Failed Securitzation and the al Aqsa Intifada

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Abstract:

The decision by Israeli and Palestinian leaders to initiate bilateral negotiations in 1993 resulted from the convergence of public opinion and elite interests around the issue of national security. Diplomacy became the preferred security policy emerged in the wake of political, technological and demographic trends following the end of the Cold War. This reflected the belief that ongoing violence constituted a greater danger than territorial compromise or mutual recognition. This break down of peace talks in 2001 followed the securitization of diplomacy as the dominant danger facing both nations.

What makes this case study compelling is that the divergent elite and public interpretations of the peace talks. Diplomats pursued negotiations despite widespread vocal and violent domestic opposition that broke out in the fall of 2000. While securitization is typically depicted as an elite initiative that seeks to convince a "relevant audience that a referent object is existentially threatened" (Emmers 2007: 112), the *al Aqsa Intifada* appears to have reversed these roles. Israeli and Palestinian publics not only communicated their rejection of diplomacy as a dangerous and unacceptable policy, but also their support for unilateral military action. Faced with the decision to ignore or acquiesce to their population's demands, political leaders on both sides became the targets of securitization.

While a great deal has been written on the Oslo Peace Process, popular explanations for its collapse generally lay blame on either the belligerence of Palestinian negotiators or the unreasonable demands of Israeli diplomats. Depicting the end of the diplomacy as an elite failure, however, fails to adequately explain the outbreak of full-scale violence four months *after* final status negotiations began and three months *prior* to its official end. The role of domestic opposition in undoing eight years of diplomacy is largely ignored. But as Dennis Ross (2005: 769), the American mediator for the Oslo Peace Accords writes, "one critical lesson from the Oslo period is that no negotiation is likely to succeed if there is one environment in the negotiating table and another on the street".

The schism between elite support and public rejection of diplomacy is best clarified by returning to the motivations that made the peace process possible in the first place. Importantly, the strategic calculations that prompted Israeli and Palestinian leaders to endorse a negotiated settlement were not the same rationale that had made diplomacy publicly acceptable. By differentiating the elite and public expectations that led the 1993 Declaration of Principles, this article explains how the peace process eventually failed the Israeli and Palestinian publics despite serving the interests of their leaders. Secondly, this paper outlines its significance to the study of security.

While generally accepted, if not understudied, the concept of securitzation recognizes the existence of an audience capable of undermining security policy change. Where typically associated with a domestic population, the tiered collapse of the Oslo Peace Process appears to reverse these roles. Rather than "responding to, dependent on, even subservient to elite cures", shifts in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion preceded changes in government policy (Bennett and Paletz 1994: 286). The vocal opposition and violent demonstrations that erupted into the 2000 *al Aqsa Intifada* communicated a clear message to reject diplomacy in favour of a return to unilateral military force.

Securitizing the Status Quo

The 1993 decision to renounce the use of force and commit to a negotiated settlement that initiated the Oslo Peace Process was a dramatic change in Israeli and Palestinian security policy. The rationale for diplomacy among political leaders, however, had little to do with why their publics reversed long standing taboos over territorial compromise and mutual recognition. The implausible alignment of interests among Israeli and Palestinian leaders was prompted by a perceived waning of geopolitical relevance in the wake of the Cold War's end. Public support for diplomacy sought to break the corosive deadlock that emerged from 1987 Intifada.

