Twenty Years since Oslo: The Balance Sheet

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Although September 13, 2013 will mark twenty years since Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles, which officially launched the Oslo process, the parties have not yet succeeded in realizing the declared goal of the process, "to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict . . . and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process."[1] Moreover, these twenty years have been marked by numerous crises and casualties, and perhaps therefore it comes as no surprise that the various components of the process have been criticized severely and Israeli and Palestinian public opinion perceive the process as an abject failure.

The purpose of this article is to take stock of the achievements and failures of the Oslo process, focusing on the Israeli dimension, in order to learn lessons that can be implemented in the next stages of the Israeli-Palestinian political process.[2] As the scope of the material is very broad, this analysis will concentrate on principal issues. There are two main conclusions. One, it was apparently impossible to break the deadlock in relations between Israel and the Palestinians except in a gradual process such as the Oslo model, in which the core issues were not addressed from the outset. Two, the overall Oslo balance sheet is mixed; the results could have been different had Israel avoided several errors, including: the attempts to reach an agreement in meetings between leaders before sufficient progress was made by the negotiators of the two sides; the unrealistic, exaggerated opening positions in the negotiating groups; interruption of the momentum of the negotiations; the failure to take advantage of their success; and the creation of a situation that was excessively conducive to actions that would torpedo continuation of the

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negotiations, such as the expansion of settlements by Israel and violence by the Palestinians.

Parameters

The initial question in an attempt to assess a complex political process on a topic as controversial as the Oslo process is, what are the criteria for examining the process? The criteria cannot be dissociated from what is necessarily a political definition of Israel's national goals, that is, its national vision. From the perspective of proponents of a Greater Israel, the main national goal is full Israeli sovereignty over all parts of the historical land of Israel.[3] From their point of view, the Oslo process was flawed from its inception because it set for itself a goal that by its very nature is flawed and contradicts Israel's main national goal. After all, it was clear to those who initiated the process that it would not be possible to reach a final status agreement without dividing the territory of the historical land of Israel between Israel and the Palestinians.

The following analysis is based on a definition of Israel's national vision as the drive to secure the existence of Israel as the democratic nation state of the Jewish people. This formula seems to match the approach of those who designed the Oslo process.

This definition's three main elements – existence, Jewish nation state, and democracy – imply the need to reach a permanent settlement with the Palestinians that will end the conflict based on the principle of two states for two peoples. Indeed, it is very difficult, if at all possible by any acceptable plan, to ensure the existence of a solid Jewish majority in the State of Israel, which is the criterion for Israel's being the democratic nation state of the Jewish people, without the creation of two states for two peoples. However, it is also impossible to guarantee Israel's existence without ensuring that the ultimate situation created at the end of the process is safe for Israel, allowing it to contend successfully with security threats.

Based on these premises, the main criteria for examining the Oslo process are: the extent to which the process has succeeded in advancing a two-state solution; the extent to which Israel's security was maintained during the process; and the extent to which the process was effective and correct. In other words, irrespective of whether the process has ended successfully or has failed to achieve its goals, it is worth examining the reasons for its success or failure and then considering whether it would

have been possible to pursue it more effectively, and what correct moves and what errors were made in the process.

Ensuring Israel's Identity through the Two-State Solution

There is no question that Israel is still far from achieving its national objective as defined above. The Oslo process did not succeed in ending the status quo: Israel retains control of the West Bank, and the settlement enterprise continues to expand. This means that Israel is skidding toward a reality of a bi-national state that is not truly democratic because there is a large population of Palestinians who do not enjoy civil rights.

However, this response by itself is insufficient, and ignores the possibility that constraints may make it very difficult to achieve the objective completely, or at least, may prolong the process with the end still not in sight. Consequently, the question is whether there are interim goals that, if achieved, would bring Israel closer to its desired objectives, and to what extent have these interim goals been achieved. An answer to these questions is far more complex.

