other side against one's own interests in the future.

Two main preliminary conclusions can be drawn from the analysis presented so far. First, the tricky structure of the conflict (rather than idiosyncrasies of the parties) makes it very difficult to reach an agreement between Israel and the PLO. Second, the power asymmetry between the two parties creates mutually exclusive inclinations as to how to deal with the conflict, thereby increasing the difficulties of the two parties in managing it in a peaceful way. Moreover, the way power matters in the conflict shapes Palestinian strategies, as will be demonstrated in more detail in the following sub-chapter.

2.2 Pillars of Israeli Power vis-à-vis the Palestinian Side

One of the results of the previous sub-chapter is to clarify not only that superior Israeli power capabilities matter in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also how. To have a precise idea of what strategies are available to the Palestinians in their power game with Israel, it is important to determine the pillars of Israeli power.

Social scientists have developed different concepts of the key term "power". Probably the most common concept is based on the definition that an actor's power equals the resources at its disposal. If we apply this idea of power as "control over resources" to the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the result is very clear. Israel is much more powerful than the Palestinians, regardless which of the common criteria for power resources are chosen. There can be no doubt that Israel's economic, military, diplomatic and political capabilities far outstrip those available to the Palestinians. Israel is among the very few former developing countries originally based on agriculture that managed to create an advanced economy based on modern technology, which is why its current per capita income is among the highest on the globe.

Moreover, Israel's military apparatus is among the most modern and efficient worldwide. Israel also enjoys a favorable diplomatic position since it has been developing close ties with the USA since 1967. Finally, since Israel in the borders of 1949 is a democracy, its political system is also among the most efficient worldwide. In principle, there is an open list of fields in which Israel's power resources are superior to those available to the Palestinians. Nonetheless, the elements presented here cover the most important Israeli power resources, and certainly all those that played a major role in the recent history of the Israeli-Palestinian power game.[8]

Yet, the concept of power as control over resources is not really appropriate for the purpose of the present paper. Because my contribution is supposed to focus on Palestinian strategies for national self-determination, it must be taken into consideration that all Palestinian efforts to establish a viable state are based on the logic of preventing Israel from exerting its power capabilities to the full degree. To give an extreme example, part of the logic in favor of suicide attacks is that Israel, for humanitarian reasons, is not able to respond to them by using all the resources at its disposal, e.g. sending out its air force for area bombardment, thereby killing tens or even hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. This leads us to an alternative concept according to which power is to be defined as "control over outcomes" rather than "control over resources".[9] Since the use of power capabilities is often restricted, which Palestinian actors try to

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[8] Population is often considered as another important feature defining the power capabilities at the disposal of an actor. Although Israel's population outweighs that of the Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, there is hardly any other relevant power resource in which the gap between the Palestinian and the Israeli sides is smaller, particularly since about one fifth of Israeli citizens are Palestinians. This aspect will be discussed at the end of this paper.

[9] For a discussion of these two concepts of power see Michael Zürn 1992: *Interessen und Institutionen in der Internationalen Politik. Grundlegung und Anwendung des situationsstrukturellen Ansatzes*, Opladen: Leske und Budrich [*Interests und Institutions in International Politics. Foundation and Applications of the Situation Structure Approach*], Chapter 2.

take advantage of in the present case by influencing the outcome to a much higher degree than could be expected if Israel exerted all resources at its disposal, the task of chapter 3 will be to examine how exactly different Palestinian actors try, or could try, to constrain Israel's ability to use its different power capabilities.

3. Actual and Potential Palestinian Strategies to Play the Power Game with Israel

As described in the last chapter, Israel is superior to the Palestinian side in terms of power capabilities in at least four major fields: armed forces, economy, diplomacy, and politics. In principle, as mentioned in chapter 1, Palestinian strategies to achieve a viable Palestinian state could be based on a radical or a moderate approach. Recent actual Palestinian strategies to achieve national independence do not cover the whole theoretical spectrum. Yet, it is important to present the whole spectrum, first, in order to understand why the actual Palestinian spectrum is limited. Second, it may be discovered that some potential options have been neglected in the actual Palestinian struggle for national independence; such a finding could contribute to chapter 4, focusing on possible future strategies available to the Palestinians.

Which military, economic, diplomatic and political approaches to achieve national independence are available to the Palestinians? Although the Israeli-Palestinian case is unique in some respects, in order to find an answer to this question, it may be helpful to briefly outline different types of successful, radical as well as moderate struggles for national independence in history.

3.1 Types of Successful Historical Movements for Independence

There have been few successful national struggles for independence primarily based on a radical economic approach, meaning that the colonized actor managed to achieve independence by countering

or outweighing the economic potential of the colonial power. The Dutch struggle for national independence in the 16th and 17th century against Habsburg Spain seems to be such a case. Even as the liberal Dutch provinces developed into a major center of international trade, the "Holy Inquisition" inhibited economic progress in Spain itself, thereby significantly contributing to the fact that the Dutch people finally held the upper hand in one of the longest independence wars in history (1568-1648). A moderate variant of an economic approach significantly contributed to Japanese independence. Being a poor, backward country in the 18th and early 19th century, Japan, although never a formal colony, was exposed to imperialist American, English and French penetration in the middle of the 19th century. Yet, through the "Meiji Restoration" of 1868, the new Japanese leadership laid the foundations for one of the most advanced economies worldwide, thereby significantly contributing to substantial (rather than formal) national independence, which could not even be shaken by the disastrous Japanese defeat in World War II. Moreover, the success of the American Declaration of Independence (1776), although mainly a result of French intervention in favor of America, may partly be traced back to an economic approach since England faced difficulties (or displayed unwillingness) in directing as many of its economic capabilities into its American colonies as would have been necessary in order to counter the economic capabilities developed by the Americans.

In terms of armed forces, there is hardly any successful case of a national struggle for independence based on a radical strategy. However, there are several examples of national independence achieved as a result of "moderate" military struggles.[10] The most prominent Middle Eastern example is the Algerian War of

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[10] It should be kept in mind that the term "moderate" only refers to the degree to which the party seeking national independence is challenging the power capabilities at the disposal of the adversary rather than to the degree of brutality of the war.

Independence. If France had brought all its military capabilities to bear, it would have easily crushed the Algerian forces. The reason why Algeria succeeded in achieving national independence in 1962 was related to the fact that France got "tired" of continuously wasting high military capabilities for a colony of minor importance to its national interest.

There are few cases in history of successful struggles for national independence based on a radical political strategy. Possibly, the establishment of Slovenia as an independent state in 1991 is such a case. To a higher degree than Croatia, even prior to independence, Slovenia had developed many features of a democratic system superior to the antiquated authoritarian regime in Belgrade.[11] There are many more cases of success in achieving independence as the result of a moderate political approach, among them most of the countries of the Fertile Crescent, including Syria, Lebanon, and Israel, in addition to Egypt.[12] These countries used the period of external British and French penetration to develop relatively sophisticated political structures superior to those imposed on them by the imperialist power (but not superior to those in the motherlands of the imperialist powers). In all cases, both imperialist powers had to realize that efforts to counter national self-determination would have been too cost-intensive.[13]

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[11] The successful secession of Slovenia also heavily relied on the fact that Croatia, which declared independence simultaneously with Slovenia, was of higher importance to Yugoslavia, which is why Belgrade decided to concentrate on preventing Croatia's independence as well as the favorable diplomatic environment with the European Union quickly welcoming Slovenian independence.

[12] As far as the Arab countries are concerned, I refer to substantial (rather than formal) independence achieved only in the 1950s.

[13] In the case of Egypt, Great Britain, allied with France and Israel, finally learned this lesson in the Suez War 1956 when the USA forced the military alliance to withdraw its troops from the Sinai.

The success of native South Africans in their struggle for national independence can be considered as the result of a radical diplomatic approach. Empowered by its people's demographic superiority, the African National Congress launched a campaign demanding the implementation of basic principles of human rights, thereby gradually isolating the apartheid regime on the international level. Although Nelson Mandela had to negotiate with a representative of the old regime, Frederik Willem de Klerk, in 1990, the latter was placed on the defensive after decades of diplomatic superiority vis-à-vis the liberation movement. There are at least two sub-types of successful moderate diplomatic approaches. First, they were usually the result of major shifts in the distribution of power in the international system, weakening the diplomatic position of a state opposed to granting independence to an ethnic group. Independence could thus be achieved as a result of peaceful negotiations, as in the case of Slovakia, which became independent in 1993. Yet, in some cases of international power shifts, national independence could only be achieved by heavy superpower support, as in the case of Taiwan, which was backed by the USA in the 1950s and 1960s, or even in local wars, as in the case of Croatia in the 1990s. In a second sub-type of successful diplomatic approaches, the power shift was limited to a local theater of war, such as in the case of Ireland in the early 20th century. After an Anglo-Irish war leading to a painful stalemate, in 1921 the parties concluded the "Anglo-Irish Treaty", which laid the foundation for the state of Ireland (at the same time creating the North Ireland conflict, unsettled to date).

