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Diplomacy and Force in the Middle East Crisis: Israeli Crisis Management Strategies, September - December 2000

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This article examines key elements of the upheaval challenging the Israeli-Palestinian peace process starting in September 2000 and then assesses the crisis management strategies used by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak in the crisis's first three months. It concludes that the government's crisis management, even according to its own framework, did not succeed.

Two months after U.S. President Bill Clinton announced the failure of the July 2000 peace talks at Camp David, Israelis and Palestinians found themselves in the middle of the worst violence since that process began at the 1991 Madrid conference. The violence, erupting at the end of September 2000, left Israeli-Palestinian relations in disarray and hopes for peace fading. In the first three months after the violence began, some 350 people died and thousands were wounded, the majority of them Palestinians.(1)

This study will first examine some key characteristics of this development. Next, the article assesses Israel's performance in managing the crisis during its first three months, September 28 to December 31, 2000. That section will also include a discussion of Israeli objectives and its various strategies combining diplomacy and force.

CRISES AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT-- A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term "crisis" stems from the Greek, originally describing "the point in the course of a serious disease at which a decisive change occurs, leading either to recovery or to death."(2) Fundamentally, political crises are "threats to core interests, and sometimes core values"(3) which can also be turning points in international conflicts. Richard Ned Lebow argues, "Crises are the most salient points of conflict between states short of war."(4) A crisis is thus a turning point between peace and war--"a sort of hybrid

condition, neither peace nor war, but containing elements of both and comprising the potential for transformation from peace to war."(5)

Crises contain an element of surprise and compel decisionmakers to act under time pressure and with a sense of urgency. But they must usually act without complete information--due to an enemy's deception or their own misperception--in an inevitably unpredictable situation. Further complicating matters is the fact that crises have a high emotional content, often involving anger and fear, emotions that may bring a deviation from rationality and reduce the chance of a non-violent outcome. Finally, international crises involve issues of critical importance that usually require intervention by the highest level of decisionmakers.(6)

Alexander George argues that the "basic paradox" of crisis management is that confrontations between parties can be avoided if either side would be willing to back away from the conflict and accept damage to its interests. The "policy dilemma" of crisis management is that "[o]nce a crisis is set in motion, each side feels compelled to do what is needed to protect or advance its most important interests; at the same time, however, it recognizes that it must avoid utilizing options and actions for this purpose that could trigger unwanted escalation of the crisis."(7)

THE CRISIS

Chronology of Events and Diplomatic Efforts

On September 28, 2000, the leader of Israel's conservative Likud Party, Ariel Sharon, visited the Temple Mount, known to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, a site holy to both Jews and Muslims. The visit spurred Palestinian anger and there were serious clashes the next day, when Muslim worshippers began stoning Jews praying at the adjacent Western Wall. Attempting to quell the violence, Israeli police forces stormed the compound. By day's end, four Palestinians were killed and over 200 were wounded.(8)

In the aftermath of the September events, violence spread across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and within Israel for several days. The violence at first seemed to concentrate on Palestinian youngsters throwing rocks at Israeli civilians and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which responded with gunfire. Soon, there was also a growing use of gunfire by armed Palestinians against the IDF and against Israeli settlements, leading to Israeli counterattacks that included the use of non-lethal weapons, heavy weaponry, and snipers targeting Palestinian gunmen. The scope of the violence is indicated by IDF statistics showing 793 incidents of fire against the IDF and Israeli civilians in the seven years leading to September 28, 2000, compared to over 1,300 such incidents in the first six weeks after September 28 alone.(9)

The violence in the West Bank and Gaza had almost immediate repercussions in the international arena. Throughout the Arab and Islamic world, anti-Israel and sometimes anti-American demonstrations emerged. In Amman and Cairo, angry marchers attempted to storm the Israeli embassies, but were thwarted by the local security forces.

On October 4 in Paris, the United States brokered the first attempts to mediate between the parties and end the violence. The talks failed when Palestinian Authority (PA) Chairman Yasir Arafat--according to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's adviser Danny Yatom--failed to sign an accord reached verbally between the parties that their

respective commanders be given orders to withdraw troops and restore calm to flash points under their control.(10) In the meantime, Barak, in a meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the same day, said that a cessation of violence would be a precondition for further negotiations between his government and the Palestinian leadership.(11)