Why Israeli and Palestinian Publics Supported Peace Talks
After the 1967 Israeli conquest of the West Bank from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the Sinai Peninsula (including Gaza) from Egypt, Israel's leadership made the decision *not* to annex the newly acquired territories with the notable exception of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The deliberately ambiguous status of these lands reflected the Israeli intention to use these territories as bargaining chips in future negotiations. Almost immediately after capturing the territories, the Israeli parliament passed a secret resolution on June 19, 1967 authorizing the withdrawal of Israeli forced to the pre-war borders in exchange for a peace deal with deal Egypt, Syria and Jordan. This resolution reflected a shared expectation between the Israeli leadership and Palestinian residents that rule was to be temporary. Co-operative rule between Israel and Jordanian

that saw Palestinians retain Jordanian citizenship reinforced the belief that the rule would be short-lived (Sherbok & el-Alami 203: 160). The pervasive Palestinian wisdom at the time was that exacerbating Israeli rule through needless recalcitrance would only damage the prospects for independence and increase the harshness of rule. In the meantime, little harm was seen in benefiting from the new economic opportunities that accompanied Israeli rule (Kimmerling 2003: 286, 289).

This perception began to change with the emergence of a *settler movement* in the 1970s. Rather than regarding the territories as a bargaining tool, a growing number of Israelis began to see little difference between territories acquired in 1967 and the land that comprised the State of Israel. The continued hostility between Israel and its neighbours, in fact, convinced many of the strategic importance of this land in providing the country depth and protection against invasion (Pappé 2003: 44). Within its pre-1967 borders, the country spanned only fifteen kilometres at its narrowest point. The West Bank territories expanded this to over 100 kilometres, creating a territorial buffer against invasion. Relinquishing territory was seen to be a dangerous proposition, as it was believed that "rational calculations about appropriate safe borders for Israel all but impossible" (Rowland 2002: 146).

The growing disagreement over the strategic benefit of the territory, as security buffer or negotiation tool, was complicated by the unexpected politicization of the country's religious community. The acquisition of these new territories had mobilized a segment of the Israeli population that had previously been ambivalent towards the State of Israel. The Jewish State declared in 1947 bore little correlation to the ancient Jewish kingdoms. The cities of Jericho, Hebron and Jerusalem all stood beyond the borders of the state. It was the 1967 conquest of Judea and Samaria, the Biblical names for the West Bank and Gaza, and not the 1947 declaration of independence that had restored the divine covenant for the first time in nearly nineteen hundred years. From a religious perspective, not only were these lands no less crucial to the Jewish people than was Tel Aviv, if necessary, they invariably took precedent (Ram 2003: 28).

Strategic and religious commitment converged to spur a migration of Israeli citizens into these territories in an effort to re-establish Jewish communities that had been exiled. While some were restored Jewish communities that had been ethnically cleansed in the 1920s and 1940s, notably in Hebron, Kfar Darom and Jerusalem,[1] new exclusively Jewish communities located outside of traditional city centres were also founded. Non-religious Israelis and new immigrants would join these communities seeking to take advantage of cheap housing prices.

The presence of Jewish communities within the disputed territories altered Israeli rule.   In addition to an added strain on local resources, the security concerns raised by the close proximity of Jewish and Palestinian communities made the Israeli presence seem far less temporary to Palestinian residents. Local autonomy succumbed to the preferential treatment demanded by these Israeli communities.[2] A major economic downturn in 1985

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[1] In response to the 1929 Hebron Massacre and wide-scale rioting, the British government evicted all Jewish residents from Hebron. During the Israeli war of Independence, Egyptian forces successfully expelled all Jewish residents of Kfar Drom. After the capture of East Jerusalem in 1948, the Jordanian government evicted all the Jewish residents of those segments of Jerusalem that were under Jordanian control.

[2] Palestinian residents in the territory remained Jordanian citizens and exerted little direct influence on Israeli national policy.

made these pressures appear acute, as Israeli hyperinflation and stagflation collapsed real wages and Palestinian unemployment quadrupled (Kimmerling 2003: 294). The increased permanence of Israeli rule and unbearable living conditions contributed to a brewing tension that exploded into a popular uprising in December 1987, known as the *Intifada*.[3]

By most accounts, the Intifada was a resounding, if not unanticipated, success. It completely disabled the security doctrine that had guided Israeli military policy since the inception of the state. Israel's geographic vulnerability and demographic inferiority had fostered a strategic imperative for accumulative deterrence (Hermann 2001: 171). Superior military capability, decisive action and overwhelming military response were lynchpins of this policy. Underpinning this was a belief was that the Arab populations would accommodate and accept the presence of the Jewish state only after its permanence became unquestionable and the benefit of Israel to the region became undeniable (Ross 2005: 19).