Table 1 gives an overview of the different types of successful movements of independence discussed above, thereby stressing the different power capabilities and the degree to which they were used against the actor opposed to the granting of national independence.

Table 1

Types of Successful Movements of Independence

Degree of Power / Employment Field of Power Resources	Radical Case	Moderate Case
Economic	■ Netherlands	■ Japan, (USA)
Armed Forces	-	■ Algeria
Politics	■ Slovenia	■ Fertile Crescent
Diplomatic	■ South Africa	■ Slovakia (negotiated)
		■ Croatia (accomplished after armed struggle)
		■ Taiwan (achieved through support of a superpower)
		■ Ireland (negotiated after a local war)

Due to the huge power gap between Israel and the PLO, actual as well as potential future strategies of the Palestinians are predominantly moderate rather than radical. Thus, recent Palestinian efforts to achieve a viable state focused on strategies aimed at restricting Israel's ability to use its superior power capabilities. Also in the foreseeable future, the Palestinians are left with no reasonable alternatives to adopting moderate rather than radical strategies. In other words, all actual as well as reasonable future Palestinian strategies attempt at reducing Israel's control over outcomes rather than to balance or even outweigh its resources.

3.2 Actual and Potential Palestinian Approaches to Achieving National Independence

The question arises as to which strategies Palestinian actors have recently pursued, and could possibly pursue in the future in order to achieve national independence. In answering this question, the four approaches presented above are applied to recent Palestinian

history. The question will then be asked whether there are potential strategies so far untested.

3.2.1 The Economic Approach

There have been few Palestinian efforts to copy the Japanese, not to mention the Dutch way of gaining independence. This is hardly surprising, since, contrary to the historic cases mentioned, Israeli occupation between 1967 and 1993 directly and systematically restricted the development of an autonomous Palestinian economy. Thus, in the present case, growth in agriculture was curtailed by expropriation and destruction of agrarian land as well as by a discriminative water policy. Moreover, industrial growth was inhibited by a restrictive licensing policy. Therefore, the growing Palestinian labor force was mainly channeled into the Israeli economy, which is why Palestinian welfare became dependent on Israeli migration policy. With the beginning of the Oslo period, Israel's contribution to the impoverishment of the Palestinian economy became less direct. Nonetheless, the closure policy significantly constrained Palestinian chances for developing their economy.

The policy of the PA added to the economic problems of Palestine among other things by establishing monopolies, thereby neglecting some economic potentials. However, it is evident that the Palestinians lack any real chance to challenge Israel's superior economic power. Even if Palestinian actors had worked hard on the improvement of their economy in the Oslo period, it is a fair assumption that opportunities were extremely limited. Furthermore, there is no good reason to assume that the situation will change in the foreseeable future. The Japanese and Dutch way was and is therefore not a realistic perspective for Palestinians in challenging Israel's superior power capabilities. Although occupation is cost-intensive for Israel since it binds resources and manpower otherwise at its disposal for productive purposes, Palestinians are not in a position to take advantage of this by economic means since this would require that the Palestinian economy generate surplus at least to a level where the economic

resources at the disposal of the Palestinians in their struggle against Israel meet the economic resources Israel is ready to spend for occupation. Palestine is not capable of doing so, particularly since its economy is highly dependent on Israel.[14]

3.2.2 The Military Approach

Military means were already used during the Oslo period (1993-2000). There can be no doubt, however, that force and counter-force reached a new quality with the start of Al Aqsa Intifada. Although the common perception that most Palestinian military actions are suicide attacks inside the heartland of Israel does not stand up to an empirical scrutiny,[15] this perception is anything but surprising due to the outrage suicide attacks provoke among Israelis and Western observers alike. Nevertheless, the analysis should start with a brief examination of Palestinian military actions in general before focusing on suicide attacks.

According to statistics supplied by the Israeli Defense Force, in 2002 the overwhelming majority of Palestinian armed attacks took place in the Occupied Territories, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and the clear majority of targets were military installations. Thus, at first sight, the military approach of Al Aqsa Intifada could be perceived as guerrilla warfare similar to some Latin American cases as well as the Algerian movement for independence. Therefore, the first question to answer is why the Palestinian guerrilla attacks did not trigger an Israeli reaction similar to France accepting Algerian independence after having

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[14] Of course, the Palestinian leadership and people would be well advised to make all efforts to improve their economy, but the positive repercussions of improving the economy would not help much in the power game with Israel. Perhaps this explains the otherwise surprising fact that the disastrous acceleration of the Palestinian recession since the start of Al-Aqsa Intifada only plays a minor role in public debates.

[15] See the statistics prepared by the Israeli Defense Force, available at: **http://www.idf.il/newsite/english/0104-1.stm**, August 31, 2003.

gotten "tired" of continuing the warfare. A first possible answer is that such a reaction is just a matter of time. However, I believe that structural dissimilarities between the cases of Algeria and Palestine, which are hardly subject to change over time in the foreseeable future, are the main reason for the different outcomes. First of all, as will be argued further on, the Palestinian strategy of suicide attacks strengthens Israel on the diplomatic as well as the political level, thereby significantly reducing the effectiveness of Palestinian guerrilla attacks. Second, although the Palestinian and the Algerian cases share the feature of settler colonialism, at least three major dissimilarities between the two cases put the Palestinians at a comparative disadvantage to the Algerians in the 1950s and 1960s. First, geographic proximity makes occupation and settlement policy less cost-intensive to Israel than it used to be to France. Second, compared to the French-Algerian case, the awareness of a separation between the "motherland" and the "colony" is less developed in the Israeli society. This holds true primarily for the religious segment of Jewish-Israeli society, which believes that major parts, if not all of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, constitute the "Holy Land" promised to them by God. Nonetheless, also many secular Israeli Jews are only partially aware of the fact that many "Israeli neighborhoods", particularly in and around East Jerusalem, are actually settlements. For instance, even among "liberal" Israeli Jews only few would consider the so-called "French Hill" neighborhood a settlement to be dismantled. Third, the Israeli settlers' movement is well organized and exerts major influence on the government. When Baruch Goldstein carried out his massacre, killing 29 innocent Palestinian civilians as they prayed in the Mosque of Al-Haram Al-Ibrahimi in Hebron in February 1994, an overwhelming majority of Israelis was outraged. The forced disarmament of the fanatic settlers of Hebron and most likely even further measures against the settlers in general would therefore have been supported by a clear majority of Israelis who in those days believed in the prospects of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. However, except for the establishment

of the impotent "Temporary International Presence in Hebron" (TIPH), nothing was done.[16] Furthermore, when Yigal Amir killed the former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995, the reaction of Binyamin Netanyahu, who was elected Prime Minister only half a year later in May 1996, was to pursue national unity rather than to isolate the influential settlers' movement:

> *"The criminal attack on Yitzhak Rabin has revealed in full force one of the dangers menacing the openness of a free society, primarily the danger of violence by extremist individuals (…) We must fight them with all legal means at our disposal. (…)*
>
> *But in this campaign against those few extremists, we must take care not to place collective blame on an entire group loyal to the State, which carries out its laws. I refer especially to the religious public, to the communities living in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, a public which is today being subjected to harsh attack, whose tremendous contribution in all areas of our life cannot be doubted. Any attempt to exploit the tragedy to gain political advantage and to incite against half the people is, of course, fundamentally invalid. (…)*
>
> *Especially after the tragic murder of Yitzhak Rabin — may his memory be blessed — we must remember the feeling of togetherness of one family; that is a basic condition for our existence, and it is our obligation now to make every effort to rehabilitate and strengthen it".[17]*

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[16] Ilana Kass/Bard O'Neill 1997: *The Deadly Embrace. The Impact of Israeli and Palestinian Rejectionism on the Peace Process*, Landham, Md.: University Press of America, pp. 174-175.

