Chapter 2

Oslo Accords: A Critical Assessment
OSLO ACCORDS: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

The Declaration of Principles on Palestinian Interim Self-government Arrangement, signed on the White House Lawn on 13 September 1993, was a watershed in the Arab-Israeli conflict. But without the prior agreement on mutual recognition there would have been no agreement on Palestinian self-government. On this occasion, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin hoped that the first agreement between the Palestinians and Israeli since the creation of the state of Israel, "hopefully will bring about an end to hundred years of bloodshed, misery, between the Palestinians and Jews, between Palestinians and Israeli" (Shlaim 1994). This reconciliation was based on a historic compromise, acceptance of the principle of land for peace. Both sides accepted the Declaration of Principle as the basis for the settlement of their long and bitter conflict, through peaceful dialogue. Despite the mutual recognition of national claims and acceptance of a division of the land, serious differences between the Israel and Palestinians remained unresolved.

The gravity of the domestic opposition faced by Israeli leaderships from the right-wing Zionists who hold a maximalist view of Israel and were not ready to compromise on the territorial composition of the Israeli State. They also rejected the formula of "territory for Peace" (Vatikiotis 1997:252), (White and Slogan 1997:297-336). The direct consequence

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19 This Agreement culminated after a series of secret private meetings, through a variety of venues and intermediaries between Israeli and Palestinian emissaries. For the complete text, "Israel-PLO Declaration of principles in Washington D.C, 13 September", see in Journal of Palestine studies (Washington D.C) vol.23, no.1, Autumn 1993,pp.115-21

20 The Oslo Accord consisted of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) on interim self-government arrangements, signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, and three accompanying letters of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. The PLO accepted UNSC resolution 242 and 338, recognized the right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security, committed itself to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, and renounced the use of terrorism and other acts of violence. Its leader, Yasser Arafat, called for an end to the Intifada and affirmed that the articles of the Palestinian covenant that are inconsistent with his commitments are inoperative and invalid. These developments turned a new page in the Israeli-PLO relationship.. For the text of the three accompanying letters see, Journal of Palestine Studies, (Washington D.C), vol.23, No.1, Autumn 1993,p.115
of this was the assassination of Rabin on 4 November 1995 by a young far right Israeli Jew. Rabin's assassination, the first ever political murder of an Israeli leader (There is a political dictum that "A Jew does not kill a fellow Jew" (Doron 1996:6),(Shahak and Mezvinsky 1999: 113-149). which had evolved over centuries of Diaspora communal life) demonstrated the huge gap between the Rabin-Peres government's commitments to trading land for peace. For their part, Palestinian opponents of the peace process were not ready to accept a Jewish State in any shape, size or form. Furthermore, they considered any Palestinian who was prepared to compromise would be a traitor to the Palestinian cause and an apostate.

The brutal killing of civilians in various parts of Israel as well as in Hebron (February 1994) by extremists on both sides starkly demonstrated the obstacles and problems that lied ahead. Yet, even the most implacable foes of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement would concede that the Oslo accords had changed the Middle Eastern political landscape beyond recognition. However, as one scholar warned during the euphoric days, "unless those most immediately affected sense a genuine transformation in their lives commensurate with their expectations... it may lead to the eventual collapse of the accord" (Karsh 1994:4).

Components of the Oslo Accords

The Oslo accords as it is commonly referred comprises of the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 (or Oslo-I), the Cairo accord signed on 9 February 1994; Paris economic protocol signed on 29 April 1994; Cairo II signed on 4 May 1994; early empowerment agreement signed on 29 August 1994; and the Washington agreement signed on 28 September 1995 (Oslo-II).

The Declaration of Principles, 13 September 1993

The Declaration of Principles (DoP) has dramatically altered the very nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It became a blueprint for the conduct of future negotiations although it was ambiguous, open to interpretation, and contained no specific Israeli
commitments on Palestinian nationalist aspiration for an independent state. The DoP declared: “the aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations is to establish a Palestinian self-government authority for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council Resolution 242 and 338.” 21 The authority would be established in “Gaza and Jericho first”, to be followed later in other unspecified populated areas. The permanent status negotiations would commence not later than the beginning of the third year and would cover remaining issues including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and co-operations with other neighbours. Importantly, prior to Oslo and in particular, at Madrid, the PLO had been persistent in its opposition to an interim accords unless the principles of a final settlement were agreed in advance. But in DoP, the PLO accepted the Israeli position of a five-year transition period without a prior agreement about the nature of a permanent settlement.

Significantly, the domain of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was functional not territorial. This meant that the PA could exercise its authority over the Palestinian people in specified areas, but it had no sovereignty over land, resources or border. This constraint was spelled out in the nature of the PA’s jurisdiction. The DoP provided for elections ‘under agreed supervision and international observation’ for a ‘Council’, the governing authority. The council could legislate matters concerning “education, and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, tourism and a Palestinian police force, as agreed upon.”22 Once the council was set up, it would “establish a strong police forces, while Israel will continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats as well as responsibility for overall security of Israelis for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order” Moreover, “the withdrawal of the military government will not prevent Israel from exercising the powers and responsibilities which transferred to the council.” It meant that the real functions of the PNA from Israel’s perspective would be to function as a strong police force, whose main purpose would be to guarantee Israel’s security.


22 Ibid, pp, 115-21
Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip and redeploy from the Jericho areas. Redeployment has a substantially different meaning than withdrawal. It implies mainly the Israel Defence Force (IDF) would be moved from one area or centre of major Palestinians cities to another nearby areas and around the cities. As Prime Minister Rabin made it clear the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) would remain in the territories and would be redeployed from urban centres to less provocative locations. Israel would determine whether there was a need for its intervention. The DoP also established joint liaison committees for every issue and eventuality. The liaison committees, as well as future negotiations gave Israel a decisive advantage and indeed, a veto over the resolution of any question owing to the enormous power disparity between the two sides.