In the days following the Paris talks, the major Israeli-Palestinian crisis threatened to spread across Israel's borders. In the afternoon of October 7, Hizballah guerrillas abducted three Israeli soldiers on the Israeli side of the Lebanese border. Under immense pressure to respond, Barak then issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the Palestinians to halt their assaults on Israeli military outposts and civilian settlements, threatening to "direct the IDF and the security forces to use all means at their disposal to halt the violence" should the PA fail to comply.(12) A side effect of the sudden escalation was increased pressure on Barak to form a national unity government.(13)

Within the first two months of the crisis, tensions came to a peak on October 10, when two Israeli army reservists were killed by a mob in Ramallah after apparently taking a wrong turn with their car. The lynching, caught on live camera by an Italian film crew and subsequently televised internationally, led the IDF to retaliate by attacking five targets associated with the Palestinian Security Services with helicopter gunships, wounding some thirty Palestinians.(14)

Another serious attempt to deescalate the crisis occurred during the October 16-17 summit in Sharm al-Sheikh, hosted by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and attended by Clinton, Barak and Arafat. The summit produced a communique according to which Israel and the PA would "issue public statements unequivocally calling for an end to the violence and agreed to take immediate concrete measures to end the confrontation."(15) It was further agreed that the three sides--the United States included--would develop, "in consultation with the UN Secretary-General, a committee of fact-

finding on the events of the past several weeks and how to prevent their recurrence."(16) This represented a compromise solution between Palestinian attempts at "internationalizing" the conflict by means of a commission composed of countries to the Palestinian's liking, and Israel's attempt at avoiding an international commission of inquiry it insisted would be biased against it. The fact-finding commission, led by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, began its inquiries on December 11, 2000.

On October 20, the UN General Assembly--as it continued its tenth "emergency special session on illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory"--condemned the violence that had taken place in Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza since September 28. In a resolution introduced by the representative of Egypt, the assembly condemned acts of violence, especially the "excessive use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinian citizens."(17) This resolution would be followed by the similar UN Security Council Resolution 1322 on October 7, after the Clinton Administration decided not to veto it.

On October 22, after a two-day meeting of Arab heads of state in Cairo, the communique announced full support to the Palestinian uprising and encouraged the suspension of further political and economic links with Israel, while failing to endorse the U.S.-brokered Sharm al-Sheikh ceasefire. The Arab leaders also echoed what had been one of the main Palestinian objectives since the beginning of the violence, namely the internationalization of the conflict beyond the confines of U.S.-led diplomacy.(18) In the communique, the leaders called upon the UN Security Council to "assume responsibility of providing the necessary protection for the Palestinian people...by considering the establishment of an international force or presence for this purpose."(19)

Israel, in response, issued a statement in which it expressed its rejection of the "language of threats used at the Arab summit

in Cairo" and condemned the call for continued violence. It further called on the Palestinians to honor their commitments to halt the violence and incitement and to restore calm and order immediately.(20) Reacting to the outcome of the Arab summit and to what Barak termed the failure of the Palestinian side to uphold the Sharm al-Sheikh understandings, the Israeli prime minister, on the same day, called for a "time-out, the goal of which w[ould] be to reassess the diplomatic process in light of the events of recent weeks."(21)

Barak's call for a "time-out," however, did not seem unequivocal, and by November, Israeli government representatives reiterated a willingness to resume talks with their Palestinian counterparts, acknowledging that, as Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh put it, "there is no other solution besides diplomacy."(22)

On November 1, hopes for an end to the violence briefly rose when Regional Cooperation Minister Shimon Peres met the PA Chairman at the Gaza-Israel border. After the two-hour meeting, Barak issued a statement according to which Peres and Arafat reached agreement "on a series of steps on the basis of the Sharm understanding that are due to lead to the renewal of security cooperation and a halt to the violence and incitement."(23)

Despite the Peres-Arafat meeting, however, Arafat did not order an end to the violence. During November, shooting incidents directed at the IDF as well as against Israeli civilians, especially in the Gilo area on the outskirts of Jerusalem, increased, with the Israeli army retaliating systematically, often using heavy weapons.

The situation seemed to escalate further when on November 22, a car bomb detonated near a bus in the coastal city of Hadera, killing two Israelis and wounding sixty. In contrast to the aftermath of other recent attacks, however, the IDF chose not to retaliate.

Israeli strategy was indeed changing as a result of the government's new political initiatives. In late November, Barak brought

forward new proposals in which he seemed to abandon his quest for an all-inclusive, end-of-conflict agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, such as was discussed at Camp David. Barak now seemed to opt for an interim agreement based on the declaration of a Palestinian state.(24)

At the same time, under increasing domestic criticism and feeling his chances were better in a straight race for prime minister without parliamentary elections, Barak decided on a bold gambit. On December 9, he unexpectedly announced his resignation and pushed forward new prime ministerial elections to February 6, 2001.