First of all, the Oslo process led, albeit in circuitous fashion, to the unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip. It is unlikely that Israel would have reached that point without Oslo. The disengagement from Gaza was the first important step in ensuring separation between Israel and the Palestinian political entity. Similarly, the security barrier, another result of the Oslo process, created a partial separation from the West Bank and helped foster the idea in the Israeli consciousness on separating physically from the Palestinians, although it is also possible to argue that the barrier enables Israelis to suppress any thinking about the Palestinians and thus serves the status quo. Second, as a result of the Oslo process, broad support developed among the Israeli and Palestinian public for the two-state solution,[4] and there is a solid majority among the public that supports it. In other words, Israeli public opinion does not constitute a real obstacle to implementation of the solution. Third, the nucleus of a Palestinian territorial political entity has been established in the Palestinian territories in the form of the Palestinian Authority, and the process of building a Palestinian state and its institutions has begun, including a security apparatus that maintains close cooperation with Israel's security services. Fourth, during the process, many subjects long considered taboo that constitute serious obstacles to the ability to implement the two-state solution were challenged − for example,

"Jerusalem united forever"[5] – and this significantly narrowed major gaps between the two sides.

To understand the importance of these achievements, the Israeli-Palestinian political situation on the eve of the Oslo process must be examined. For the fifteen years before Yitzhak Rabin's victory in the 1992 elections, the ideology of a Greater Israel was dominant in Israel.[6] Yitzhak Shamir, who preceded Rabin as prime minister, agreed to join the Madrid process and hold negotiations with Arab states, but his intention was to buy time in order to realize the vision of a Greater Israel. The bilateral negotiating channels with Syria and Jordan that were part of the Madrid process were fruitless, and the negotiations were not serious. Shamir did not agree to engage in negotiations with the Palestinians, and therefore the Jordanian delegation included representatives who were Palestinian and who ostensibly represented the local Palestinians in the territories. In practice, they were appointed by the PLO because no Palestinian was prepared to be a member of a negotiating delegation without PLO approval and direction. Maintaining the status quo in the territories and continuing the settlement project were Israel's real goals, and Israel ignored the danger of becoming a non-democratic, bi-national state. Notwithstanding the difficulty in altering this situation, the negotiations that led to an agreement on a Declaration of Principles and the start of the Oslo process changed this reality.

Ensuring Israel's Security

Security risks were taken during the Oslo process, as indeed, there is no way to promote political and other agreements with the Arab parties without taking security risks. Even the simple decision to allow Palestinian laborers to work in Israel means taking a certain security risk. The question is whether the risks were proportional and whether appropriate steps were taken to minimize the risks.

The first concrete security risk stemmed from the willingness to give the Palestinian Authority security powers in part of the territory, and thereby allow them to establish security forces on a limited scale with limited weaponry. A second risk emerged from the agreement to allow Palestinians from PLO-affiliated organizations who in the past were involved in terrorist activity into the territories.

There is a widespread claim that the process itself spurred various Palestinian elements to embrace violence and motivated them to resist

the Israeli occupation through armed protest, as occurred in the second intifada. The argument is that with fewer expectations, the Palestinians would not have responded as they did. In other words, if Prime Minister Barak had not gone to Camp David, there would have been no second intifada. When a connection between Palestinian violence and the Palestinian process is posited, a positive correlation is at times found and can be explained as follows: terrorist organizations sought to thwart the political process through terror attacks; at the same time, the outbreak of the second intifada was also connected to frustration stemming from the failure of the Camp David summit. The question is whether similar Palestinian violence would have erupted even without the Oslo process. Although hypothetical situations are beyond definitive analysis, a possible answer to this question emerges from an historical analysis of Israeli control over the West Bank, which has been marked by waves of violent outbursts. A typical example is the first intifada, which broke out because of cumulative frustration in the absence of a political process. While it began as an unarmed popular uprising, it deteriorated soon after and escalated to the use of weapons.

Overall, there is a degree of predictable cyclicality: at first, the Palestinians resort to a violent protest against the occupation, then Israel's security forces succeed in overcoming and eliminating the terror cells, then the Palestinians realize that they will not succeed in achieving their goal through violence, and then they seek another way, a popular uprising or a political path, but this too fails. In the meantime, years pass, and a new generation of young people who have not experienced firsthand the price of using violence comes of age, they return to violence, and so on. Thus the assumption that if there were no political process to raise the expectations of the Palestinians they would accept the occupation and avoid violence appears unfounded. Indeed, Rabin's victory in the 1992 elections was apparently achieved to a large extent by virtue of the spontaneous wave of Palestinian popular terror during the period preceding the elections.