While proving successful in neutralizing the threat posed by Arab states and terror groups, this policy proved entirely ineffective against a popular uprising. Overwhelming military response seemed only to fuel resistance to Israeli rule by underscoring the need to end it. The tenacity of the uprising challenged the Israeli belief that the Arab population would eventually accommodate itself to Israeli presence. The economic opportunity, municipal autonomy and religious freedom that accompanied Israeli rule did little to dissuade calls for self-determination (Bar-On 1988: 60).

The *Intifada* not only challenged Israeli military doctrine, it changed Israeli public opinion towards the territories. Scenes of Israeli solders using live ammunition to quell a popular uprising of civilians armed with stones and Molotov cocktails were at odds with Zionism's liberal ideals and humanitarian principles. This dramatic shift had a demoralizing effect on the Israeli public. As Bar-On (1988: 48) wrote:

> The amount of blood that has been shed has shocked public opinion both inside Israel as well as around the world and, instead of deterring the Palestinians, added fuel to the flames of the uprising.

As the occupation became increasingly unpopular and attempts to quell the uprising unsuccessful, the deliberately ambiguous status of the territories became untenable. For the first time since 1967, there was a price to pay for holding on to the territory indefinitely (Liberfield 1999: 70).

Few options that did not involve relinquishing the land were acceptable to the Israeli public. Most of the Israeli public would not tolerate the mass expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. Annexation of the territories would be fraught with the problem of incorporating millions of non-Jewish residents into the state. The choice between losing the Jewish character of the state or abandoning the democratic principles upon which it was founded was a decision Israelis refused to make (Kacowicz 2005: 253). As the status quo became unacceptable, the Israeli public increasingly demanded an end to its rule over the territories.

The *Intifada* had an equally significant impact on the Palestinian population. The unexpected success of the uprising charged popular opinion. Not only had they

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[3] The *Intifada* is a Palestinian name given to the 1987 Palestinian uprising. Its popular translation as *shaking off* reflects the directed nature of this resistance in ending Israeli rule.

succeeded in de-legitimizing Israeli rule, they had done so in the absence of their traditional leadership. The *Intifada* occurred in the shadow of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in which Israeli forces successfully ousted the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from their Beirut stronghold. Rather than fight to the end, their leaders negotiated their exile to Tunisia. Palestinians were left without international representation or credible leadership. Into this void emerged a local leadership that supplanted the PLO brass that had seemingly abandoned their people. Without the luxury of diplomatic immunity and international support, local leaders confronted Israeli rule directly, organizing unarmed protests, mass strikes, and a boycott of Israeli products (Kimmerling 2003: 300).

Facing the threat of irrelevance, the PLO leaders sought to undermine the uprising and maintain their position at the helm of the Palestinian cause (Schultz 1999: 71). This helps explain the 1988 PLO declaration that it was willing to enter into direct negotiations with Israel (Kimmerling 2003: 269). These dramatic reversals of the long-standing Palestinian policy of refusing to recognize Zionist claims or the Jewish state was in large part a response to having been sidelined.

While the success of the *Intifada* in demoralizing Israel and ostracizing the Palestinian leadership forced the Israeli public and PLO leaders to reconsider long-standing beliefs, it would be the failure of the *Intifada* to end the occupation that ultimately moved the Palestinian public to support a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Years of bloody resistance and economic hardship had not forced Israel into conceding to Palestinian demands. Adapting to the new circumstances, Israeli troops repositioned themselves outside of populated areas, severed economic ties with the territories and embarked on efforts to restore Israel's international image. As the sustainability of the modified Israeli rule became apparent, the acceptability of a diplomatic solution that recognized Israeli claims became increasingly palatable to the Palestinian public.