[17] Binyamin Netanyahu 1995: Knesset Speech (Special Session in Memory of Yitzhak Rabin, November 13, 1995), available at: **http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH01hb0**, September 2nd, 2003.

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I dare to speculate that the French people would have reacted differently if an extremist affiliated with the "Pieds Noirs" had killed French President Charles de Gaulle in 1960 or 1961 as a reaction to his policy shift towards an "Algérie algérienne".[18]

Contrary to France's reaction to the Algerian struggle, the Palestinian guerrilla attacks did not trigger Israel to grant independence to the Palestinians. The major argument for this thesis is closely related to the strategy of committing suicide attacks, which strategically strengthen Israel on both the political and diplomatic levels, as will be argued in the following paragraphs.

Since the present paper focuses on strategic rather than moral issues, the primary task here is to understand the strategic implications of suicide attacks. Yet, it is impossible to grasp the strategic implications of suicide attacks without first, understanding their moral perception in Israel as well as the Western world,[19] and second, grasping on which values this perception is based. A short answer to this task is that suicide attacks absolutely contradict basic standards of human rights because they are deliberately committed for the main (or even sole) aim of killing innocent people, i.e. non-combatants. In other words, for those who believe in human rights, suicide attacks are a crime against humanity. Moreover, since the value system of human rights implies that these are not subject to a trade-off, you are even not justified to kill innocents if you or your children were the victims of a war crime or a crime against humanity. For instance, even if your whole family was shot by a mass murderer, you are not allowed to take revenge by killing one of his relatives;

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[18] See also Roger Heacock 2003: *Die Dialektik vertikaler Feindbilder [The Dialectics of Vertical Foe Images]*, available at: **http://www.birzeit.edu/research/feindbilder.html**, August 31, 2003.

[19] Of course, there is no reason to exclude Arabs from this perception by definition. But due to the relative lack of power of the Arab world in international relations, their perception is much less important in the attempt to grasp the strategic implications of suicide attacks.

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moreover, you must not kill the mass-murderer himself except in order to save the life of yourself or somebody else.

Note that the question of explaining why some Palestinian actors resort to suicide attacks must be strictly separated from the normative question of why they are strongly condemned by those who believe in human rights. As I have argued elsewhere, I think that part of the explanation for Palestinian suicide attacks is indeed the Israeli occupation.[20] However, rather than an explanation of the roots of suicide attacks, the task of this paper is to discuss their strategic impact on the Palestinian goal of achieving national independence—and for this purpose a normative discussion of suicide attacks is essential.

A preliminary result of the analysis presented so far is that, from the perspective of those who base their moral values on the concept of human rights (or who claim to do so), those Palestinians who commit suicide attacks put themselves in the wrong.

Yet, sometimes Palestinians who share this argument seem to be confused as to why the international community very strongly condemns suicide attacks whereas often the very same international community shows a higher degree of understanding for Israeli military actions inflicting death on innocent Palestinians. This is an important point because if Palestinian suicide attacks and Israeli military operations resulting in the death of innocent Palestinians were considered acts showing an equal degree of barbarism, it could be expected that suicide attacks at least would not harm the Palestinian diplomatic position vis-à-vis Israel. Why are Palestinian suicide attacks and Israeli military operations causing the death of innocent civilians perceived differently by those whose value system is based on human rights?

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[20] Martin Beck 2002: "Rationalismus, Ethik und Krieg. Zur Logik und Moral der , Operation Schutzschild' im Frühjahr 2002" [Rationality, Ethics and War. On the Logic and Morality of the Israeli 'Operation Defensive Shield' in Spring 2002], in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 31.4, pp. 457-458.

At first glance, the different Western perception of Palestinian suicide attacks and Israeli operations killing innocent people may seem to be a case of moral double standards particularly since a highly reputed international human rights organization like Amnesty International states that many more Palestinian than Israeli children have been killed in the course of Al Aqsa Intifada.[21] However, although there are numerous examples for the fact that the international community applied moral double standards in the Israeli-Palestinian case, this does not hold true in the case of suicide attacks. Let us take an extreme example to clarify this argument. According to my view, and let us assume this would be the view of all those whose value system is based on human rights, the Israeli assassination of Salah Shehadeh in July 2002 qualifies as a war crime for several reasons.[22] First, as mentioned above, according to international law, you are not justified to kill even a mass murderer without according him a fair trial except in self-defense. It is very questionable whether the Israeli argument, according to which the killing of Shehadeh qualifies as a case of self-defense because this was allegedly the only way to prevent him from organizing further suicide attacks in Israel, is valid.[23] Second, even if this is the case, in killing Shehadeh, Israel caused the death of several innocent lives: 14 people, among them 8 children, were killed by the attack; since Shehadeh was in a residential dwelling, the Israeli army must have anticipated that killing him would inevitably cause death casualties of non-combatants due to the massive bomb used in the operation. Yet, since each human life

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[21] Amnesty International 2003: *Israel and the Occupied Territories. An Ongoing Human Rights Crisis*, available at:
http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/pages/iot_home, August 31, 2003.

[22] It seems appropriate to choose the killing of Shehadeh as a case study of comparison rather than the massacre by Baruch Goldstein because, contrary to the latter case, the former shares a major feature with the case of Palestinian suicide attacks: Both suicide attacks and "targeted killings" are *systematic* strategies carried out on countless occasions.

[23] See Ariel Sharon's remarks on the Israeli strategy of "targeted killings" at a joint press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair (November 1, 2001), available at: **http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0ko00**, September 2nd, 2003.

regardless of nationality has the same value, the Israeli action cannot be justified even if it should hold true that doing so was the only way to save some innocent Israeli lives.

Why then those who believe in human rights are more outraged by a Palestinian suicide attack than by Israel's killing of Shehadeh. This is evident by a comparison of the following statements by Human Rights Watch on Palestinian suicide attacks and the "liquidation" of Shehadeh, respectively:

> *"The people who carry out suicide bombings are not martyrs, they're war criminals, and so are the people who help to plan such attacks. The scale and systematic nature of these attacks sets them apart from other abuses committed in times of conflict. They clearly fall under the category of crimes against humanity".[24] (Emphases added, M.B.)*

> *"On July 23, 2002, fourteen civilians were killed and some 140 injured in the 'liquidation' of Hamas military leader Salah Shehadeh. Eight of the fourteen were children. Israeli political and military authorities had approved the operation, which involved the dropping of a one-ton bomb in a crowded civilian residential area, in violation of Israel's obligation under international humanitarian law to minimize civilian casualties".[25]*

The answer to the question why the two cases are perceived differently is that the basic logic of the Israeli action, although not justified, was still related to a military purpose (at least it is impossible to prove the contrary) whereas at least the main (if not the only) purpose of a suicide attack in Israel is to kill innocent people. Arguments sometimes put forward by those who attempt

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[24] Kenneth Roth 2002, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, quoted from: **http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/11/isrl-pa1101.htm**, August 31, 2003.

[25] Human Rights Watch 2003: *Israel, the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Palestinian Authority Territories*, available at: **http://www.hrw.org/wr2k3/ mideast5.html**, August 31, 2003.

to defend suicide attacks (e.g. that due to mandatory conscription as well as the reserve system of the Israeli army, all Israelis are actual or potential soldiers) absolutely contradict the value system of human rights (since, according to international law, even soldiers are non-combatants unless they are on duty, not to mention people who once were or might become soldiers in the future). Also, any defense of suicide bombings based on the famous "children's question": who was first in taking actions contradicting standards of human rights and who "only" took revenge, is meaningless if the value system of human rights is accepted.

Even those readers who do not share my argument (be it because they do not share the value system of human rights, or because they believe that I do not understand it properly) may possibly benefit from it insofar as it may add to their understanding of the strategic impact of suicide attacks. Whether one likes it or not, the dominant perception of those whose value system is based on human rights and who exert some influence in the international system, i.e. some Western governmental and non-governmental actors, runs along the lines delineated above.

Before the negative impact of suicide attacks for the Palestinian struggle for independence is discussed in more detail, it should be added that there would be—or at least would have been—a potential chance for the Palestinians to avoid some of these negative repercussions. The basic reason for this is that Palestinian suicide attacks are committed by non-governmental political actors rather than by the leadership of the PA whereas most Israeli military actions resulting in the deaths of innocent Palestinians are ordered by the Israeli government.