According to the DoP, the permanent peace would be based on the UN resolutions 242 and 338. But these resolutions meant very different things to the two parties. In 1988, when the PLO accepted these resolutions as a basis of peacemaking, it did so on the basis of the international consensus as to their meaning, namely, Israel would withdraw to the June 1967 borders from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Subsequently, the PLO diplomacy focused on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state emerging in those areas. However, Israel never accepted this interpretation of the resolutions or the linkage. It contended that the resolutions required Israel to withdraw from only some but not all of the territories and it never accepted a Palestinian state in the sense of national sovereignty. The DoP does not clarify the above two contradictory interpretations of the resolutions, and it did not explicitly mention a Palestinian state or self-determination.

Finally, the DoP required that all matters related to economic development must be negotiated in liaison committees. These specifically include water resources, electricity, energy, transports, trade, industry etc. The most contentious issues such as border, settlement, security arrangements, refugees and relation and cooperation with neighbours were deferred for later negotiation with Israel exercising the veto. The Palestinians had to proceed without any clear idea concerning the character of the future negotiations. The negotiations were to determine the elections for the governing council as well as its structure and responsibilities (Drake 1994:1-36).
Cairo-I Accord, February 1994

The second accord was signed between two parties in Cairo on 9 February 1994 [Cairo-I]23 and this was five months later than the period stipulated in the DoP. The Israeli negotiating team was composed of top IDF officers, led by Major General-Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, head of military intelligence and the number two man in the IDF. Palestinian delegation was led by Nabil Sha’ath, a former businessman and one of Arafat’s senior political confidants. Four months of intensive talks resulted in two partial agreements. The first agreement involved security and military issues, focusing on the PLO’s responsibilities for maintaining law and order among the Palestinians under its jurisdiction and for the protection of Israel’s security, as well as on modes of control on the Gaza border with Egypt and Jericho border with Jordan. Israel assumed unilateral jurisdiction over both boundaries. The second agreement was another statement of principles concerning the transfer of authority to the Palestinians and, they further refined the limitations on governance and delineated the expectations of the PNA regarding Israel’s security needs.24

The IDF had set the terms of reference for future negotiations; the Cairo agreement transformed ambiguity into fixed constraints on Palestinian self-rule. Avi Shlaim, who observed the Oslo accords as a “historical breakthrough” admitted that Cairo-I “tilted very heavily towards the Israeli position.” (Shlaim 2000:524). The outstanding feature of the agreement was thus to allow the IDF to maintain a military presence in and around the self-rule areas. This was mainly because of Rabin’s persistent emphasis on security as

24 The text of “Yitzhak Rabin, Speech to the Knesset on Gaza-Jericho Agreement, Jerusalem,11 May 1994 (Excerpts) in Journal of Palestine Studies, vol.24, no.1, (Autumn 1994) pp.141-43. Palestinians will have a policing authority regarding civilian issues, subject to several constraints. It allows blanket (IDF) protection of ... the settlements in the Gaza Strip. There are constraints on Palestinian building and other issues. In other areas-such as religion, archaeology, water, electricity, construction and planning, telecommunications, postal services, and population registration affairs-the transfer of power will be subject to certain constraints in order to secure essential Israeli interests. It stipulates that a liaison committee will be established to decide on the principles concerning the entry of persons who left Judea and Samaria in 1967. Take note we are not talking about refugees from 1948 but about people displaced in 1967. This clause stipulates that all decisions on this issue must be made unanimously by all the members of the Joint liaison committee. In other words, without Israel’s agreement, the committee will not be able to determine how many people will be allowed in and in what stages.
a major feature in every document relating to the peace process. Almost in every issue involving Israel’s security needs the Palestinians were virtually required in every article to guarantee them. In the meantime, the massacre of twenty-nine Palestinians at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron by a Jewish settler on 25 February 1994 and the subsequent counter attack on the Israelis by the Hamas created a different atmosphere. Israel lost its hope and the credibility of Arafat in managing his own people, extremists and fanatics. The accusations against Arafat were serious. And there was a general dissatisfaction even among the Jewish peace supporters (Mao’oz 1999:408). They felt that the Palestinian leader did little to control extremism in Palestinian politics at this critical juncture.

To guarantee public order and internal security for the Palestinians of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, it was agreed that the PNA would establish a strong police force, as set out in article IX of the agreement. Israel would continue to carry out the responsibility for defence against external threats, including the responsibility for protecting the Egyptian border and the Jordanian line. It also was responsible for defence against external threats from the sea and from the air, as well as the responsibility for overall security of Israelis and settlements, for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order. Israel wanted an exclusive control over all exits from the occupied territories whereas the internal dimension of security for long-term protection of the Jewish settlement in areas from where Israeli withdrawal was to take effect. Therefore, the delegations from Israel and Palestine failed to arrive at a concession not only over the details of the interim phase but also over the resolution of a few contentious issues.

Cairo-II, May 1994

Israel considered the 9 February 1994 agreement partial and insufficiently precise in stipulating the autonomy limitations and security responsibilities of the PNA. Thus, negotiations continued for another four months until a second Gaza-Jericho agreement

was signed [Cairo-II], on 4 May 1994.\footnote{Text of "Israel-PLO agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho areas, Cairo, 4 May 1994", see in \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, (Washington DC) vol.3, no.4 (Summer 1994) pp.118-126.} This agreement gave Israel an absolute authority regarding responses to external threats. It includes an arrangement ensuring effective protection of the borders of Israel and Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. Security criteria were defined in which construction and introduction of arms were placed under constraints and supervision in those regions as well. Furthermore, the Palestinian police would have no authority over Israelis. The size, types of arms, and deployment of the Palestinian police were agreed. Bringing in arms other than those allowed under the agreement was banned. An apparatus of cooperation and coordination with the Palestinian police was set up. The Palestinians made a commitment to act and prevent terror against Israel from areas under their control.\footnote{See the text of "Yitzhak Rabin, speech to Knesset on Gaza-Jericho agreement, Jerusalem, 11 May 1994 (excerpts)", in \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, (Washington DC) vol.24, No.1 (Autumn 1994) pp.141-143} The agreement also included, reasonable protection of the settlements and the settlers. Taken together, the myriad agreements that constitute these documents suggest a determined Israeli effort to impose the maximum number of controls on, and obstacles to, the possibility of Palestinians actually succeeding at self-rule (Said 1995:67-83). For example, both sides agreed that the Israeli occupation laws and military orders, which had controlled every aspect of Palestinian’s lives since 1967, were to remain in force unless they were amended by "mutual agreement (Shehadeh 1994:18-25).