Why Israeli and Palestinian Leaders Advocated Diplomacy
The collapse of the Soviet had a dramatic impact on the strategic calculations of Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The Soviet Union had long been the primary financial backer and political sponsor of the PLO. Collapse resulted in the significant curtailment in the PLO budget and political support. Palestinian leaders grew increasingly reliant on Gulf States sponsors, who had both surplus capital and sympathies with the Palestinian cause.

The collapse of the Soviet Union also changed the strategic rationality with regards to the territory. The greater Palestinian birthrate had left many Palestinians with the feeling that time was an ally: if Israel failed to relinquish the territories, one day, at least, it would have to deal with a Palestinian population poised to become the majority. However, the arrival of nearly one million Russian Jews from the former Soviet Union appeared to redress this demographic imbalance. The increased inevitable expansion of Israeli cities in the territories and increased demand for resources made a more immediate resolution to the conflict favourable.

The end of the Cold War was equally unsettling for Israeli leaders. For decades, they had positioned the country as a strategic U.S. ally in the region of Soviet-backed Arab states. With the disappearance of the Soviet threat, American protection could no longer be assured. Strategic energy concerns might favour oil-rich Arab regimes over Israel. This fear appeared to be justified by the 1991 Gulf War. As American-led forces prepared to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Israel volunteered its troops. Despite its long-standing relationship with the United States and the Iraqi threatening to bomb Israeli cities,

American leaders refused to allow Israel to join coalition forces. Fears of upsetting Arab populations and splitting the coalition superseded the military advantage of the Israeli Defence Forces. It became overtly clear that Israel was no longer an irreplaceable American ally. More ominously, it had become a *liability* for the 1991 campaign, when Arab allies threatened to withdraw their forces if Israel joined (Kimmerling & Migdal 2003: 328).

The Gulf War not only exposed Israel's tenuous position in the Middle East, it challenged the geo-political rationale for controlling the disputed territories. Two days after the start of the war, Iraq launched scud missiles against Israeli cities (Hermann 2001: 170). Where Israeli rule over the West Bank had been argued to be an effective buffer against an Arab assault, the penetration of long-range missile attacks into Israeli territory made control of the West Bank seem irrelevant. In the absence of a strategic benefit, and, given the uncertain relationship with the United States, the benefits of controlling the territories became increasingly difficult to justify. This international condemnation, internal opposition and the demoralizing effect on soldiers generated growing support among Israeli elites to relinquish rule over Palestinian population centres (Bar-On 1988: 48).

The war had an equally isolating impact on the Palestinian leadership after the PLO decided to endorse Saddam Hussein publicly for his attacks on Israel. In siding with Iraq, however, they immediately alienated the Gulf state sponsors they had grown dependent upon. Financial support for the organization dried up, leaving the PLO on the verge of bankruptcy (Kimmerling & Migdal 2003: 329). Gulf states also expelled almost 400,000 Palestinians who had immigrated in pursuit of employment opportunity (Ross 2005: 766). American supporters were equally put off by Palestinian support for Iraq. Scenes of Palestinians cheering on rooftops as scud missiles smashed into Israeli cities almost instantly undid the image of Palestinians as righteous victim. With no foreseeable resolution to conflict and an increasing sense of isolation, both parties were prompted to a radical reconsideration of the status quo.

For leaders on both sides, a diplomatic resolution to the conflict became the preferred policy option. Israelis saw diplomacy as providing them with a secure exit from the territories while preserving the Jewish nature of the state. A negotiated settlement with Palestinians would end isolation from Arab states and permit regional normalization with Arab neighbours. For the Palestinian leadership, the initiation of peace talks would simultaneously restore the legitimacy of their cause by demonstrating their desire for peace while attracting an influx of financial support. As previously mentioned, these interests aligned with Israeli and Palestinian public support for direct negotiations as the best means of breaking out of what had become an unacceptable stalemate. The precedent established by the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Camp David Agreement became the acceptable prototype for peaceful diplomatic resolution (Kimmerling & Migdal 2003: 320).