The independent investigation of Human Rights Watch comes to conclusions contradicting the official Israeli positions.[26] Although

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[26] Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002: *The Involvement of Arafat, PA Senior Officials and Apparatuses in Terrorism against Israel, Corruption and Crime*, available at: **http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/go.asp?MFAH0lom0**, September 3rd, 2003

in the summary of the report, it is stated that "Arafat and the PA could and should have taken [important steps] to prevent or deter suicide bombings directed against civilians",[27] Arafat and the PA leadership are not held responsible for planning, let alone implementing suicide attacks, which is one of the reasons why the Israeli 'Operation Defensive Shield', targeting among other things the PA infrastructure, could not be considered a just war.[28]

The PA leadership did not succeed in benefiting from the fact that it is not directly involved in suicide attacks, and this is largely due to Israel's superior diplomatic power, i.e. US tolerance if not support for the policy of damaging the infrastructure of the PA and isolating Arafat, who is allegedly "Israel's Bin Laden." Yet, apart from the failure to take consistent action against suicide attacks in 2001 (i.e. before Israel significantly restricted his options by carrying out 'Operation Defensive Shield'), Arafat and his political elite bear joint responsibility in the creation of such a desperate situation for the Palestinians primarily for the following two reasons. First, Arafat did not face the dramatic situation after the failure of the negotiations of Camp David and Taba. He did not take action to develop a coherent strategy for the period after Oslo, instead idly waiting for an uncoordinated popular uprising to come. Second, the PA leadership had established an authoritarian regime oppressing both criticism of the PLO bargain with Israel in 1993 and opposition to the PA policy in the 1990s in general. By doing so, Arafat significantly contributed to the strengthening of political actors who believe that their main feasible strategy in the power struggle both against Israel and the PA is to use force against Israeli civilians, on the assumption that suicide attacks weaken Israel (which does not hold true) and the PA alike (which holds true). In the fourth section of this chapter, the Palestinian problem of unused political potentials to challenge Israel's power superiority will be discussed in more detail.

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[27] Human Rights Watch 2002: *Erased in a Moment. Suicide Bombing Attacks against Israeli Civilians*, available at: **www.hrw.org**, August 31st, 2003.

[28] Martin Beck 2002:footnote 20, p. 454.

The major strategic impact of suicide attacks is a devastating effect for the Palestinians in the diplomatic game with Israel. Israel's major point of weakness on the diplomatic level is that occupation contradicts international law. In other words, the major leverage point for the Palestinian side on the diplomatic level is to insist that justice be done. Yet, since suicide attacks are not justified, their use significantly reduces the chances of obtaining international support for Palestinian self-determination. By referring to the four types of diplomatic approaches described at the beginning of this chapter, the negative impact of suicide attacks on the Palestinian goal of achieving national independence may become even more obvious. First, their military impact on Israel is much too weak to hope for an outcome resembling the Irish or Croatian way. Furthermore, suicide attacks clearly diminish the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of the Slovakians and the Taiwanese.

Since secular and Islamist groups organizing suicide attacks do not care much for what they perceive as Western rather than truly global concepts of justice, the normative aspect of the argumentation presented here is meaningless to them. Rather, those who organize and support suicide attacks might argue that their lesson from thirty-six years of occupation is that there is no good reason to wait for the international community to support the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel. The logic of those who organize suicide attacks is based on the belief that the only language Israel understands is force; as a result of terror, it is believed that Israelis will tire of continuing the occupation. However, such a strategy could only work if Israel were a classic colonial power whose heartland were geographically and politically distant from the Occupied Territories. Yet, as has been mentioned, Palestine is not Algeria and Israel is not France. The reaction of the Israeli government to suicide attacks is to strike back as hard as possible. Moral restrictions on the use of its military capabilities against Palestinian targets, although still significant (note that the organizers of suicide attacks heavily rely on these moral restrictions, which may be considered the most important ideological contradiction of their approach), are increasingly reduced without triggering outrage in the Israeli society. For instance, according to a report published by Human

Rights Watch in May 2002, "during their incursion into the Jenin refugee camp, Israeli forces committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, some amounting prima facie to war crimes".[29] Nevertheless, in a poll conducted in June 2002, some 80% of Jewish Israelis backed 'Operation Defensive Shield' during which the incursion into the Jenin refugee camp was conducted.[30]

Instead of maximizing divisions in Israeli society, the policy of suicide attacks actually unites it. Those who remain in the Israeli peace camp find themselves on the defensive, many of them tearfully blaming the Palestinians for forcing them to do what they claim to hate, namely to oppress the Palestinian people. Thus, the strategy of committing suicide attacks not only reduces Palestinian options at the diplomatic level, but it is also devastating at the political level because it results in confrontation with an increasingly united adversary.

Protagonists of suicide attacks claim that the resort to violence triggered some phenomena of economic crisis in Israel. This assertion actually holds true. Moreover, the strategy of suicide attacks inflicts much more economic harm on Israel than any direct economic option available to the Palestinians could ever do; although the problems inflicted on tourism are of minor importance to the advanced Israeli economy in general, the drastic decrease of foreign investment constitutes a severe problem in the era of globalization. However, the Israeli economic crisis is still manageable. Moreover, in spring 2003, the Israeli leadership managed to implement some adjustment reforms appreciated by the global market and the USA proved to be ready to grant additional funds to Israel. Furthermore, if Israeli development is compared to the Palestinian crisis, in which

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[29] Human Rights Watch 2002: *IDF Military Operations*, available at:
http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/israel3/israel0502-01.htm#P49_1774, August 31, 2003.

[30] Ephraim Ya'ar /Tamar Hermann (Tami Steinmetz Center) 2002: *Peace Index* June 2002, available at:

http://spirit.tau.ac.il/socant/peace/peaceindex/2002/files/june2002e.doc, August 31, 2003.

the latter's economy was brought to the edge of collapse, it becomes once more obvious that the strategy of committing suicide attacks inflicts more harm on the Palestinians themselves than on their adversary, particularly since it failed to inflict nearly sufficient harm on the Israeli economy to make Israel tired of occupation.

3.2.3 The Diplomatic Approach

At the latest when it embarked on the Oslo Peace Process, the mainstream PLO (Fatah) decided to focus on achieving national independence for the Palestinians by negotiating a Palestinian state alongside Israel. With the failure of the negotiations of Camp David and Taba in 2000 and 2001 however, the proponents of this approach received a major blow. Although the PLO had accepted major compromises in advance to the Oslo interim period, especially the renunciation of all of historic Palestine controlled by Israel within the 1949 borders, and the recognition of Israel as a legitimate state in the Middle East, Israel intensified occupation in the course of the 1990s in major respects, especially by increasing settlements and restricting the mobility of Palestinians. Thus, for the majority of Palestinians, the positive achievements of the Peace Process were limited at best; for many, the peace dividend was even negative. As a result, the negotiation approach lost credibility among Palestinians, finally resulting in the popular uprising labeled Al-Aqsa Intifada.

Even at the beginning of the Oslo Process, there could be few doubts that the diplomatic approach had some structural limits. As holds true for all four approaches discussed in this chapter, power resources available to Palestinians are not sufficient to balance those at the disposal of Israel. Moreover, as will be argued in the next sub-chapter, the bargain of Oslo left the Palestinians with no leverage to push Israel to compromise. In other words, it was always evident that the result of Oslo would never be a truly fair deal with Israel, i.e. the establishment of a fully sovereign Palestinian state on the whole of the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel in 1967 or an arrangement giving adequate compensation to the Palestinians in all aspects deviating from this formula (those who might fault me for expressing

a know-it-all attitude ten years after the fact may ask themselves whether there was really any good cause in 1993 to believe that the only reason why Israel did not immediately agree to a sovereign Palestinian state on the whole of the Occupied Territories was that the Israeli government headed by Yitzhak Rabin needed some time to convince its people to accept such an agreement).