**Paris Protocol**

The Israeli occupation has severely undermined the Palestinian economy before the peace process. Israel remained central to determining the quality and characters of Palestinian economic life. Without an improvement in economic life, the peace and prosperity remain illusory for both parties. The Palestinians solely depends upon the external sources (mainly on Israel) and was also on the verge of declining income sources, gross imbalance in the labour market, rising unemployment, weakening productive sectors such as agriculture, industry and restricted trade and commerce with Israel.
In the light of this precarious economic condition, the Declaration of Principles provided unprecedented opportunities. As Israeli Association of Chambers of Commerce has predicted, on the regional level implementation of the DoP would improve the business climate in the Middle East, stimulating investment and growth, which would foster the creation of a common Middle East market and encourage tourism throughout the region. For Israel these developments were bound to attract large-scale movement of investment and trade and open markets that until then were completely closed. Israel might also benefit from the use of its highly skilled labour force, its infrastructure such as ports, financial services, agricultural projects, and computer and communication services.

Therefore, Israeli the Palestinian and negotiated for eight months in Paris to achieve an economic agreement. The Israel-PLO protocol on economic Relation was signed on 29 April 1994. It is generally referred to as the economic protocol or the Paris protocol. According to the agreement’s preamble “the two parties view the economic domain as one of the cornerstone in their mutual relations.” This protocol laid the groundwork for strengthening the economic base of the Palestinian side and for exercising its right to economic decision making in accordance with its developmental plans and priorities. This would enable the PNA to formulate proper policies and conducive atmosphere and friendly relations with other Arab countries. The features of the Middle East Common Market based on shared economic interests, a high degree of cooperation and mutual interdependence and a desire to raise a living standards, especially among the Palestinians were also present (Avineri 1994:12-15). In short, the protocols strategy was to strengthen the Palestinian autonomy by increasing its competitiveness and giving it a market orientation. This thinking was in line with a report issued by the Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East (ISEPME) and the recommendation of the World Bank,

29 Ibid., p.103.
which advocated a market approach and export as the basis for building long-term prosperity for Palestinian (Stanley 1993:60-75).

But there were certain restrictions on economic activities in relation with Israel. Firstly, under agreements, labour, capital manufactures, foodstuffs and services would remain subject to Israeli authority. Secondly, Israel retained authority over all borders. Finally, as the World Bank has pointed out, the agreement split up the West Bank and Gaza into a largely separate economic units with little economic interrelationship among them (Roy 1998:19-25).

However, despite certain restrictions Israel was expected to provide a major outlet for Palestinian workers, with 100,000 labour permits issued daily. Without this source of income of Palestinian economy could not be revived. In practice however this number were dramatically reduced because of persistent terrorist attacks. This situation made the Palestinian economy worse. Between March and December 1994, for example 54,000 foreign workers from Eastern Europe (especially from Romania, Turkey and the Far East) were given work permit to take jobs previously filled by Palestinian (Murphy 1997:128-29). The Palestinian economy has furthermore been devastated by varying degree of closure of the occupied territories and the prevention of Palestinian labourers from entering the job market inside Israel (Parker 1999:94-131).

To fill the gap and provide a long-term boost, the Israeli government gave a US$25 million grant and provided US$50 million insurance for Israelis who were ready to enter into joint venture with the Palestinians. These funds would be administered through the Israeli Foreign Trade Insurance Corporation (IFTRIC) the Koor conglomerate established the Salem 2000 project to initiate joint ventures in the territories (Peleg 1998:232).

The Oslo II added the efforts of the donors to speed up the Palestinian economic and social development in the West Bank and Gaza as well as to support the emergence of a Palestinian administrative infrastructure and
strengthening the PNA. By bringing benefits for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip the international community hoped to generate more support among the Palestinians for the peace process (Brynen 1996:79-72). But the delay of economic acceleration was mainly due to the failures to realise economic prosperity. Some critics have argued that Arafat had actually “excluded the economic experts and sought to maintain control of everything. This newly formed PLO economic council “was packed with politicians... rather than giving real authority to professional economists” (Kanovsky 1995:33).

Similarly, The World Bank feared that some aid money could end up being used for ‘political’ construction project that were not needed and “politically connected businessmen.” Officials of the US Agency for International Development (AID) were quoted as saying “when we look for cooperation (with the PA) we find one office of the authority contradicting the others... their lack of coordination is unbelievable.” Another AID officials noted that what the PA “wanted us to do is create the accoutrements of a government for them. They would like us to build them ministry buildings with a fax machine and a word processor on each desk.... (but) that has nothing to do with creating jobs (Kanovsky 1995:33-35). Although the structures and process have developed to support the international assistance efforts were complex, involving more than three dozen countries and several international organizations, the Palestinian leadership lacked the necessary expertise to develop an economic infrastructure that could flourish, especially while still under occupation (Brynen 1996:46-52).

The Paris agreement was also expected to lead to peace agreement with the rest of the Arab World. If peace treaties were signed and genuine peace prevails in the area, the parties hoped that the military expenditure could be cut down in

30 Immediately after the Oslo accords the EU, already the foremost western donor to the Palestinian community, pledged an additional 100 million Euro ($ 85 million) per year for five years. At an international donor conference convened in Washington in October 1993, arrangements were set in motion for management and distribution of aid to the nascent Palestinian entity.
the long run. Moreover, the economic opportunities of the DoP offers were countless: it envisioned regional cooperation in various spheres, including the establishment of water development programme and cooperation in electricity generation and energy development. It also visualised the creation of a financial development and action programme to encourage international investment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and in Israel and the establishment of a transport and communication programme. It envisions cooperation in trade and industry, including textile, food, pharmaceutical, electronic, diamonds, and computer and science based industries.

The Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibility

On 29 August 1994, the fourth major agreement was signed for the purpose of implementing the actual transfer of authority to the PNA for the administration of civilian life in Gaza and Jericho. This accord is also known as 'early empowerment’ agreement. The accord empowered the PNA to assume self-governing authority in education, culture, health, social welfare, tourism, taxation, and policing. The autonomous decision-making however, would be excluded in education, health, and tourism on security grounds. In this agreement Israel would retain the control over all types of responsibility for the security of Israelis living in or travelling through areas under the control of the PNA. The powers and responsibilities delegated to the PNA are so carefully defined (Aruri 1995:33-39). It further spelled out the limitations and restrictions as well as the obligation and responsibilities for further administration. But the major challenges of the interim agreement, namely, the redeployment of Israeli forces, elections, installation of a Palestinian council, and implementation of full self-government had to be negotiated.

Oslo-II, September 1995

After a continued negotiations Arafat and Peres moved to the next phase by signing an agreement on 28 September 1995, in Washington DC. This accord is also known as

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31 Ibid, pp.93-94.
Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement on the West Bank and Gaza strip or Oslo-II.\textsuperscript{33} It reiterated earlier agreements but made additional provisions for the election of the Palestinian legislative council to which Israel would transfer authority in the sectors previously specified. It specifically committed Israel to release Palestinian prisoners and detainees in the West Bank and Gaza but not in East Jerusalem. This release however pertained to those who had committed offences prior to the signing of the DoP on 13 September 1993.\textsuperscript{34}

Most importantly, the accord also divided the West Bank into three areas of jurisdiction. Area ‘A’ would consist of about three percent of the West Bank, including the densely populated urban areas of Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Qalqiliya, Tukarem and Bethlehem and these would be gradually handed over to full Palestinian control. The status of town of Hebron was deferred to a later date. Area ‘B’ included a network of some 400 Palestinian villages and adjoining rural lands that comprised around twenty-seven percent of the West Bank. This would be controlled jointly by Israel and the PNA. And Area ‘C’ encompassing seventy percent of the West Bank included Jewish settlements and their bypass roads, military installations, Israeli designated state lands and agricultural lands of the Palestinians. This would remain under exclusive Israeli control during the interim period. Even though Israel was to redeploy from area ‘A’ locations the Palestinians could not move from one part of area ‘A’ to another part of area A, without passing through area B. This in practical terms meant a series of checkpoints, roadblocks and the

\textsuperscript{33} In a ceremony at the East Room of the White House, Prime Minister, Rabin and PNA Palestinian Authority Chairman, Arafat signed the interim agreement for the extension of Palestinian self- rule in the West Bank. U.S President Bill Clinton, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan’s King Hussein also signed the document as official witnesses. Among the guests attending the ceremony were representatives of the Lebanese and the Syrian government. Jerusalem Post, 29 September 1995. The text of “Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strips, Washington, 28 September 1995. see in Journal of Palestine Studies (Washington DC) vol.,25,no.2 Winter 1996,pp.123-140

\textsuperscript{34} Israel informed the PNA told the PA that the agreed release of prisoners would take place at the end of Knesset ratification of the interim agreement on 5th October 1995. President Ezer Weizman opposed clemency for female Palestinian prisoners who had ‘blood on their hands’. At the same time, he explored the legal perspectives on granting clemency or reducing the sentences of several Jewish prisoners serving time for politically- motivated crimes against the Palestinians. On 6th October 1995, President decided on the release of 12 female Palestinian prisoners who are residents of eastern Jerusalem. However, he decided not to lighten the sentences of two prisoners convicted of murder. Jerusalem Post The Jerusalem Post, 29 September 1995 and 6th October 1995.
necessary permits from Israel. Furthermore, the entrances and exits to Gaza were also under complete Israeli control (Usher 1999:25-75), (Said 2000:74-107).  

Even the agreement on the limited redeployment by Rabin-Peres government has generated a strong opposition from many sectors in Israel. On 4 November 1995, a West Bank settler, Yigal Amir, a student of extremist rabbis (who preached that Rabin had given away the sacred land of Israel) assassinated the prime minister (Shahak and Mezvinsky 1999:113-149). On 22 November Peres became Prime Minister and Ehud Barak Foreign minister.

One of the most problematic and intricate aspects of the interim agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was related to the holding of elections and the creation of an elected government. Israel wished to limit the number and powers of the council but in contrast, the Palestinians proposed a 100- member council with extensive legislative powers that would bring the Palestinians closer to de facto statehood. Finally the Oslo-II agreement resolved the issue of elections in Jerusalem and set the Palestinian assembly at 89 members. The elections took place on 20 January 1996, based on a proposed electoral law circulated in the West Bank and Gaza in late October 1995. Reflecting the continuing strong support for Arafat and the peace process, Fatah won fifty of the eighty-eight seats and Arafat was elected president. The election was considered to be a reasonably fair by international and local observers. (Andoni 1996:5-16), Jorwawi 1996:29-39), (Shikaki 1996:5-16)

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35 The only Exception was Hebron whose small and militant Jewish enclave made it specifically difficult case.
36 The Jerusalem Post, 29 September 1995, p.6
37 The Jerusalem Post, 29 and 30 October 1995
38 Yasser Arafat manoeuvred among clans, religious groups, and locales to ensure Fatah’s dominance in the final outcome. Total voters turnout was remarkably high at that 79.7 percent % of the 1 million plus registered voters actually cast and ballots. Reflecting the continuing strong support for Arafat and the peace process, Fatah won 50 of the 88 seats, independents took 37 seats, and FIDA (the pro-Oslo party that split from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1993) claimed one seat. Seven 7of the independents were Islamists; the remainder were mostly pro-Fatah. Thus, in reality, Fatah controlled 71 of the 88 seats.
Timeframe for Implementation

One of the most interesting aspects of the DoP was that it stipulated a series of timeframe for the implementation of the various phases of the accord. Such an arrangement was essential for Arafat not only to convince the sceptic public but also to verify Israel's intentions towards reaching a political settlement with the Palestinians. The agreement set forth the following timetable for Palestinian self-rule (Kumaraswamy 1994:220-22).