As for the direct security risks that stemmed from arming the Palestinians and from the entry of former terrorists into the territories, it is doubtful whether these factors played a major role, other than psychological, in the security price Israel paid during the Oslo process. There were quite a number of weapons in the Palestinian territories even before Oslo. Most of the Israeli fatalities were from suicide bombings

using improvised explosive devices that had no connection to Palestinian Authority weapons. The terrorist leaders and the various "engineers" were almost all home grown. The Palestinian security apparatus itself was not a real problem for Israel's security forces, even if individuals from this apparatus participated in terrorist activity, nor were the "elderly" terrorists who returned from Tunis to the territories.

The interim agreement and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority did in fact constrain the freedom of action of Israeli security forces in Area A, where under the agreements security responsibility was in Palestinian hands. The assumption was that security cooperation with the Palestinian Authority security apparatus would compensate. However, this assumption turned out to be justified only part of the time. When it became clear that the Palestinians were not fulfilling their commitments, the agreement did not prevent the IDF and security forces from regaining freedom of action, e.g., in Operation Defensive Shield and subsequent operations. One of the main considerations guiding security risks is the need to avoid a situation in which they become irreversible. The security arrangements in the interim agreement took this consideration into account, and in retrospect, they were justified. Palestinian security forces were not a significant obstacle to Israel's ability to restore its freedom of action in the realm of security. The stable security situation created after the second intifada and the contribution of the Annapolis process, with almost no terrorist attacks and close cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian security apparatuses, gradually allows a return to the original terms of the agreement, including Israel's relinquishing full freedom of action.

The basic format of the Oslo process, namely, interim agreements followed by negotiations on a permanent settlement, was a function of significant political constraints in Israel, and it was not possible to launch an alternative negotiating process with the Palestinians to stop Israel from becoming a bi-national state. However, this does not mean that failure was inevitable.

However, a complete discussion of the security ramifications of the Oslo process must include Israel's contribution to the creation of security problems, including the 1994 massacre by Baruch Goldstein at the Cave of the Patriarchs and Israel's responses to the killings, whereby the Palestinians in Hebron were the ones to suffer negative consequences, and other provocative

Israeli actions. During this period, there was a recurrent pattern: if there appeared a chance to stabilize the security situation, Israel took actions that heated up the atmosphere. One example is the targeted killing of Yihye Ayyash of Hamas, known as "the engineer," in January 1996 in the Gaza Strip: the decision by Prime Minister Peres to kill him was made after Arafat came to the conclusion that he could not continue to tolerate terrorist elements and try to co-opt them, and that he must take serious action against them. During this period the Palestinian security personnel were cooperating with their Israeli counterparts, and Arafat also exerted heavy political pressure on Hamas leaders, which led them to decide to desist from terrorism. The killing of Ayyash prompted a murderous wave of suicide bombings and had serious consequences for Israeli politics. A second example occurred several months later, in September 1996. After the cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority successfully created security stability, the Western Wall tunnels were opened at the direction of Prime Minister Netanyahu. This led to the outbreak of clashes between the two sides, escalating the tension already existing between them because of Israel's failure to keep the commitments it made in the interim agreement[7] and its failure to restart the negotiations between the two sides. In a third example, Prime Minister Sharon approved the targeted killing of senior Fatah figure Ra'ad Carmi in Tulkarm in January 2002. This killing was carried out after Arafat reached the conclusion, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, that continuing the violent intifada was harming the Palestinian cause given the perceived similarity between al-Qaeda and the Palestinians. He took serious actions to stop the attacks and stabilize the security situation, with considerable success. In the weeks immediately before Carmi was killed, the number of attacks declined gradually to nearly zero. Carmi's killing put an end to this process and led to a renewal of the cycle of violence, culminating with "Black March" 2002, in which 135 Israelis were killed in terrorist attacks.[8]

Israel paid the higher security price in the second intifada. Comprehensive research is still necessary, with all materials (including previously classified) placed at the disposal of researchers who will attempt to determine the reasons for the outbreak of the intifada and why it was so long and bloody. This research will need, first, to discuss the controversial question whether the Palestinian leadership (Arafat) planned the intifada, or whether it was a popular outburst, with Arafat

erring in his decision to jump on the bandwagon. A second key question is whether Israel contributed to the development of the second intifada, its extent, and its violent character by responding with disproportionate force when it began. The two questions are linked, because if the second intifada was not planned, it is possible that it could have been controlled and stopped at an early stage, before much Palestinian blood was shed and much motivation for revenge created, the same way that the escalation surrounding the opening of the Western Wall tunnel in 1996 was contained.