Meanwhile, violence continued unabatedly, with hour-long gun battles between Israelis and Palestinians becoming a frequent occurrence. By then, Israel had been accused of--and had in fact admitted--having adopted a policy of systematic killing of Palestinian instigators of the violence, although it refrained from eliminating leaders within the higher political echelons. As Israeli leaders described a new strategy of "strik[ing] at those who are leading the shooting cells and their deputies," their Palestinian counterparts referred to Israel's new policy as "state terrorism."(25)

In mid-December, efforts to revive peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis were renewed. Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami indicated that Israel had dropped its precondition for restarting talks with the Palestinians and would now be willing to negotiate as long as it saw an effort on the Palestinian side to re-arrest Islamic militants, clamp down on gunmen, and halt incitement against Israel.(26) Initial meetings in Gaza between Ben-Ami and Gilad Sher, Barak's chief of staff, and Arafat remained fruitless, but a new round of talks were held in Washington.

On December 23, a five-day discussion at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington, DC, between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators came to a close. Though the sides failed to inch closer towards a peace deal, Clinton put forward a comprehensive framework and asked the

parties to respond by December 27. Reportedly, this plan included a fundamental trade-off between Palestinian sovereignty on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in return for giving up the demand that Palestinian refugees could return to Israel.(27) While Israel accepted the Clinton proposals as a basis for discussion "provided that they become the basis for discussion also for the Palestinians,"(28) the Palestinians failed to provide the Americans with an unequivocal answer by the time the third month of the crisis came to a close.

KEY PLAYERS

Israel: In Israel, crises have been traditionally managed by the security cabinet, which consists of a select group of ministers. Israel's security cabinet during the period under review was composed of seven ministers, three of whom--Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, and Justice Minister Yossi Beilin--were particularly active in the first three months after the outbreak of the crisis.(29) Other players included the IDF's Chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz.

Palestinian Authority: Relatively little is known about the extent to which PA Chairman Yasir Arafat--who is known to govern in authoritarian style--consults other players within the Palestinian decisionmaking elite. Similarly, there has been some debate about the extent to which Arafat was in actual control of the events on the ground. His basic authority as ra'is, whose words and actions carry heavy weight and influence, however, is beyond doubt. Other players within the PA on the issue include the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala), veteran PLO leader and Arafat's unofficial "Number Two," Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin), PA Planning Minister Nabil Shaath, as well as the rising star of the Palestinian Security Services, Gaza Preventive Security Service chief Muhammad Dahlan.(30)

United States: Former U.S. President Clinton invested more time and energy into the quest for Middle East peace than any

American leader before him.(31) The U.S. team on the crisis included Special Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross and his deputy, Aaron Miller. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Samuel Berger played less crucial roles.

Egypt: Egypt was involved in the crisis from the outset. Yet while supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict, Egypt found itself in a somewhat delicate situation given widespread anti-Israeli sentiments among its populace and pressures exerted on it by other Arab and Islamic countries to suspend diplomatic ties with Israel. On November 21, Egypt recalled its ambassador, Muhammad Bassiouny, from Israel. In reaction, Ben-Ami stated that this move has "hurt Egypt's ability to continue to fill the very important role it has in the process." (32) President Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa are the main Egyptian players.

Other Arab States: The reaction of Arab states to the crisis ranged from expression of solidarity with the Palestinians (Egypt and Jordan) to declarations that Arab countries should prepare for war against Israel (Iraq, Yemen, Libya). The more pragmatic among the Arab states have attempted to prevent the violence from escalating, for two main reasons: to avoid the threat of a regional war, and to prevent the disturbances from spilling over to their domestic scenes.(33)

Sub-state Actors: A number of sub-state actors are playing an increasingly important role in the crisis. Largely responsible for the violence in the West Bank and Gaza, which has led to tens of Israeli dead and scores of wounded by late November 2000, is the Tanzim ('organization,' in Arabic), the armed wing of Fatah, the PLO's largest faction, which in turn is led by Arafat. Estimates as to how many active Tanzim members operate today vary from several hundred to a few thousand.(34) The Tanzim is led by Marwan al-Barguthi, secretary-general of Fatah in the West Bank.(35)

On the Israeli side, Jewish settlers have increasingly engaged in vigilantism,

including acts of violence ranging from demonstrations, stone-throwing, and shooting guns. On October 17, for example, settlers shot dead a Palestinian civilian, and wounded five more villagers in the village of Beit Furik.(36)

The third sub-state actor is the Lebanese guerrilla movement Hizballah. On October 7, the crisis spread to Israel's northern border when Hizballah abducted three Israeli soldiers. Backed by Syria and supported by Iran, Hizballah has been attempting to provoke Israel into escalating the conflict ever since the latter's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. Hizballah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah is an ardent protagonist of an ongoing violent struggle against the "Zionist entity" as the only solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.(37)

"CLASSIC" OR "MODERN" CRISIS?