After the failure of the Oslo Peace Process and over two years of force and counter-force in the period of Al Aqsa Intifada, for at least three structural reasons, the perspectives for those Palestinian actors who are still in favor of the diplomatic approach are much worse than they had been before Israel and the PLO had agreed upon the Oslo Process. As was argued in chapter 2, the major obstacles to achieving Palestinian independence through negotiations with Israel are a lack of trust between the actors, their orientation towards relative gains and the power gap between Israel and the PLO. There can be few doubts that trust between the parties diminished further with the failure of the Oslo Peace Process (Palestinian perspective: we compromised in 1993 because we believed that the Israelis would also do so in the course of the Peace Process, but they refrained from doing so and there is no reason to assume that Israel will not play the same game once again if we agree upon another peace process; Israeli perspective: instead of sticking to the Peace Process, the Palestinians resorted to violence against us again and there is no reason to believe that they will not do this once more if we agree upon yet another peace process). There is likewise an increasing tendency towards relative gains (Palestinian perspective: the Israelis used their benefits from the Oslo Peace Process to tighten up occupation and there is no reason to believe that they will not continue to do so in the future if we agree once again upon a peace process; Israeli perspective: the Palestinians used their benefits from the Oslo Peace Process in order to develop terrorist structures threatening our security and there is no reason to believe that they will not continue to do so in the future if we once again agree upon a peace process). It is also clear that the power gap between Israel and the Palestinian side is even larger than at the start of the Oslo Peace Process (especially on the diplomatic, economic and political level: the Palestinian side lost credibility vis-à-vis Israel on the diplomatic level due to the suicide attacks; the economic crisis of Palestine brought it

on the edge of collapse whereas the Israeli economic crisis is manageable; finally, the Israeli society and leadership is unified in the fight against Al Aqsa Intifada whereas on the Palestinian side, the degree of fragmentation of the political system is extremely high).

3.2.4 The Political Approach

The political approach played a major role in the history of the Palestinians in their struggle for independence. The founding of the PLO in 1964 and, much more importantly, the subsequent development of a sophisticated organizational structure in the 1970s and 1980s was a major reason why the Palestinian people managed to escape the fate of other stateless people such as the Sahrawis. However, after the establishment of the PA, a period which could have been used for another move forward, the Palestinians failed to embark on the political approach which would have involved promoting democratization.

As has already been mentioned, the Palestinian chances to embark on the political approach are restricted by the Israeli occupation's policy. The authorities granted to the PA do not cover all crucial aspects of sovereignty. Furthermore, the Israeli closure policy and the subsequent direct financial support for the PA by the international community made it very difficult for democratic actors to succeed against their non-democratic adversaries inside the Palestinian political system.[31] The potential of the political approach as compared to that of the economic, is nonetheless much higher due to the fact that Palestine enjoys some favorable pre-conditions for democratization. Many Palestinians support basic democratic values such as freedom of expression.[32] Nevertheless, given the fact that the actual development of the Palestinian system since 1993 took the path of authoritarianism, I must postpone a further discussion of this aspect to chapter 4.

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[31] Martin Beck 2000: "The External Dimension of Authoritarian Rule in Palestine", in: *Journal of International Relations and Development* 3.1, pp. 47-66.

[32] Khalil Shikaki 1996: "The Peace Process, National Reconstruction and the Transition to Democracy in Palestine", in: Journal of Palestine Studies 25.2, pp. 5-20.

In what way does the democratic system of Israel in the borders of 1949 provide it with superior power capabilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian authoritarian regime? The theorem shared by many scholars that democracies are superior to authoritarian regimes in terms of political effectiveness applies to the present case, as becomes obvious by comparing the reaction of the Israeli and the Palestinian systems to the failure of the negotiations at Camp David and Taba in 2000 and 2001 respectively. The failure of these negotiations, which triggered a failure of the whole Oslo Peace Process, was a major blow to the political ambitions of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian President Yasir Arafat alike. However, only the former showed some leadership quality by successfully playing the "blame game" through which he managed to convince the international public that Arafat was solely responsible for the failure whereas Arafat remained passive. Secondly, the Israeli government paved the road for a major policy change by declaring the progress achieved at Camp David and Taba null and void. Barak obviously did so in order to give utmost flexibility to any future Israeli government to exert its superior power capabilities against the PA and the Palestinian people. On the Palestinian side, rather than facing the fact that the difficult situation demanded a coherent new strategy, the leadership just waited for things to come. When Al Aqsa Intifada erupted in September 2000 as a popular uprising of the Palestinian people, who had decided that they were no longer able to bear the hardships of the deadlocked Peace Process and intensified occupation, contrary to the Palestinian leadership, the Israeli political elite and public were well prepared for a policy change. Finally, although Barak won the "blame game" on the international level, he had to pay a high price for the failure of Camp David and Taba on the national stage. The Israeli people forced him to take political responsibility for the failure of the Oslo Peace Process by voting him out of office whereas the Palestinian system lacked the ability to adapt to the new situation by producing a new coherent strategy and/or a fresh leadership, thereby contributing to an unprecedented degree of fragmentation of the Palestinian political system.

It must be added that it was not only Israeli intransigence, made possible by its superior power capabilities, which led to the failure of the Oslo Peace Process. Also the Palestinian leadership must be held partially responsible for this outcome. The argument for this thesis is not the failure of the negotiations of Camp David and Taba which, given the Israeli and Palestinian preferences, probably nobody is to blame for since "[a] sober assessment of the summit would conclude that the problems were extremely difficult given the demands of both sides (...)" (emphasis added, M.B.).[33] The PLO is co-responsible for the original "defect architecture" of the Oslo Peace Accords. The diaspora PLO, facing growing political competition from within the Occupied Territories and being exposed to an existential crisis due to its maneuvering behavior during the Gulf War of 1990/91 both on the financial and the diplomatic level, signed an agreement which left the Palestinian side with major strategic disadvantages vis-à-vis Israel. Particularly, it turned out to be problematic for the Palestinian side that Israel was recognized as a state whereas the Palestinian right of statehood was not determined; additionally, all major issues, such as the problem of settlements and sovereignty over Jerusalem, were postponed leaving the Palestinian side without any leverage to push Israel to compromise:

"Indeed, the inside [i.e. Palestinian opposition to Israeli occupation inside the occupied territories, M.B.] played such a major role in the negotiations which followed in Washington, that the Oslo accords can be seen as a response of the outside [the PLO leadership in the Diaspora, M.B.] to the challenge posed by the inside. (…) Israel was offered a variety of things it had been incapable of obtaining in Washington (most notably, postponing any discussion of Jerusalem and settlements to the final status negotiations, and not forbidding settlement expansion during the interim period), and this is an important reason why Rabin chose

[33] Helga Baumgarten 2003: "The Myth of Camp David or the Distortion of the Palestinian Narrative". (*Strategic Paper* of the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (GIIS), Birzeit: Birzeit University, P.18.

to sign with his enemy, Arafat and the PLO. This price paid was heavy, in terms of serious errors on the part of the Palestinian negotiators, errors which could partly and perhaps largely have been avoided had there not been this fundamental ignorance and mistrust of the inside on the part of the outside".[34]

To put it in a nutshell, the Oslo Accords were rational for the PLO rather than for the Palestinian people. By signing the Oslo Accords, the PLO achieved two major aims simultaneously. First, the organization managed to overcome its severe financial crisis by replacing its offended financiers from the Gulf with Western donors.[35] Second, it regained political supremacy inside Palestine through the establishment of the PA. Moreover, in the years to follow, the leadership of the PA not only repressed all criticism of its bargain, but also failed to prepare its people for the likelihood that, at least on the basis of the Oslo Accords, the chances for arriving at a peace treaty establishing a Palestinian state with full sovereignty over the whole of the Occupied Territories was an illusory outcome of a future negotiation process with Israel in view of its positions in the conflict with the PLO and its superior power capabilities, which the PLO, albeit implicitly, was ready to acknowledge by contract.

Table 2 (pp. 42-43) is intended to provide the reader with an overview of actual strategies the Palestinians embarked on in recent history. Moreover, potential alternatives, which the final chapter will discuss in more detail, are summarized.

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[34] Roger Heacock 2003: *Locals and Returnees in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). A Historical Perspective*, available at **http://www.birzeit.edu/ research/locals.html**, August 31st, 2003.

[35] Martin Beck 2000: "The PLO and the Peace Process in the Middle East", in: *Palestinian Journal for Historical Studies (al-Majalla al-Filastiniya lil-Dirasat at-Tarikhiya)* 2.1, pp. 206-218.

4. Future Potentials: A Comprehensive Approach

In recent history, Palestinians primarily embarked on two approaches, a diplomatic and a military strategy, and both are "moderate" according to the definition of chapter 1. Due to the superior Israeli power resources, both strategies have severe structural limits. Thus, the Oslo period, when Palestinian political actors emphasized the diplomatic approach, did not result in a viable Palestinian state. The same is true of the period since the beginning of Al-Aqsa Intifada in which one group of Palestinian actors pursued a diplomatic strategy and another chose a military approach whereas a third one tried the squaring of the circle by combining these two strategies. Three different strategic recommendations may be drawn from these findings. First, surrender; second, focusing all forces towards one strategy; third, combining different approaches in order to challenge Israel's power in more than one field, thereby generating synergetic effects.