While conspiracy enthusiasts of various kinds might conclude that there is a consistent Israeli policy to prevent security stability and quiet, this is manifestly incorrect. The cases cited above are more indicative of problems in decision making and judgment than deliberate intent. Decisions such as the targeted killings of Ayyash and Carmi were not the result of a conscious policy to prevent calm, rather, the lure of the operational opportunity and disregard for the possible consequences of such operations.

The Negotiating Process Itself

The major criticism of the Oslo process is that it was based on interim agreements, without agreement on its final objectives. The two sides agreed to postpone the negotiations on the sensitive topics of the permanent status agreement − borders, Jerusalem, and refugees − and make do with interim agreements on Palestinian autonomy. The assumption was that this would be a confidence building process that would facilitate the subsequent discussion of permanent status issues. In practice, the interim agreements gave an opportunity to those on both sides who opposed the agreement to thwart the negotiations through the use of violence. It also created the motivation for both sides to obtain assets in any way possible that would enable them to entrench their positions. Thus, for example, the process created a strong motivation among many in Israel to expand the settlements, and what was supposed to be a confidence building process became a confidence destroying process. Overall, Israel had the upper hand because of the asymmetry of power in Israel's favor. For these reasons, critics claim that it would have been better to deal with the core issues of the permanent status agreement early in the negotiations.

This criticism is valid only if the proposed alternative was a viable option; a second question is whether the Oslo process was preferable to the status quo, with the absence of effective negotiations on a settlement with the Palestinians. An answer to the latter question has already been given, namely, that continuation of the status quo on the eve of the Oslo process would have been a poor choice. The answer to the first question also appears to be negative. The option of effective negotiations on the core issues of a permanent status agreement was not realistic. The futile discussions in the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating groups that were part of the Madrid process and the prolonged contacts, through various channels, between Israel and the PLO made it clear that neither side was sufficiently ready for negotiations on a permanent settlement and for the price it would have to pay on sensitive issues. This argument is especially true for the Israeli side, including both the public and the decision makers from the entire political spectrum, for whom "two states for two people" and "Palestinian state" were not part of their political lexicon. Even at the height of the process, when effective negotiations were underway and agreements were signed, neither Prime Minister Rabin nor Foreign Minister Peres adopted this terminology. It was only in 1999, when preparations began for negotiations on a permanent status agreement and it was no longer possible to ignore the fact that it would ultimately lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, that this expression began to recur frequently even by Israeli government officials.

It is no wonder, then, that the two sides clung to the precedent that gave legitimacy to the incremental process: the Camp David Accords signed by Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat. This agreement stated that the parties would hold negotiations on Palestinian autonomy. To both sides, this seemed to be a convenient first stage before entering into negotiations on a permanent settlement. In addition, the precedent of the peace treaty with Egypt illustrated the importance of interim agreements as confidence building measures that later made successful negotiations on a peace treaty possible. The separation of forces agreement in the Sinai, signed during the first Rabin government, laid the foundation for the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt five years later.

Based on these conclusions, the next question is whether the outcome was inevitable, i.e., whether the confidence destruction process and the security costs were unavoidable, or whether they stemmed from Israeli errors that could have been avoided and that, along with errors made by

the Palestinians – such as failure to take decisive action against terrorism at various stages – caused the collapse of the Oslo process. A partial answer was provided in the security analysis above; Israel's security behavior also contributed to the deterioration.

As to the negotiations themselves, first for the interim agreements and later for the permanent settlement, there are several key issues: the relationship between the work by the negotiating teams and the meetings between leaders; how external events were addressed; publicized negotiations vs. covert talks; formulation of opening positions and red lines; how momentum could have been maintained; and how developments on the ground that would harm the chances to reach an agreement could have been prevented.