The violence that erupted in Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the fall of 2000 combines characteristics of both a "classic" international political crisis as well as characteristics of what could be termed a "modern" crisis.

Classic Characteristics of the Crisis

Threats to core interests: It is self-evident that the Fall 2000 events threaten core interests of both Israel and the PA, including first and foremost the physical security of their citizens. According to a December 6, 2000 report from the Israeli human rights organization, B'tselem, from September 29 to December 2, 2000, 231 Palestinian have been killed, and some 10,000 Palestinians have been wounded. The death toll on the Israeli side was twenty-nine.(38)

Turning point between peace and war: Both events on the ground and statements by Israeli and Palestinian leaderships have caused an escalation of the crisis to an extent that military analysts began, in late November, to speak about the ongoing violence in terms of limited warfare between Israel and the PA.(39)

Element of Surprise: The argument can be made that Israel was tactically, though

not strategically, surprised by the outbreak of the violence. The IDF had long been preparing for the possibility of violence erupting in the West Bank and Gaza, as can be seen by various IDF threat assessments--including one made on May 10, 1998 by Lt. Gen. Mofaz (40). Coming only a few weeks after Israel negotiated face to face with Palestinian representatives on so-called 'final status' issues at Camp David, however, the timing of the violent eruptions certainly did take Israel by surprise.

A Sense of Time Pressure and Urgency: Israeli decisionmakers are likely to have experienced a heightened sense of time pressure and urgency due to several reasons. First, Israel is sensitive to the loss of life--certainly Israeli, but also Palestinian--and the longer the violence continues, the more life is lost. Second, the loss of a parliamentary majority for the Barak government shortly after being invited to the Camp David talks on July 11, 2000, weakened the government's domestic position considerably and increased the pressure on Barak to reach a quick, full, and "final" agreement with the PA.(41) Third, Israelis believe that the longer the crisis continues, the more damage is being inflicted on the country's image worldwide. Finally, many in Israel believed that with the end of the Clinton administration, the proverbial "window of opportunity" to reach a final agreement would be shut, at least until the next president settled into his new job. As a result, Israelis felt that the current crisis came at the worst possible time, and were adamant in seeking a quick end to the hostilities. In their totality, these factors combine into a heightened sense of urgency.

High Degree of Emotional Content: A high degree of emotional involvement is not only a feature of this eruption of violence, but of virtually all crises in the Arab-Israeli context. Snyder and Diesing's concept of the 'spiral of hostility'(42) is easily applicable to a conflict in which action and counteraction have generated a seemingly endless cycle of violence.

Modern and Other Characteristics of the Crisis

State vs. non-State Conflict: Although some classic crisis definitions emphasize that the sequence of interactions that constitute a crisis is one being played out between the governments of sovereign states,(43) this pattern does not hold true for this crisis. This particular conflict is played out between a state actor (Israel) and a non-state actor (the Palestinian Authority)--though the latter is widely expected to turn into a state actor in the not-too-distant future.

Intrastate Conflict: A second striking feature of this crisis is the heavy involvement of sub-state actors in the violence, such as the Tanzim, the settlers, Palestinian terrorist organizations, and Israeli Arabs--who briefly joined the Palestinian riots in the early weeks of the crisis and suffered numerous casualties at that time.(44) Consequently, the crisis can be considered an intrastate conflict.

Asymmetry in Capabilities: According to Brecher and Wilkenfeld, the smaller the "power gap" between two actors, "the less the constraint on crisis initiation by either."(45) In this case, the crisis unfolded despite large asymmetries in capabilities between the two main adversaries. Israel has the upper hand in military and economic terms. One possible explanation for this "anomaly" could be the assumption that an actor with little to lose--or the perception that it has little to lose--"may consider a crisis to be an opportunity, as opposed to a situation to be avoided."(46) Another would be that the weaker actor assumes that the intervention of external factors--Arab states, the UN, Western pressure on Israel, international public opinion, etc.--would balance the power equation.