1. The DoP would come into force one month after its signature that is, from 13 October 1993.
2. Within a month from that date of entry, (that is, by 13 December 1993) both sides would sign an agreement for withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Gaza-Jericho area.
3. Israel would implement an accelerated and scheduled withdrawal of its military presence from Gaza-Jericho and this would be completed within four months after the signing of the agreement to that effect (that is, before mid-April 1994)
4. Elections would be held no later than nine months from the time the agreement took effect. Under agreed supervision and international observation the Palestinian would have their first democratic election before mid-July 1994.
5. Israel would redeploy its military forces from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip “no later than on the eve of the elections” to the council or before July 1994.
6. Following the inauguration of the Palestinian council, “the civil administration will be dissolved and the Israeli military government will be withdrawn.” According to agreed timetable this should happen no later than July 1994 elections.
7. The permanent status negotiations would commence no “later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period” or around mid-1996.
8. Because the DoP was an interim accord that would cover only “five-year transition period”, the future permanent status of the occupied territories would be settled by early 1999.

However deadlines, target dates and commitments in Palestine-Israeli negotiations tended to be expressions of optimistic intent rather than realistic assessment. On the eve of the
signature ceremony former Israeli president Chaim Herzog contended "one must extract the proposed arrangements from the constraints of an accelerated time-table, in which one speaks of weeks instead of months, months instead of year (Kumaraswamy 1994:222).

**Issues of Agreement**

The ultimate purpose of the Israeli-PLO negotiations was to arrive at the resolution of their historic conflict. This could be accomplished through the final status negotiations, which are, suppose to start in May 1996 (the beginning of the third year of the transitional period) and to be concluded by May 1999. One could divide the period when Rabin-Peres government pursued peace into three phases: first, the effort to negotiate from September 1993 to February 25, 1994; second, from February 25 to April 1994 when Israel tried to save the process after a Jewish Israeli settler murdered 29 Palestinian worshippers in the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron; and finally, the renewed efforts that culminated in 4 May 4 1994 agreement (Ross 2004:122).

The September 1993 DoP (First agreement) provided a framework for the peaceful resolution of the most important issues pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both sides agreed

- a five year period of limited autonomy and jurisdiction over land for Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories, beginning in the Gaza Strip and Jericho but gradually extending to the entire West Bank in July 1994; Jewish settlements would continue to remain under Israeli control, and Israel would be responsible for external security; the Palestinians and Israel are then to begin talks on a permanent settlement; status of Jerusalem would be determined in a final agreement
- A Palestinian council, elected by July 1994, would have authority over direct taxation, economic development, social welfare, education and culture, health care, environmental protection, tourism, electricity,
exported and imported goods, water, and land; the Israeli military and civil administrations would be withdrawn.

Withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian areas of Gaza and from Jericho would be completed by 13 April 1994; Israeli troops would be redeployed outside population centres in the West Bank before July elections; left unclear were the extent of the troop withdrawal and deployments around Jewish settlements.

Palestinian police force responsible for internal security to be created based on Palestine Liberation Army units from outside West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli-Palestinian Liaison committee and Israeli-Palestinian Economic cooperation committee to be established

Disputes between Palestinians and Israel would be settled by a joint committee or referred to arbitrators with the consent of both sides;

Jordan and Egypt would be asked to join Palestinians and Israel, to develop procedures for admission of Palestinians displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and their dependents; status of 1948 refugees deferred until final negotiations. 39

The next Cairo Agreement solely dealt with the “Gaza-Jericho first” provision of the DoP. 40 The agreement provided for the withdrawal of the IDF from most of the Gaza Strip and from the West Bank Arab town of Jericho, and for the transfer of two dozen spheres of administration in those regions to a PNA. The negotiators signalled that Palestinian self-governance would not be limited to the Gaza Strip but would eventually extend to areas of the West Bank. The Interim Agreement sought to broaden Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank through Palestinian election. Further more, it proved for

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39 See the text “Israel-PLO Declaration of principles in Washington D.C, 13 September”, in Journal of Palestine studies (Washington D.C) vol.23, no.1, Autumn 1993,pp.115-21
• further Israeli withdrawal from 470 Palestinian cities, towns, and villages;
• the creation of areas "A", "B", and "C" to be under Palestinian, Israeli or joint jurisdiction;
• the transfer of further administrative powers to the PNA;
• a PNA pledge to act vigorously against anti-Israel violence emanating from within its domain; and
• A PLO commitment to convene the Palestinian National council to change the 1968 Palestinian covenant within two months after the Palestinian elections (Ross 2000:195-98)\(^4\)

Later phase would discuss those most outstanding issues including Palestinian quest for independence, status of Jerusalem in general and East Jerusalem in particular, delimitation of borders of the Palestinian entity, future of Israeli settlements, defence and security of the West Bank and Gaza strip, future of Israeli Arabs and other issues relating to Palestinians in Diaspora, such as repatriation, compensation and land redemption (Karsh 1997:144) So long as these issues were not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, they continued to threaten the peace process. Therefore, all issues were deferred until after the election of a Palestinian interim self-government. The elected council would enter into negotiation with Israel regarding these issues.

**The Implementation Mechanism**

Mainly due to lack of consensus within the government of Israel that the implementation could not progress on schedule. The Israeli leaders were divided into two groups, one wanted to ignore the political aspirations of the Palestinians but was keen to maintain Israeli control over the West Bank for a long time. This way it hoped to block any real progress towards Palestinian statehood. The other group accepted that the Oslo accord meant Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank and ultimately the establishment of an

independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. The first group wanted to use the five-year transitional period to linger as far as possible the political and territorial status quo. The second group wanted to use the transitional period to develop a different type of relationship. Rabin belonged to the first group and Peres belonged to the second group.

Prime Minister Rabin has order to set up two committees in early October 1993 to negotiate the implementation of the DoP. The first ministerial level committee that was supposed to meet in Cairo every two or three weeks was chaired by Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas, who signed the DoP on behalf of the Palestinians. The other committee, consisted of experts, who were supposed to meet for two or three days each week in the Egyptian resort of Taba on the Red Sea. This was headed by Nabil Sa'ath for the PLO and Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak, head of military intelligence on behalf of Israel (Shlaim 1995:20-31).