Complex negotiations such as those between Israel and the Palestinians are exhausting and time consuming, and thus cannot be conducted between busy leaders. Leaders must intervene in the negotiations either when there is an impasse or a particular problem must be resolved, or at the end of the negotiations, when the negotiating teams have reached agreement on most of the issues and intervention by leaders is necessary to overcome the few remaining obstacles. Too often, Israeli leaders are under the mistaken impression that they can finalize the issues with the other party by themselves. However, meetings between leaders are dramatic and formative events. If they are not prepared correctly and present the leaders with too many open questions, the result is generally failure, with wide ranging consequences. A typical example of this is Barak's experience at Camp David.

Of the various kinds of external events, two are particularly important: the use of violence by elements wishing to torpedo the negotiations, and political developments that create a sense of urgency. The use of violence always challenges the continuation of the negotiations. Adapting a remark by Ben Gurion from the time of World War II, Rabin coined the sentence, "We will fight terrorism as if there were no negotiations, and we will conduct negotiations as if there were no terrorism." The idea was that those who initiated terrorism should not be rewarded with canceled negotiations. But Rabin himself did not observe this prescript, and in many cases negotiations were suspended because of terror attacks – not always because the Palestinians did not cooperate in fighting terrorism, but because of the fear of public opinion. Another major lesson of the Oslo process was that an attempt should be made to ignore external

events that create a (frequently artificial) sense of urgency. Thus, for example, Barak went to Camp David under conditions of lack of ripeness only because President Clinton's term in office was drawing to a close. Too often, the result is misguided management of the negotiations and creation of conditions that lead to failure.

When negotiations are conducted overly publicly, it is apparent that the parties involved are not interested in successful negotiations and are instead inviting failure. First, mutual trust must be built that will lead to basic understandings in covert discussions. The public aspects of the negotiations are very important because the parties must obtain support from public opinion, but this does not need to harm the effectiveness of the negotiations. Conducting the negotiations in the mass media hurts mutual trust, and part of the impasse in recent years can be attributed to this.

In many cases, when entering negotiations, Israel approached negotiations as if they were transactions in a Middle East bazaar: two parties engage in discussion with offers that are far from their actual positions, and therefore, they have room to compromise. This assumption is both patronizing to the negotiating partner and incorrect, and it caused many mistakes in the course of the negotiations. The Palestinians did not enter the talks with the assumption that they had much room for maneuver. On the contrary, they entered negotiations believing that they had made most of the concessions in 1988 and in the start of the Oslo process, when the PLO adopted the two-state solution[9] and recognized the 1967 borders in the Declaration of Principles. The result was a clear asymmetry between the two sides.

Barak, however, went to Camp David with opening positions that he knew were very far from any solution the Palestinians could accept, for example, his opening positions on territory and Jerusalem. The Israeli side sought to annex a large area of the West Bank, over 13.3 percent, without any territorial compensation for the Palestinians, and under a long term lease continue to control the Jordan Valley, another approximately 10 percent of the territory, or in total, 23.3 percent.[10] As to Jerusalem, the opening position was a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty. The result was a rapid Israeli withdrawal from unreasonable positions. This situation created a dilemma for the Palestinians: should they stop, or press for further Israeli flexibility? They were therefore motivated to continue the negotiations and not arrive at an understanding that would stop

Barak's retreat from his positions. If Barak had arrived at the negotiations with opening positions that were nearer to his red lines, there would have been a fierce struggle over every small change in positions, and both sides would have had very strong motivation to reach understandings. One can argue, of course, that the distance between the respective red lines made it impossible to reach an agreement, but this propels us back to the idea that the meeting between leaders should take place only when the gap between the two sides has been greatly narrowed. In addition, there is the question of how red lines are defined. They are generally not absolute, and when they are drawn, both what is desirable and what is attainable must be addressed. The red lines also become clear during the negotiations between the negotiating teams and before the meeting between the leaders.

Another consistent mistake was to ignore the importance of maintaining the momentum of the negotiations. In many cases, after success at a particular stage of the process, the momentum was stopped, and Israel did not continue the negotiations – for example, after the interim agreements were signed with the PLO, when the government of Israel turned its attention to the negotiations with Syria. Even when Barak became prime minister, he preferred initially to engage in negotiations with Syria; Olmert adopted the same policy. The loss of momentum served the opponents of the agreement on both sides, and made it easier for them to work against it. It also contravened the main idea of the Declaration of Principles, that five years after the signing of the interim agreement, the parties would sign a permanent status agreement that would resolve the core issues. This required that negotiations on the permanent status agreement be launched as early as possible, yet the real negotiations began only during Prime Minister Barak's term, after the five-year period had elapsed and after the attempt to reach a settlement with Syria had failed. A process in which momentum leading to progress was maintained and was also visible had a better chance of fulfilling its original purpose as a confidence building process.