Territorial Proximity: As Brecher and Wilkenfeld have shown, territorial proximity:

"increases the likelihood of crises, for the possibility of conflictive interaction is greater between a contiguous than a physically separate dyad. It may arise from undemarcated borders or wider

competitive claims to territory, often a residue of past relationships... [C]ontiguity, per se, generates more sources of competition than does distance and, therefore, a higher probability of hostile interaction leading to an international crisis."(47)

In few cases is that assessment more applicable than in this crisis, where the territory of the two adversaries is practically interwoven and territorial claims are among the most fervently fought issues.

Political Regime Divergence: Another "system constraint" that has been identified to increase the likelihood of crises--and that applies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict--is regime divergence. Democratic and non-democratic regimes are more likely to experience international crises than democratic adversaries.(48) In terms of regime divergence, the difference between Israel and the PA is striking. While Israel has long had established democratic institutions, political accountability and transparency, the PA is plagued by corruption, and its democratic institutions are in a developing phase at best.(49)

A Protracted Conflict: Israel's dominant institutions and players, including the IDF, consider the current crisis a protracted conflict.(50) In his "ultimatum speech" on October 7, 2000, Barak suggested that Israel's "struggle will not be an easy one. It may well be protracted."(51) Brecher and Wilkenfeld found that crises are not only more likely to occur in a protracted conflict setting, but that actors in such a setting are more likely to resort to violence than those in other conflict situations.(52) Their findings seem to apply to the case at hand.

The Media War and International Opinion: A striking feature of the Middle Eastern crisis is the vast amount of media coverage. Israelis and Palestinians have conducted media battles in order to win over international opinion. With both sides blaming each other for the violence and being convinced of the righteousness of their respective positions, Israelis and Palestinians

also accuse the international media of "bias" in favor of their adversary. While Palestinians accuse the U.S. media of basically adopting Israel's position in the conflict, Israel faced overwhelming criticism certainly from the Arab, but also from much of the European press, in the first three months of the crisis.(53)

EXAMINING ISRAELI CRISIS MANAGEMENT, September-December 2000

Israeli Objectives

In its reaction to the violence that began in late September 2000 in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel proper, Israel's government appears to have set for itself three strategic objectives: to bring about an end to the violence; prevent escalation into a regional war; and limit the "internationalization" of the conflict.

In order to achieve these strategic goals, Israel adopted a number of tactical objectives: to restore deterrence while signaling a willingness to renew negotiations; to minimize Israeli casualties on both sides; and to deny the Palestinians a victory in the court of world opinion.(54) The tactical objective of minimizing Israeli casualties has two values. In addition to the intrinsic value, the Barak government recognizes that a rising death toll of Israelis could have the effect that domestic public opinion would pressure the government toward escalating the conflict.(55) Israel's goal of limiting Palestinian casualties has several reasons. First, Palestinian funerals lead to mass demonstrations and riots. Second, Israel is sensitive to the reaction of international public opinion. Third, it attempts to limit Palestinian anger due to the belief that the two parties will eventually have to negotiate and come to an agreement with one another.

Indeed, the Barak government's conviction that Israelis and Palestinians needed to return to the negotiating table and reach a political settlement largely shaped Israel's crisis objectives. Further, this factor's impact on the Barak government's crisis objectives and management strategies seemed

to grow stronger the longer the crisis continued. This linkage helps explain Israel's return to negotiations with the Palestinians by mid-December despite the ongoing violence--in stark contrast to earlier Israeli statements that an end to the violence must precede any renewed diplomatic contacts. In this respect, it could be argued that by mid-December, a return to negotiations became an Israeli objective in itself. Certainly, this linkage affected Israeli crisis management.

THE ROLE OF FORCE IN ISRAELI CRISIS MANAGEMENT: PRIMACY OF DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

"Effective crisis management of war-threatening crises," according to Alexander George, "requires policy makers to develop and employ strategies and tactics that are sensitive to both diplomatic and military considerations."(56)

George distinguishes between offensive and defensive strategies for managing crises. While the former are intended to alter an existing situation at the expense of an adversary, the latter attempt to prevent or reverse such gains. In both strategies, military forces are to be employed not as substitutes, but as instruments of foreign policy.(57)

A closer look at Israeli crisis management strategies reveals that Israel's employment of force in the first three months of the crisis was in large part an element of a wider defensive strategy.