In fact, a lot of complicated issues were involved at the operational level. The mutual difference and understanding between Rabin and Peres. During the first phase on issues such as full Israeli control of border crossing and access roads to settlements in the occupied territories Peres was more willing to concede than the IDF officers. But control over border crossing between the Gaza strip and Egypt meant that 10 percent of the territory would remain under Israeli control after its formal ‘withdrawal’ (Hussain 1995:69-105). There were disagreements over the exact area of Jericho from which Israel would start its withdrawal and control over border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan after the Jericho withdrawal.

As a result of these factors, the Taba negotiations took four months to complete instead of two months as originally planned. It was also mainly due to two issues, one on general principles and the other on border crossing and both were very much in tune with the position of the IDF during the interim period. Both parties eventually reached a compromise. The IDF undertook to redeploy
rather than withdrew its forces in the Gaza strip and Jericho retaining full authority over Gaza’s three settlement blocs, the four roads joining them to the green line, and the relevant territory overlooking them. The main argument was to allow the IDF to maintain a military presence in and around the area for Palestinian self-government and to retain full responsibility for external security and control of the land crossing to Egypt and Jordan (Shlaim 1995:26-28).

On 4 May, Rabin and Arafat signed the “Cairo agreement” to extend the Palestinian self-rule over the rest of the West Bank. It had taken place in three phases. In the first phase, responsibility for towns and issues such as education and culture, health and social welfare and direct taxation were to be transferred from Israel’s civil administration to the PNA. In the second phase, Israel was to redeploy its armed forces away from “Palestinian population centres.” In the third phase, elections for a new authority were to take place throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And only about a month behind schedule, six weeks later, a Palestinian police force was in place and Arafat himself arrived in Gaza from Tunis (Heller 1995:28-32).

The shape of the permanent settlement was not specified in the DoP but was left to negotiations between the two parties during the second stage. The DoP was completely silent on vital issues. But this was not difficult hard to understand. Both sides recognised that if these issues were addressed, there would have been no accord. Thus they took a calculated risk, realizing that a great deal would depend on the way the Palestinian self-government worked out in practice. This was largely conceived as a confidence building for both parties to be carried out in Gaza and the Jericho.

Impediments

Delays in implementation and vocal and often violent opposition both within Israel and among the Palestinians and in the occupied territories and beyond soon created problems. Clearly implementation of the process would involve a series of decisions and actions

42 See the text of “Israel-PLO agreement on the Gaza Strip-Jericho area, 4 May, 1994”, in Journal of Palestine Studies, (Washington D.C.), vol.23, no.4, pp.120.
that would, over time, test the various components of the DoP. In Israel the accord was often referred to as a peace agreement rather than simply as an agreement on a process that might ultimately culminate in peace. Among Palestinians, there was a widespread perception, which the leadership did not try very vigorously to dispel, that this was an agreement on Palestinian independence, rather than simply agreement on a process that might fulfil that aspiration. This contrast between expectations and reality was brought home by the absence of immediate changes on the ground, problems in the follow-on negotiations, and revival of violence in the occupied territories. Therefore, implementation of the DoP was constrained by a number of factors. These can be classified under short term and long-term problems.

**Short-term problems**

- There were intra-party differences over the Oslo accord, which did not enjoy the unanimous support of all the Israelis or Palestinians. The PLO had to deal with opposition very carefully from within and without, namely, the Islamic militant groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad as well as from the right wing ideological supporters of Jewish extremism in the settlements (Rubin 1999:14).

- Palestinian economic reconstruction and revival required mobilization of resources and investment. The outside donors were reluctant to release huge sums without adequate controls. They afraid that the aid would be spent on non-developmental purpose (Kanovsky 1995:22-39).

- Maintenance of law and order particularly in the Gaza, which was a hotbed of violence. Arafat faced a dual dilemma. If was harsh towards the militants who were opposed to the agreement, he might loose his popularity and could be accused of doing the dirty job for the Israelis. This development could lead to a civil war situation. On the other hand, if he did not act against militants who were carrying out suicide attacks inside Israel, he would be accused by the Israel of ineffective governance. This in turn would put jeopardise the flow of economic aid.
and this will give the Israeli government an excuse to delay the implementation of the accords (Kanovsky:22-39).

- From the Israeli perspective there were two types of security threats associated with Palestinian sovereignty. First, PNA might be either unable or unwilling to prevent terrorist attacks against Israel; and second, there was the danger that rejectionist Arab states might use a Palestinian state as a spring-board for an offensive against Israel;

**Long-term problems:**

- The issues of final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- The issue of water rights to the Palestinians, especially when Israel depends heavily upon the aquifers that exist or flow from the West Bank.
- The question of Jerusalem is another permanent status issue postponed until the final round of talks and currently not covered by the Oslo accord.
- The territorial implication of Jewish settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Despite DoP, the Israeli settlement activities continued unabated and citing ‘natural growth’ new housing units were built.
- The fate of the Palestinian refugees who left mandate Palestine during and after the Arab-Israeli conflict which would be discussed in the final status negotiations

**Fundamental Flaws and Ambiguities**

The Declaration of Principles (13 September 1993), the Gaza and Jericho Agreement (4 May 1994) and the Interim Agreement (28 September 1995) have been hailed as a ‘blueprint for peace’ between Israelis and Palestinians. The agreements however, failed to directly address any of the most difficult disputes between Israel and the Palestinians, including final status of borders, refugees, settlements, and Jerusalem. But, it has helped the two parties to negotiate them during the five-year interim period (Karsh 2000:200-3). These talks on the nature and scope of the interim period were expected to go on for at least two years, after which the much more contentious final status issues
were expected to be negotiated, presumably for the remainder of the five-year period.

Since the Madrid conference Israel has made a number of significant concessions, namely, accepting the Palestinians are a separate people distinct from other Arabs, agreeing to negotiate directly with the PLO and in bowing to the inevitability of at least some withdrawals from of the occupied territories. In the past the Israeli governments had resisted doing so. The PLO has also made major concessions, such as dropping its insistence on full Israeli military withdrawal and full Palestinian jurisdiction over the occupied territories during the interim period, and acquiescing in Israeli armed forces remaining in a large area of the territories for this period, while accepting postponement of the resolution of virtually all the crucial issues to the later round of negotiations.