Since the first strategy will be discussed briefly at the end of this chapter, I will start by discussing the second. If my finding holds true that pursuing the strategy of suicide attacks decreases the chances of the diplomatic approach, from the perspective of the protagonists of the diplomatic approach, focusing all forces towards one approach would require the abandonment of suicide attacks. The point of view of the protagonists of the strategy of suicide attacks would be to stop wasting resources by attempting to regain decreased international support for the Palestinian case instead of recruiting as many suicide attackers as possible in order to force Israel on its knees. The strategic problem of the first point of view is that it is on the defensive due to the fact that the achievements of the Oslo period are very low. In some fields, the Israeli occupation continued as before (e.g. Jerusalem); in other fields it was even tightened up (e.g. settlement and closure policy). How could Palestinians be convinced to embark once again on a peace process after

Table 2
Actual and Potential Palestinian Strategies for Achieving National Independence

Israeli Power Resources	Type of Approach	Main Actual Strategy	Main Actors	Actual Compared to Potential Intensity	Point of Leverage	Potentials/ Alternatives	Limits and Negative Repercussions
Armed forces	Algerian	Suicide Attacks	Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Al-Aqsa Brigades	Very high	Occupation as a military problem (moral and/or strategic restrictions for Israel to use all its military capabilities)	Targeting only military installations in the Occupied Territories, thereby minimizing death casualties	Increasing Israeli diplomatic and political power (outside and inside support)
Economics	Japanese (American)		Some actors of the PA, some NGOs and private enterprises	Fair to low	Outweighing the economic resources at the disposal of Israel to maintain occupation		1. Extremely difficult to implement (closure policy) 2. Extremely high gap to Israel 3. Only long-term strategy

Table 2
Actual and Potential Palestinian Strategies for Achieving National Independence

Israeli Power Resources	Type of Approach	Main Actual Strategy	Main Actors	Actual Compared to Potential Intensity	Point of Leverage	Potentials/ Alternatives	Limits and Negative Repercussions
Politics	Fertile Crescent		Some actors of the PA, some NGOs, some international donors	Very low	Occupation as an ideological problem for Israel	Democratization plus civil disobedience	1. Difficult to implement (curtailment of PA sovereignty, closure policy) 2. Long-term rather than short term effects
Diplomacy	Slovakian	Negotiations with Israel	PA	Low	Occupation as a problem of International Law	Public campaigns on limits of justice	No full justice

the experience of the failure of Oslo unless Israel is ready to compromise in advance, which is very unlikely to happen? The strategic problem of the second point of view is that it would be highly inefficient since contrary to the expectations of its proponents, it would increase Israel's willingness and ability to use its superior military capabilities against the Palestinians.

The logic of the third conclusion is that, due to the huge power gap between Israel and the Palestinian side, the latter cannot afford to waste any resources. Moreover, embarking on several fields at the same time could trigger synergetic effects. If we take the two major strategies pursued by the Palestinians in recent history, the strategy of suicide attacks can be ruled out since it is not compatible with an approach challenging Israel on the political level, which is the main unused resource of the Palestinians.

As has been argued in chapter 3, although there is also some potential for Palestine to improve in terms of its economy, there seems to be no real chance in the foreseeable future to reach a situation in which Palestinians could challenge the economic resources Israel is willing to expend in order to maintain occupation. In the field of politics, however, the Palestinian perspectives are less bleak. One of the main reasons why Israel does not face major challenges in what could be the Israeli-Palestinian political power game is that the Palestinian Autonomous Territories did not develop democratic structures. Although, as has been argued in chapter 1, the PA was never put into the position of becoming a fully-fledged democratic government, a democratic system covering the policies granted to the PA could be embarked on. Such a system could challenge Israel's superior power position for two reasons. First, it would be hard for Israel to defend occupation over a democracy vis-à-vis the international community. Moreover, a democratic Palestinian system would significantly reduce Israel's lack of trust towards the PA as well as its orientation towards relative

gains.[36] Second, synergetic effects with a diplomatic approach could be achieved. For instance, in a democratic system strategies of civil disobedience against the Israeli occupation, power could become more prominent, e.g. mass marches crossing Israeli checkpoints taped by international media. Moreover, democratic Palestine would be the prerequisite for an open discussion of what painful sacrifices the Palestinian society is ready to make in order to reach an agreement with Israel, especially over the issue of refugees.

It should be added that not all kinds of Palestinian military actions would have the same devastating effect on Palestinian power capabilities on the diplomatic level. If a guerrilla tactic were pursued to be limited to the infrastructure of Israel's armed forces as well as settlements in the Occupied Territories, with the probable exception of the USA, there would be a reasonable chance of convincing the international public that these acts are legitimate acts of resistance. Moreover, and possibly more important, such a strategy would weaken Israel at the political level. As has been described above, the effect of suicide attacks on the Israeli society is unification. Yet, if Palestinian military operations only targeted the infrastructure of Israel's armed forces and settlements, the majority of Israelis, whose immediate benefit from occupation is

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[36] Note that this assertion only holds true for the actual result of a process of democratization, i.e. a consolidated Palestinian democracy. In other words, this does not mean that Israel will necessarily welcome a process of democratization in Palestine. Actually, there are numerous counter-examples. Paradoxically, the main reason behind this has been mentioned in the first part of the argument put forward above: a democratic Palestine would make it difficult for Israel to justify major aspects of occupation that any (i.e. even a "moderate") Israeli government is interested in maintaining, particularly the control over (major parts of) East Jerusalem, settlements close to the "Green Line" as well as a denial of the "right of return". Moreover, due to 36 years of occupation, a Palestinian democratization process would not necessarily bring to power those in Palestine who would be interested in consolidating such a process, which is why Israel cannot be sure that a Palestinian process of democratization will result in a democracy.

limited at best, might oppose a continuation of occupation inflicting costs on the Israeli society as a whole.

As has been shown, much more promising strategies would be available to the Palestinians than those currently pursued in order to achieve national independence. However, it is rather unlikely that they will be adopted. First, due to their lack of understanding as to how the Israeli society works, protagonists of the strategy of continued suicide attacks will hardly be convinced to alter their policy. Second, due to the failure of the Oslo Peace Process, those who are in favor of negotiated peace with Israel are on the defensive since this strategy pursued for seven years (1993-2000) failed and left the Palestinians without major benefits. At the same time, Israel is not willing to eliminate major features of occupation as an advanced concession in order to win the Palestinian trust back. Third, after having proven in 1993 that its survival as an institution and the imperative of regaining political supremacy inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were its priorities rather than the fate of the people, the Palestinian leadership was incapable of pursuing the path of negotiating with Israel in an efficient way in the course of the 1990s. Yet, there are no indicators to suggest that the current Palestinian leadership could resign in the foreseeable future (as Israel's Labor Party under the leadership of Ehud Barak was forced to do by the electorate). To make things worse, no promising Palestinian leadership capable of doing a better job seems to be available. Note that this fact is a result of the development of an authoritarian system, whose leadership, contrary to a democratic system, has the means to stifle the development of an alternative.

Even if the Palestinian leadership should adopt a new comprehensive strategy, focusing on negotiating peace with Israel and the promotion of a process of democratization, there would be no guarantee of success. The structure of the conflict as described in chapter 2 shows that even under favorable conditions, it would be difficult to achieve a viable Palestinian state through negotiations. Due to Israel's superiority in power terms, any

negotiated peace with Israel will most probably be lacking in justice if this is defined as full Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian Territories occupied in 1967, the establishment of a Palestinian state without major constrictions on sovereignty, and finally Israeli approval for the right of return.

Possibly, the naïve observer introduced at the beginning of this paper may be disillusioned to a degree that he or she opts for surrender vis-à-vis powerful Israel. This conclusion brings us back to an idea that was popular among PLO leaders in the 1960s, namely establishing a bi-national Israeli-Palestinian state, thereby exploiting the fact that Israel is more vulnerable in terms of the size of its population than in any other field. Compared to the basic approach of "Liberation into the State",[37] in these days the perspective of a bi-national state, described as "The Rational Choice for Palestinians and the Moral Choice for Israelis" by Jenab Tutunji and Kamal Khaldi,[38] is only a utopian idea among some Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals. Yet, imagine that all Palestinians surrendered today to Israel, at the same time demanding equal citizenship rights. What is a daydream for some Palestinians and Israelis would be a nightmare for the overwhelming majority of Israelis who believe in the compatibility of Zionism and democracy. Thus, paradoxically, surrender could be the only Palestinian strategy that might finally convince Israel to accept - with no "ifs" and "buts" - a sovereign Palestinian state in the whole of the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

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[37] This term was coined by Helga Baumgarten 1991: *Palästina: Befreiung in den Staat* [*Palestine: Liberation Into the State*], Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.