Coercive Diplomacy

Coercive diplomacy is defined as efforts to persuade an opponent to stop and/or undo an action he has already embarked upon.(58) It seeks to persuade an opponent to put an end to his aggression by threatening to punish him if he fails to comply with that demand. Coercive diplomacy may involve an exemplary use of force, although not necessarily so.(59)

In its quest to persuade the Palestinian Authority to cease the violence in the conflict at hand, Israel has employed at least four variants of coercive diplomacy: try-and-see;

show of force; setting an ultimatum; and threatening to break off negotiations.

The so-called try-and-see variant of coercive diplomacy is a specific and clear demand in which the coercing power does not announce a time limit.(60) Clearly, this was the first approach Israeli decisionmakers used in trying to manage the crisis in late September by repeatedly calling on the Palestinian side to end the violence and settle all disputes on the negotiating table. On September 30, for example, Barak spoke by telephone with Arafat calling for his "personal and immediate intervention" to squelch the violence.(61)

The second variant of coercive diplomacy used by Israel was the IDF's show of force. A mere four days after the riots on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the Barak government employed this strategy in an attempt to lend credibility to its disregarded calls to stop the violence. It began deploying armored vehicles (including tanks) and attack helicopters in the outskirts of Palestinian towns on October 1, initially in the town of Nablus, where some of the worst rioting had occurred.(62)

An ultimatum is a potentially escalatory, extreme variant of coercive diplomacy that is used in order to convey urgency to an issue that has not been settled by means of "ambiguously worded diplomatic protest."(63) Barak made use of this strategy on October 7, 2000, when he addressed the Israeli people at an early peak of the crisis. Saying that he had so far been issuing instructions to the IDF to exercise restraint, Barak then issued an ultimatum to the PA, threatening, "If we will not see a change in the patterns of violence in the next two days, we shall see this as the breaking off of the peace negotiations by Arafat--a cessation for which he bears responsibility and which he initiated. We shall direct the IDF and the security forces to use all means at their disposal to halt the violence."(64) When the ultimatum ran out forty-eight hours later, Barak extended the deadline, saying that he wanted to give intensive diplomatic efforts a chance.(65)

In the first weeks of the crisis, Barak stated on numerous occasions that he no longer regarded Chairman Arafat a partner for peace.(66) On October 20, Barak concluded that it was no longer worth Israel's time or effort to continue talking to Arafat, and pronounced an indefinite "timeout" from the peace effort, thereby employing the fourth variant of coercive diplomacy described above, the threat to break off negotiations.(67)

Tit-for-Tat and Limited Escalation

Israel's strategy of retaliation has always been firmly anchored in its national security concept. Examples include the year-long Israeli Air Force (IAF) retaliatory strikes against Hizballah camps in Lebanon in response to attacks by that group against Israelis. Other examples include assassinations of terrorist leaders, such as the January 5, 1996 elimination of the Hamas bombing mastermind known as "the Engineer," Yahiya Ayyash. The concept of tit-for-tat has not been abandoned by Israeli decisionmakers, as Barak proved in the course of the current crisis. In an October 7 speech, he reiterated that Israel "will not yield to violence....Anyone who challenges us with force, will be met with force, and immediately."(68)

Retaliatory strikes often followed particularly costly or gruesome attacks. After the lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah, Israel retaliated by shooting anti-tank missiles from Cobra helicopters on the Palestinian police station of Al-Bira--where the lynching took place--as well as a few other selected targets, including the Voice of Palestine radio station. The symbolic nature of the "tit-for-tat" was revealed when the army spokesperson's office released a statement saying the attacks were a "limited action designed to respond to the barbaric act Palestinians conducted this morning."(69) Israel began deploying heavy weaponry on October 1, while helicopter gunships were sent into action and a tank round was fired for the first time on October 3.(70)

While tit-for-tat reprisals are by definition carefully measured and chosen to match, but not exceed, the severity of the provocation (71), a strategy of "limited escalation" might be employed if the former strategy has proven unsuccessful. In the case of the conflict under scrutiny, it may be argued that a November 20 Israeli attack on the headquarters of the Palestinian Preventive Security Services and on Arafat's elite Force 17 presidential guard in response for an attack the previous day on a school bus in Gaza reflected an Israeli decision to employ the strategy of limited escalation by hitting the nerve center of the PA's security services.(72)

Another example of Israel's employment of a "limited escalation" strategy is its policy of selectively assassinating Palestinians it holds responsible for attacking or planning attacks on Israelis--while refraining from hitting the Palestinian political elite. The first implementation of this strategy in this crisis seems to have occurred on November 9, when an Israeli helicopter rocketed a pickup truck carrying a local commander of the Tanzim, Hussein Abayat. According to Israeli reports, Abayat had directed or participated in seven shooting episodes over the previous month. Barak not only acknowledged Israel's responsibility for the assassination--a rare occurrence in a traditional policy of refusing to take explicit credit for such actions--but also promised to continue with such operations should Palestinian gunmen continue to attack Israelis.(73)