One of the main reasons for the wide gap between the sides, which prevented renewal or progress in negotiations, was the continuation and acceleration of the settlement project. One of the major weaknesses of the Oslo process was that the interim agreement created a convenient situation for expanding the settlements, in particular, by dividing the land into areas A, B, and C. Area C, under full Israeli civil and security

control, covers 60 percent of the territory of the West Bank. This definition created an illusion, exploited by supporters of the settlement project, that this territory belongs to Israel, which has carte blanche there. This view is also currently reflected in proposals by the political right to annex Area C to Israel. It is clear that there is no chance of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians in which they would establish their state on only 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank. Those who initiated the Oslo process should have understood that these arrangements would have a negative impact on the chances of reaching a final agreement, and they should have avoided the temptation to preserve what appeared to be maximum freedom of action for Israel. In practice, the freedom of action that was maintained was the freedom to expand the settlement project and place additional obstacles in the way of an agreement.

Conclusion

The contentions of this article are based on the political definition of Israel's goals in its process with the Palestinians as defined at the outset of the article, and on the assumption that the Palestinians had a basic willingness to reach an agreement, if it met their essential needs. This willingness was expressed as early as 1988 in the decision by the PLO to accept the two-state solution, and in 1992 by the willingness to enter into the Oslo process. The basic format of the Oslo process, namely, interim agreements followed by negotiations on a permanent settlement, was a function of significant political constraints in Israel, and it was not possible to launch an alternative negotiating process with the Palestinians to stop Israel from becoming a bi-national state. However, this does not mean that failure was inevitable. Both sides made quite a few errors in conducting the process, and it may be that had they avoided them, the outcome might have been different.

Notes

1 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, September 13, 1993, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Declaration%20of%20Principles.aspx.

2 The analysis of the balance sheet is largely based on the writer's personal experience in the negotiations with the Palestinians, both as part of the Israeli negotiating delegation between 1994 and 1998 and through unofficial channels in the following years.

3 This objective is difficult to translate operationally because it is not clear what were the borders of the historical land of Israel. The borders were different in various periods of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel. This article addresses the commonly accepted political definition among proponents of this approach, which is the territories of the British mandate over Palestine between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, since even those proponents have mostly agreed to relinquish the territories in Transjordan.

4 Though in recent years there has been a decline in support for the two-state solution, in a joint survey conducted by the Truman Institute at Hebrew University and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, it was found that 56 percent of the Israeli public supports the two-state solution and 40 percent oppose it. At one of the peaks, in March 2010, support reached 71 percent. See http://www.huji.ac.il/dovrut/seker.pdf.

5 Those who coined this slogan have not clarified for themselves what the historical Jerusalem is that Israel must keep united, and have ascribed the sanctity of Jerusalem to an arbitrary area defined by Israeli bureaucrats immediately after the Six Day War.

6 Directly, for thirteen years during Likud governments that supported this ideology, and also indirectly in the two years in which Shimon Peres was prime minister in the national unity government, by virtue of the Likud's veto power over political decisions.

7 Israel suspended the negotiations on the arrangements in Hebron and did not want to fulfill the three additional stages of redeployment to which it had committed in the agreement.

8 Raviv Drucker, "Behind the Scenes of the Second Intifada: Sharon's Associates and Defense Establishment Heads Speak," February 11, 2013, http://pelephoneportal.invokemobile.com/nana/iarticle.aspx?ServiceID=126&ArticleID=957761.

9 At the nineteenth meeting of the Palestine National Council, held in 1988, the PLO decided to declare a Palestinian state on the basis of the UN partition plan, and thus it accepted the principle of the two-state solution.

10 Gilead Sher, *Just Beyond Reach: The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations 1999-2002* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahronot, 2001), p. 203; interview with Shaul Arieli, who headed the negotiating administration in the Prime Minister's Office for talks with the Palestinians during the Barak government.