[38] Jenab Tutunji/Kamal Khaldi 1997: "A Binational State in Palestine. The Rational Choice for Palestinians and the Moral Choice for Israelis", in: *International Affairs* 73.1, pp. 31-58.

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Comments

Samir Awad *

When offered the chance to be the discussant of this paper by Professor Beck, I was intrigued, and I readily accepted if only to read something with such a novel approach. The paper meets the expectations and presents many interesting and pertinent observations although it sometimes fails to take significant recent developments into account, and could eventually use an update.

During the first few pages the scene is set, the model presented and showed to apply to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As is the case with game theorists, the author starts the paper by what is commonly known as "putting the rabbit in the hat". Clearly, such a trick is needed if one is to consider the surprise or even bombshell that Dr. Beck drops at the very end of the paper! This argument starts by our "naïve" observer thinking that a Palestinian state would be established in the foreseeable future and ends with an assertion that "surrender" might be a realistic option for the Palestinians!

This structure begins with a mundane definitional debate, distinguishing the concept of a state from that of a viable state compatible with the realization of Palestinian self-determination. The author abandons the former concept and adopts the latter, although (on page3) he states that even a sovereign state on all pre-1967-war borders "East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip (note the particular order of enumeration!) plus a land corridor between them" is probably not going to be economically viable. This should have been pursued further to conclude the argument, noting for example that (especially now with the wall that Israel is busily building) the idea of establishing a Palestinian state that is economically viable in the WBGS is even more doubtful, or that economic independence is not a crucial *sine qua non* for a viable state. On the same page, the author questions another concept (cultural viability) but ends the investigation as soon as he begins it, pending the conclusion.

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Chapter 2 develops the positions, preferences, and potentials of the two parties, Israel and the PLO. On page 6 the author suggests that there would have to be conditions on the creation of a state, and that the PLO would need to accept its demilitarization (which they actually do) and on Israel seeking to improve its position through better relations with the Arab world. At any rate, it is here where the paper clearly engages the problem and sets the rules of the game, correctly I might add.

The power asymmetry between the PLO and Israel encourages the author to elevate the level of complexity of the conflict from one compatible with an ordinary Prisoner's Dilemma to Graduated Prisoner's Dilemma setting. The discussion in section 2.2 of the pillars of Israeli power vis-à-vis the Palestinians carries with it a sense of overkill. The "full" spectrum of options (military, economic, diplomatic, and political) for the Palestinians are not mutually exclusive and certainly not exhaustive, however, we are presented with a bleak picture for any policy maker on the Palestinian side, let alone ordinary people. It remains to be seen whether other resources (like popular will, a broad international solidarity movement, or popular and civil asymmetric challenges, a favorable international environment, etc.) should perhaps have been evoked at least and not so easily overlooked. This is why, in my view, the cases of the countries of the former U.S.S.R are not present in this discussion. Although a number of assertions could be further debated, developed and refined, the examples of international independence movements are relevant and important, and they shed the light on the methodology that professor Beck adopts.

I find the discussion of the "suicide attacks" particularly central to this paper, but more importantly to the whole independence of Palestine endeavor. I agree that this side of military action undermine not only other fields of resistance especially the political and diplomatic ones, but also international solidarity with the PLO. Moreover, this activity managed to erode the moral high ground that the Palestinian resistance maintained. The examples that the author evokes to demonstrate the dissimilar

impact of Israel killing Palestinian civilians (as with the assassination of Salah Shehadeh) and Palestinian groups killing Israeli civilians is accurate in general but not necessarily precise. The case of Shehadeh could be explained along similar lines to those the author used, however the Israeli army frequently targeted civilians, and civilians alone. The discussion of the diplomatic approach and the Palestinian side carrying the blame of the failure of Camp David II is to be expected given the favorable position that Israel has in the media, especially in the US. An analyst of this phenomenon commented that the American media could, if they wish, turn 180 degrees and make Arafat smell of roses in two weeks.

The last chapter brings some excellent analysis and a surprise, which is the relevance of surrender as an option to the Palestinians. Without any doubt, the fourth chapter is an advocacy paper that should be read and understood by everyone, even if the idea of surrender is not tolerated by the reader. I must nonetheless remark here on the fact that such a radical idea came up at the end of the paper although mentioned in passing earlier on, and with a very short discussion of less than one page. The argumentation therefore is not convincing at face value (it should be discussed further, perhaps in the future!). I think that this is an excellent paper with sound methodology and valuable insights. Professor Beck should be congratulated on his well-composed research as well as on the approach itself.

Roger Heacock *

Let it first be said that Professor Martin Beck's strategic paper is exactly that. In other words, it represents what the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies at Birzeit University had intended in inaugurating this series: a clear, masterful, policy-oriented piece of work, solidly based on critical analysis (and, in this case, steeped in the theory of negotiations). As such, it should be presented to all former, present and future negotiators on behalf of the Palestinian people and their cause, as well as those on whose behalf they are negotiating, and made required reading for them. In that light, the rest of the commentary which follows might simply be seen as an academic dialogue with the author, implying the possibility that the paper might be tightened up, whittled down and its internal balance very slightly modified before, like Machiavelli, one considers submitting it to the Prince.

Professor Martin Beck shows in this paper that the options for the Palestinians have been seriously reduced, to a certain but undeniable extent because of their resort to suicide attacks. Had this ultimate escalation not occurred, there might at least conceivably have been a significant motivation on the Israeli side to move towards a 'French' decision (as in Algeria) finally to evacuate the Occupied Territories. But, he says, the use of violence degenerated, on the Palestinian side, into the evil and counterproductive tactic of suicide attacks. Unfortunately, one cannot agree with this assessment, because Israeli procrastination over carrying out their commitments under the Oslo Accords, and moving finally to granting Palestinians their statehood, was always attributed to armed (not necessarily suicide) attacks that were allegedly to be feared from the Palestinians. Moreover, before the Palestinians under occupation had resorted to armed attacks of any sort, the refusal to contemplate self-determination was justified by Israel in myriad ways that translated into positions even less flexible than today's and were always framed

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in the discourse of security and the fight against terrorism. It might be added here that, unlike the Algerians in the years 1954-1962 (who, incidentally, did not hesitate to resort to bombing campaigns directed against French civilians), the purpose of the military escalation by Palestinians during Al-Aqsa intifada has not been to bring about a withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories. It has been rather in the nature of an attempt to deter Israel from taking drastic military action against Palestinians. Of course Israeli leaders define their own military actions in the same way, except that they contradict their claim by stating that the objective is to bring about the total defeat of the Palestinians. The question whether or not, and in what conditions, certain strategies exercise a deterrent effect, while others do not, would merit a much longer discussion.

Professor Beck, at any rate, places more weight on ethical considerations (and they are patent) than strategic ones in his discussion of suicide attacks.

> *"Yet, it is impossible to grasp the strategic implications of suicide attacks without first, understanding their moral perception in Israel as well as the Western world, and, second, grasping on which values this perception is based. A short answer to this task is that suicide attacks absolutely contradict basic standards of human rights because they are deliberately committed for the main (or even sole) aim of killing innocent people, i.e. non-combatants. In other words, for those who believe in human rights, suicide attacks are a crime against humanity"* (p.27).

Suicide attacks, in other words, are crimes against humanity when they are directed against innocent civilians (perhaps not, or less so, when they are carried out against military men). Let us take the case of the two atomic bombs dropped by the US over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and which between them pulverized a quarter of a million people, virtually all of them innocent civilians. Now, rare are the mainstream commentators (Western political scientists) who call these two bombings crimes against humanity. Why? Because

the Japanese were all enemies of the United States? Because it was hoped victory would thus be hastened? These two reasons, often given by those who would justify the dropping of those bombs are exactly the reasons given by those Palestinians who attempt to justify the use of suicide attacks in certain cases. What is the difference? Not, surely, that the US was fighting a just war, but that the Palestinians are not. The difference is implicit in the above quote, referring to "moral perception in Israel as well as the Western world". Americans in 1945 were Westerners. Palestinians in 2003 are not.