In early January 2001, Deputy Minister of Defense Ephraim Sneh told Israel Radio "unequivocally what the policy is. If anyone has committed or is planning to carry out terrorist attacks, he has to be hit...It is effective, precise, and just."(74) According to an unnamed senior defense official quoted in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz, Israel decided to adopt the strategy of elimination once it realized that the confrontation would be protracted. It decided to replace the strategy of what the official termed "incidents and responses" because continuous fighting would require something that tit-for-tat reprisals are

apparently unable to provide--a "continuum of actions over time."(75)

It is not far-fetched to assume that the idea to adapt the new strategy was given further impetus by the criticism Israel faced worldwide regarding its alleged use of excessive force against Palestinians, including children. Nevertheless, Israel's "surgical strikes" against adult Palestinian attackers were not immune to criticism by international human rights and other groups. More than once, Israel was accused of executing a policy of state terrorism.(76)

Finally, Israel has resorted to imposing closures on PA-ruled territory, thus preventing the free movement of goods and people. According to the Financial Times, these closures had the effect that by early November 2000, economic gains made by the PA during 1999 were completely wiped out. The newspaper claimed that losses amounted to over \$3.4 million a day in remittances from Palestinians working in Israel and \$6 million a day from tax receipts and customs fees.(77)

Israeli Tactics, Rules of Engagement, and 'Excessive Force'

In pursuing the objectives and employing the strategies described above, Israel has been subjected to heavy criticism from international organizations, the international press, and human rights groups for its alleged "use of excessive force." On November 27, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, released a report concluding that Israel's military response to Palestinian unrest in the weeks before had been "excessive and inappropriate."(78) Israeli government representatives adamantly maintained that the IDF is receiving orders to exercise maximum restraint, but that "the mixture of both armed and unarmed Palestinians confronting the soldiers sometimes leaves them no choice but to react in a manner that may lead to civilian casualties."(79) According to the IDF, Israeli forces assume a "passive approach" by positioning themselves outside of Palestinian areas in order not to escalate the violence.(80) When facing protestors, the IDF is said to

emphasize maintaining maximum stand-off to avoid further escalation of the violence and minimize risks posed by Palestinian fire against its forces.(81)

The IDF's Rules of Engagement (ROE) (82) stipulate that the use of fire by an IDF soldier is called for only when fired upon, or in life-threatening situations.(83) Israeli ROE further require the incremental use of traditional "less lethal" (LL) and "non-lethal" (NL) weapons--such as tear gas, stun grenades, plastic and rubber bullets--before live ammunition can be fired, except in cases where an immediate threat to life exists.(84) In a series of articles in Ha'aretz, defense editor Ze'ev Schiff lamented Israel's shortage of non-lethal weapons and held that the lack of NL weapons other than tear gas and rubber-coated bullets--which, as he reminded the newspaper's readers, can sometimes kill--makes it very difficult for security forces to avoid the use of live ammunition against the predominantly unarmed Palestinian civilians.(85)

In another article published on November 10, Schiff went as far as concluding that "the failure of the IDF in the present conflict boils down to the absence of non-lethal weapons in its confrontations with the children who mingle in the crowds of adult Palestinian rioters."(86) Alternative, nontraditional LL/NL technologies such as slippery and sticky foam, antipersonnel microwaves, and unpleasantly smelling substances (malodorants) are currently being researched in the United States. But with their effect still unproven and their deployment remaining years away, the use of LL/NL weapons, in the words of one expert, "is not likely to prove a panacea."(87)

CONCLUSION

The Al-Aqsa Intifada, as it has been referred to by some, combines the characteristics of a "classic" and a "modern" crisis. As has been shown in detail, the crisis could be viewed as an archetype of a conventional crisis as well as a harbinger of what crises might look like in the future.

Three features characterize it as a "new type" of crisis:

First, at the core, the crisis involves a state actor (Israel) in conflict with a non-state actor (the Palestinian Authority)--though one that is likely to become a state actor in the not too distant future.

Second, the crisis has key roles being played by several sub-state actors on both sides--including the Tanzim movement, Jewish settlers, Israeli Arabs, and Palestinian terrorist groups. On the other side of Israel's northern border, a Lebanese sub-state actor, the Hizballah, has also attempted to escalate the conflict. Though Hizballah has thus far been unsuccessful in provoking an Israeli confrontation with Lebanese or Syrian troops, its actions intensified calls among Israelis for their government to retaliate and "restore" Israel's deterrent posture.