Transition from the first to the second stage was problematic for several reasons. The DoP was a conceptual framework that laid down general guidelines but contained too many ambiguities and lacunae to serve as an operational plan. The language was often vague and almost every item required negotiation with Israel such as extent and location of Israeli withdrawal as well as the authority, structure and function of the self-governing Palestinian council (interim agreement). Given the minimal guideline supplied by the DoP, as well as the complexity of the issues, it was clear that these negotiations would not be merely pro forma. For example, the DoP called for withdrawal from "the Jericho area" without specifying precisely the geographical limits of that area. Under the DoP two items concerning the "transfer of power" have definitely been agreed upon. First, the authority transferred to the Palestinians would cover five spheres. Second, the Palestinians were authorized to form their police force (Article VI-2). There was an undertaking to speed up this process (Dajani 1994:14). These were what the Palestinians were promised at the beginning of the implementation of the agreement.
The rest were subject to negotiations. In effect, at least four major and separate agreements had to be negotiated during the interim phase, namely, an interim agreement, an election agreement, a withdrawal agreement and an agreement on economic matters (Dajani 1994:14-15. Another example in the use of term “withdrawal rather than abolition”. It stated that in article VII (5) that after the inauguration of the (elected Palestinian) council, the civil administration and the military government would be dissolved. But this would not prevent Israel from exercising the power and responsibilities (Shehayeh:1994:18). Israel was completely responsible for the security of Israelis living in or travelling through the occupied territories. The Israel wanted to retain some capacity there to discharge this responsibility.

In addition to the withdrawal, the DoP treated the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit “whose integrity will be preserved during the interim period.” But their territorial integrity was left undetermined during the final status (Ziad 1994:75-83). AS would be discussed the DoP and other agreement did not prevent from expanding existing settlement or building new ones. The fact the DoP did not designate the West Bank and Gaza Strip as “occupied territories.” The word “Palestinian self-determination” was similarly nowhere to be found. Israel was not ready to concede that the Oslo process would eventually lead to Palestinian state just as the Palestinian side was reluctant to relinquish its ideological commitment and dream of regaining control of all historic Palestine (Karsh 2000:200-220). Ambiguities was also useful for the PLO because it could claim that its concessions to Israel were temporary, while at the same time establishing the political, military, economic, administrative and infrastructure of the future of Palestinian state. In this way, Israel was able to portrays the Oslo accords in terms of ‘redeployment,’ 'interim phases', and ‘Palestinian self-rule’, rather than in terms of permanent Israeli withdrawals or the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

As result, it appears that the two sides exhibited a different attitude towards the negotiation process of the texts that emerge. It could be said that the Palestinian side was
not shared the detail information on the proposal submitted by the Israeli side. However, Oslo and its aftermath has taught all parties that there were no gains from ‘constructive ambiguities’, because the desire to satisfy everyone by wording which were subsequently interpreted differently by the parties collapses on the day of reckoning (Stain 1999). Clear commitments and obligations, with a clear timetable and a series of tests along the way to ensure compliance, were proved insufficient.

Deferred Issues and the Rationale

The Israeli and Palestinian architects of the Oslo accords did not provide an outline as to the nature of the final settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. They claimed that was impossible to do so in September 1993 since there was very little that the two sides could agree upon at that stage. Both sides felt that they were about to embark on an unprecedented journey which would change not only the Middle East but also their perceptions of each other and of themselves. Hence, they felt it was impossible to carry out such profound changes within the space of a short period of time and with the signing of one agreement. Oslo was therefore envisaged as a process of change over a defined ‘transitional’ time-period of five years (Karsh 2000:201). This relatively drawn-out process was seen as necessary for two principal reasons. The first was because the positions of both sides appeared to be so far apart on the critical issues (settlements, borders, refugees, Jerusalem, Palestinian statehood, etc) that reaching an agreement on these issues appeared impossible. Thus, by developing a dynamic of gradual change and by building up a cooperative relationship between the Israeli government and security organs on the one hand and the Palestinian Authority governmental and security organs on the other (as envisaged by the DoP) it was thought that the mutual suspicions and ill will that precluded a comprehensive agreement would be greatly reduced. This, in turn, would enable the two sides to deal with difficult issues later in a more conducive atmosphere.

Second, because of the grave nature of these issues, both parties were vulnerable to domestic pressures. Hence, both opted to defer all sensitive issues until after “the election of a Palestinian interim self-government.” This body known as the council would enter
into negotiations with the government of Israel regarding these issues. Hence, the agreement required the election of the council as an “interim preparatory step towards the legitimate right of the Palestinian people (of West Bank and Gaza Strip) and their just requirement” as well as towards reaching a “permanent settlement based on United Nation Security Council resolution (UNSC) 242 and 338.”

All these were intrinsically subsumed by the issue of a Palestinian state, and both sides were committed to discuss these issues. In Israel, this dynamic was generally recognized by both supporters and opponents of the agreement, and the government implicitly acknowledged it when it rescinded its longstanding refusal to deal with the PLO. This prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict involves multiple issues such as survival, sovereignty, legitimacy, territory, boundaries and security, history, religion, ethnicity, natural resources, economic development and political power, regime type, internal stability and regional order. Considering the complexity of these issues, it would be unrealistic to expect a sudden and comprehensive transformation from total conflict to genuine peace. Rather, an incremental policy was more likely to occur. If left unresolved they may disrupt the entire peace process and its achievement. Hence, these issues continue to be serious challenge to the peace process.

**Outcome of the Agreement**

The history of the 1993-96 peace process was extremely complex filled with agreements, violent incidents, and complex details. Yet in the end, it is not serious to say that these efforts collapsed. The small issues involving timing and personal interactions, precise location of borders, or the exact degree of control over holy sites failed to address. But Oslo agreement made possible changes in Israeli and Palestinian’s policies and public opinion that opened the way to a peace process. It might be useful to know more about the outcome by asking the basic question.