We can understand the thrust of Professor Beck's arguments better if we grasp the fact that he is an Idealist, in the Hegelian sense. His universe, and his system of states and decision-makers, is a rational one (in the sense that "the real is the rational and the rational is the real"). It is basically a world of order and of movement, at the same time, a world both Platonic and dialectical (ideas order the world, which is in turn in a process of constant change, through the interaction of opposites). Furthermore, at the top of his hierarchy of ideas stands Justice. In this sense, he deviates from the Hegelian scheme, which placed Freedom at the top (history, for Hegel, was the progressive unveiling of the idea of freedom). This is why Beck devotes much of his argument to a discussion of suicide bombings on the part of the Palestinians, which he sees as incarnating evil (they are "crimes against humanity", he states). Israeli attacks are not as bad because they only incidentally rather than systematically kill civilians, and are thus indifferent to human life, but not criminally violating it to the same degree. The reason it can be said with some degree of certainty that Beck places justice ahead of freedom, is his constant reference to Palestinian 'suicide attacks' (which violate justice). They are mentioned 66 times in the course of his 36-page paper, or twice a page, while the principal signifier of freedom, 'democracy', is referred to seven times, or once every five pages. True, the more didactic notion of "democratization" comes up 12 times, as a prescription for improved chances in the confrontation with Israel, while the adjective "democratic" comes up 17 times (mainly to deplore the lack of that ingredient in present Palestinian political culture). Also, the term "occupation", likewise linked to (lack of) freedom, comes up 34 times

in all. One might in this simplistic fashion conclude that justice is twice as important for Beck as freedom.

In this idealist world, rational statesmen should seek rational alternatives, if these exist, and they do, in one form or another, because the world we live in is a rational one. We should therefore look for alternative strategies, those adopted thus far having failed, in the economic, military, diplomatic and political fields. After some analysis of these four possible areas of action, in the course of which he harnesses a variety of interesting historical examples to his cause, he reaches the pessimistic conclusion that in none can much success be achieved, largely because of suicide bombings, which make it impossible to overcome the enormous asymmetry in all four areas of conflict he has analyzed. Even more importantly, he feels that the very fact of the asymmetry suggests the impossibility for the Palestinians to achieve their proclaimed goal of an independent state in the Palestinian lands occupied by Israel in June 1967.

He therefore comes to the conclusion, very popular today, incidentally, among a certain brand of "radical" and cosmopolitan intellectuals, that the Palestinians should give up on their dream of an independent state. Being a political scientist, he has the courage to name this move for what it would be: surrender. The demand would of course be for a democratic non-denominational state, in which Palestinians would exercise their democratic political rights on a footing of equality with Israeli Jews. Unfortunately, it appears very clearly that this Hegelian idealism does not adequately cover the intricate realities of international life in general, nor of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle in particular.

The fact of the matter is that one should, in the quest for a positive outcome of the struggle, add to the idealism displayed by Professor Beck, healthy doses of materialism and romanticism. The romantic sensibility, by which is meant the dominance of emotions and the passions rather than rationality, leads us to the following consideration: Zionism exists, and has done so for more than a century. Post-Zionism (in Israel) does not. We saw how quickly the handful of its proponents (notably among the "new historians")

turned viciously on the Palestinians when Al-Aqsa Intifada broke out and before any suicide bombings had taken place). Any attempt to "surrender" in the manner proposed by Dr. Azmi Bishara and his disciples, who now include Martin Beck, is doomed to failure. One wonders in this regard, why this essentially post-modern, post- (or pre-) nationalist theory has come to the fore at a time when it is clearly too late to propose it to the PLO leadership. When Professor Sari Nuseibeh presented it (with a view, as he then specified, to "highjacking the bus rather than just riding on it") in the mid-nineteen eighties, before the first intifada with its popular agenda relegated it to the dustbin of history, he was reviled as a traitor.

The notion that Arabs would tomorrow make up half of the Israeli population and two thirds a few decades later, places this option outside of the realm of the possible. Israel and Israelis perfectly well assume the burdens of the forced Bantustanization of the Arabs: they have been practicing it since 1948 against their own minority, and since 1967 against the populations of the occupied territories. They are not daunted by the task. The Jewish nature of the State of Israel is its only justification. Israelis are perfectly aware of their original sin, the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948. If the Jewish state they built on the basis of the expulsion were called into question, then the original sin would alone remain. Adopting a healthy dose of philosophical romanticism makes it possible, likewise, to understand why the Palestinians cannot and will not surrender: if they abandon their national cause in favor of a request to be treated as regular Israeli citizens, they abandon what has become their subjective identity, the struggle for self-determination. It is not difficult to show that, in the political realm, domestic and international, emotions may preside over decisions. George W. Bush's actions in the wake of September 11th, 2001, offer a prime example of this. The proponents of the view that he was simply and cold-bloodedly (rationally) carrying out the pre-established program of the neo-conservatives in the United States (another very popular theory nowadays) are missing a large part of the reality, and, I would add, overestimating the difficulty of stopping the current American expansionist drive in the Middle East.

The other element that should be thrown into the analytical brew is that of materialism. Power relationships, as Professor Beck correctly states, define political outcomes, *but only in the short term.* Material conditions my rapidly change, and these include, not only external relationships of power (heavily asymmetrical in the Israeli-Palestinian case for quite a time to come) but also internal relationships in the various social formations that stand in confrontation to one another. Israel is suffering enormously from the three years of Al-Aqsa Intifada. The number of hungry and unemployed people is constantly on the rise. The economic picture is bleak, with little prospect for improvement, as long as this ongoing struggle with the Palestinians lasts. In the short run, Sharon can preserve his parliamentary majority through fear tactics and blackmail ("They want to destroy us"), as he has done so skillfully for the past two years. But in the longer run he, or his successor, will need to search for new policies, in the interest of political survival, given that the triple program he had promised the Israelis, security, prosperity and peace (in the sense of the crushing of the uprising) has failed miserably. Contrary to Professor Beck, I believe that, although Palestinian society has suffered much more, it appears to possess more internal cohesion, or at least resilience. It does not have the habit of high consumption patterns which are those of the Israelis, and its social structures, based on the extended family, have so far preserved it from collapse. I could not agree more with Professor Beck's depiction of the Palestinian National Authority and its leadership having simply sat around "idly waiting for an uncoordinated popular uprising to come" (indeed I wish I could make this brilliantly concise formulation my own), while continuing to suffer from its built-in authoritarianism and lack of accountability before its own people. This is in fact the main cause for pessimism in the present context. The Palestinian people have shown that they have the necessary resources, determination and intelligence to stay the course. The forms of resistance they have adopted are of course open for discussion at a variety of levels. But the main enemy of the Palestinian cause is not the question of strategy and tactics, but

rather than of dependence and leadership.

There is in the real world no such thing as an "ordinary" dilemma (in which both protagonists can simply agree that they want 'peace') as opposed to a "graduated" dilemma. In conflict, there are two types of games: 1. zero-sum games (World War two) with one winner, one loser, or 2. "graduated dilemmas", based for their resolution on compromise. At issue for the Palestinians and the Israelis is whether they choose to opt for option one or option two, and the issue of simultaneity in the opting. It will not do for one party to opt for two even as the other has stuck to one. It is my belief that ultimately, option two will be the simultaneous option of the parties to this conflict. At that time, dusty draft agreements can be taken out of the drawers, and signatures affixed to them, the occupation will come to an end, and the question of the refugees solved to their satisfaction. The 'only' question is: when? A frightening question indeed, except for true believers.

In the meantime, Palestinians should take their ethical, political and strategic decisions, not based on Western (and certainly not Israeli) wishes: there have been too many bitter disappointments, and it is hard to understand why there is as much pandering to the West in the Palestinian Authority even today, when the Bush-Sharon duo have nothing left to demonstrate by way of their identity of objectives. This does not mean that one should ignore ethical considerations and universal standards in making decisions. Indeed, hundreds of Palestinians have spoken, written and signed petitions against suicide bombings. But, when analyzing a society of the periphery in its dealings with the awful weight of the all-powerful center, the issue needs to be seen as a part of the overall process of taking one's destiny into one's own hands, rather than as a necessary response to Western demands. This is bound up with the further development of a resolutely independent and democratic public space within Palestinian society, without which the enormous pressures of international, regional and local power centers cannot be eased, and the stubborn paralysis that characterizes the current situation is likely to be extended into the indefinite future.