Third, the crisis has highlighted the immensely important role that the international media may assume in portraying crises. While this is not a new phenomenon--after all, the media has played a central role in such circumstances at least since the Vietnam War--the novelty about this particular crisis is that public relations seems to have turned into an integral part of the daily battle. This trend is likely to continue and even become more important in the future

The second part of the study has focused on Israeli crisis management strategies, and several conclusions can be drawn here:

In the period under review--from September 28 to December 31, 2000--Israel's strategic objectives were only partly met. Most importantly, Israel did not manage to bring about an end to the violence.

In part, Israel did limit the conflict's internationalization, since Arab states, the UN, or other foreign actors did not intervene. Moderate Arab leaders--especially President Mubarak of Egypt who played a central role in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians--were able to resist pressure from the "Arab street" to sever ties with Israel, though it remains unclear whether they will be able to continue to do so in the long run.

And given the tense situation on Israel's Northern border and the volatility of many Arab regimes, an eventual lapse from the crisis into a full-scale war cannot be ruled out completely.

Israel's two main crisis management strategies were coercive diplomacy on the one hand, and tit-for-tat/limited escalation on the other. Its main objective--to persuade the Palestinians to end the violence--failed to bear fruit in the first three months of the crisis. Barak's 'try-and-see' approach of the first days proved to be futile and led him, a mere four days into the crisis, to order an IDF "show of force" that turned out to be equally unsuccessful in bringing about the desired outcome.

There is also much sense in arguing that Barak's issuance and subsequent "extension" of an ultimatum to the Palestinian Authority have harmed Israel's deterrence capability vis-à-vis its adversary. The nature of the ultimatum and its sudden cancellation by Barak left many Israelis and non-Israelis stunned.

Finally, Israel's threat to break off negotiations with the Palestinians was extremely short-lived. The fact that only a few days lay in between Barak's proclamation of a 'time-out' in the peace process and renewed assurances that Israel would return to the negotiation table under the condition that violence is brought to an end did not render Israeli coercive diplomacy any more credible, and at times made it appear incoherent.

Israel then began employing a strategy of tit-for-tat reprisals and limited escalation, particularly assassinations of Palestinians deemed responsible for attacking or having planned attacks on Israelis. Israel was quick to adapt its strategy from the tit-for-tat reprisals of the first weeks--which generated a wealth of international criticism with regard to the IDF's alleged use of excessive force--to "pinpoint" assassinations of select individuals. As Israeli army officials assessed that the killings had a chilling effect on Palestinian paramilitary operations and kept Palestinian commanders at a low profile, the

Israeli government rejected vociferous protests by Palestinian and international human rights groups with regard to the assassinations.(88)

Meanwhile, the Barak government's return to the negotiating table in mid-December--a clear change of policy after the tenth week of the violence--and its subsequent conditional acceptance of the so-called Clinton proposals, were inextricably linked to its declared attempts to reach an agreement that would put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian (and, in extension, the Arab-Israeli) conflict. Israel's decision to negotiate despite the continuing violence and Barak's willingness to make far-reaching compromises and unprecedented concessions at the negotiating table must therefore be seen in the context of the Barak-led coalition's political objectives. For that reason, his main strategy was not to squelch the intifada, but rather to appear as a hard bargainer and to convince the Palestinians that the costs of a continuing violence by far outweigh its potential benefits.

Political calculations thus affected Israeli crisis management strategies in that it ultimately stemmed the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy. To be fair, however, it should also be kept in mind that there are limits to what may be obtained with coercive diplomacy, tit-for-tat, and other crisis management strategies, especially, as Alexander George put it, "when one is faced with a recalcitrant or unpredictable opponent."(89)

This study has examined the first three months of the crisis still unfolding at the time of this writing. It can be concluded that judging by the objectives Israel has set for itself, its management of the crisis in this period was unsuccessful. A perception of this fact by Israeli domestic public opinion seems to have played a major role in Barak's overwhelming defeat in the February 2001 elections for prime minister.

Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing have described the central problem of crisis statesmanship as "how to achieve an optimum blend of coercion and accommodation in

one's strategy, a blend that will both avoid war and maximize one's gains or minimize one's losses."(90) Israel managed to avoid war in the first three months of the crisis, but it certainly did not maximize gains or minimize losses in the process.

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