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What did the parties achieve from signing the DoP? The Oslo Accords indeed opened the door for a substantial change in the relations between Israelis and Palestinians. Arafat received Israeli recognition of the PLO, his most cherished goal. In international level, Arafat "the terrorist "became "the statesman." He obtained permission for himself and certain selected others to administer civilian affairs in two areas of Palestine, namely, Gaza and Jericho and a promise that in the future they could exercise autonomy over rest of the areas. He obtained a promise of future negotiations. It should be noted that the DoP salvaged Arafat- politically and financially. Certainly Arafat hoped, even believed, that in the future he could translate the DoP into a situation more keeping with PLO objectives. But hope and conviction are different from a legal agreement that specifies limitations on the outcome. Israel made certain, both implicitly and, in the articles, annexes, protocols, and other parts of the DoP were bounds beyond which the Palestinian could not go (Rubenberg 2003:60).

What did Israel achieve from signing the DoP? Most important, it was credited with making a historic compromise, a genuine commitment to settle, justly and fairly, the century old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel gained greater international acceptance and indeed, its relations with the Third World countries, many of which severed diplomatic relations with the Jewish state in the 1970s, have swiftly improved. For example, in October 1993 Rabin visited Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim country and at that time the head of the Non-Aligned Movement where he was warmly greeted by President Suharto.

In December, the Vatican opened diplomatic ties with Israel, and in March 1994, Pope John Paul II accepted Rabin’s invitation to visit the Jewish state. Since the beginning of 1993, Israel has established or has been close to establishing diplomatic relations with a number of countries including India. In the United Nations, too, where the Jewish state

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44 A significant change in the Israeli public attitude towards Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat was discerned in a survey conducted by the Tami Steinmetz centre for peace research at Tel Aviv University. When asked if Arafat was more of a 'statesmen' or more of a 'terrorist', 40.6 percent of respondents answered that he was more of a statesmen while 43.3 percent said he was more of a terrorist. This represented a considerable change from December 1994. At the same time, only 23.3 percent thought he was more of a statesman. While 43.7 percent regarded him as more of a terrorist. The survey also found that the sharp rise in the Israeli public’s support for the peace process immediately after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin was temporary. The Jerusalem Post, 6 January 1996.
has a long been spurned by the Arab states and their allies Israel’s status improved.\textsuperscript{45} In 1994, Jordan concluded a full peace treaty with Israel and negotiations with Syria, under the auspices of the US, were in progress.\textsuperscript{46} It had increased its integration into European economic and political circles.\textsuperscript{47} Indeed, within a few short years, Peres vision for the Middle East appeared well on the way to becoming reality. By 1996, Israel had hoped to establish diplomatic relations with fifteen Arab states, with Morocco and Tunisia leading the way. In the Persian Gulf region, Oman and Qatar were the first to do business with Israel. Moreover, the majority of states of the Arab league had established official and unofficial relations with Israel, brought about the virtual lifting of the Arab boycott and attracted investment from all over the world.

Above all, Prime Minister Rabin made his stand clear when he addressed to the Knesset on 21, September,

\textsuperscript{45} Since the signing of the DoP Israel’s status has been steadily improving. In September 2004 the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) declared that its members would no longer boycott companies that had traded with or invested in Israel. The officials and businessmen from the Gulf countries also took a highly visible role at the November Middle East and North Africa business summit held in Morocco. “Casablanca Declaration, Casablanca, Morocco, 1 November 1994”, reprinted in \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies}, vol.26, November 2, Winter 1995 p.144. The overall expansion of Israel’s diplomatic map can be has been summarized as follows: the number of active ties with other countries fell to an all-time low of 65 in late 1973, before inching upwards to 79 at the end of 1986; the number rose to 116 by August 1992, and to 138 in December 1993; as of March 1994 formal contacts stood at a high of 142.

\textsuperscript{46} The signing of the Cairo agreement on self-rule in Gaza and Jericho in may eliminated the last remaining barrier, and actually prodded king Hussain to reinitesify negotiations to pre-empt even closer Israeli-PLO coordination and preserve some Jordanian influence on the West Bank. Consequently, differences on bilateral issues between Jordan and Israel, particularly the question of water rights and the disposition of a few small parcels of land, were rapidly resolved. The agreement was finally consummated at a festive signing ceremony in the Arava Valley, which immediately became the first official border-crossing point between Israel and Jordan. Even Syria also came to the negotiating table to sort out the mutual differences.

\textsuperscript{47} After the signing of Oslo accords in 1993, the President of the EU Council of Ministers, Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes, informed Rabin that it would be a matter of honour for the European Union to extend aid to both the Palestinians and the Israelis. Progress on a new Israeli-European Commission trade agreement would be speedy, Willy Claes maintained, to “open our borders more to Israeli products and services and enhance cooperation in research and development” and “that way we will be supporting the peace process in a really pragmatic way” European commission promises Israel a better Trade Deal.” The Jerusalem Post, 18.1994.
The agreement [that is, DoP], which permits the Palestinians to run their affairs, safeguards the following issues for Israel; unified Jerusalem, remains under Israel's rule, and the body that will run the lives of the Palestinians in the territories will have no authority over it. There are no differences of opinion in this house over the eternalness of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. United and unified Jerusalem is not negotiable. The Israeli settlements in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza will remain under Israel’s rule without any change whatever in their status. The IDF will continue to bear overall responsibility for the security of the Israeli settlements in the territories, the security of every Israeli staying in the territories, and for external security- namely for the defence of the current confrontation lines along the Jordan river and for the Egyptian border. The Israeli government’s freedom to determine its position [on all final status issues is referred by the DoP] leaving all the options open. The might of the IDF—the best army of the world- is available for our use if, God forbids we are faced with such a challenge [from Palestinian]. Above all, I want to tell you that a great victory for Zionism.  

Moreover, whatever the outcome of the peace process, the Oslo Agreement and their derivatives: Oslo I and II, Cairo I and II, Paris and Sharm al Sheik I represent important departures from the historical record of mutually exclusive Zionist and Arab claims over the same piece of land.