In 1993, what began as secret negotiations between Israeli and PLO officials culminated in the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords and the famous handshake on the White House lawn between Israeli Prime Minister Yitchak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (Kacowicz 2005: 253). Oslo symbolized a dramatic change in the security policies of both nations. In agreeing to negotiate, Palestinians had renounced their infamous *three NOs policy* proclaimed by Nasser at the 1967 Arab summit in Khartoum: no recognition of Israel; no negotiation with Israel; no peace with Israel. By sitting down to negotiate, the Israeli leadership also reversed Golda Meir's 1970 statement that "there is no such thing as Palestinians", and recognized the legitimacy of Palestinian claims (Rowland & Frank

2005: 10). Peace had become the solution to the security concerns of both the Israeli and Palestinian leaders and their publics.

The Tiered Collapse of Peace Talks
From the perspective of the Israeli and Palestinian leadership, the Oslo Peace Process was a resounding success. Israel had returned to the top of the U.S. agenda with the start of peace talks. Within a year of its initiation, a peace with Jordan had been signed. The PLO secured its leadership of the Palestinian cause, attracted a flood of international money and restored the Palestinian image internationally. It was the wide public support of diplomacy among Israelis and Palestinian that proved more difficult to sustain.

From the Israeli public's point of view, peace was expected to bring an end to hostilities and provide security to the Israeli people. Despite the PLO's recognition of Israel and its renunciation of violence, a wave of suicide and terror attacks accompanied the peace talks. With Israeli civilians bearing the brunt of violence from a peace partner who was unwilling, or unable, to reign in militants, the notion that diplomacy could provide security grew increasingly suspect. While the attacks were committed by militant Palestinian organizations such as *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*, the Palestinian Authority's (PA) claim that it was unable to reign in militants did little to quell Israeli fears.

Indeed, Israelis increasingly questioned if the PA was colluding with these militants to coerce greater concessions for Israeli negotiators, or if the PA were truly incapable of controlling Palestinian militants at all. For most Israelis, Yasser Arafat's direct role in the violent hijackings, cross-border raids and terrorist attacks in the 1970s and 1980s were difficult to forget. Fears that that the Oslo Peace Process was a complex ruse that had provided the PLO with a base of operations far closer than its Tunisian exile began to gain credence. Even if the organization were genuinely committed to peace, the Palestinian leadership's inability to deliver the peace they promised eroded public support for the entire process.

The Palestinian public grew equally sceptical of the peace process. The success of Oslo was contingent upon the gradual establishment of trust between antagonists, with a slow devolution of territory accompanying the growing responsibility of the Palestinian authority (Kacowicz 2005: 256). Structured as staged negotiations over a five-year period, the peace talks began by addressing minor issues and culminated in final status negotiations that would decide the three most sensitive topics: the final borders of the Palestinian state, the issue of Palestinian refugees and the future status of Jerusalem.

Rather than establish trust, however, the staged nature of the Oslo talks seemed to allocate Israel time to consolidate its power and expand the pre-1967 borders by seizing even more Palestinian land. Having conceded to Israel's two primary demands--the denunciation of violence and recognition of the state by agreeing to negotiations--there appeared to be little incentive for Israel to concede to Palestinian demands. The construction of bypass roads, demolition of Palestinian homes and seizing of Jerusalem identity cards from Palestinians led many to question Israeli commitments to peaceful coexistence (Ross 2005: 766). Perhaps most disturbing was that the peace process seemed to accelerate, rather than halt, the construction of Jewish housing projects and the establishment of checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza (Kacowicz 2005: 254). The start of the Oslo Peace Process also had the unexpected consequence of mobilizing religious communities that had traditionally remained ambivalent about the nationalist agenda.

Orthodox Jews challenged the claim that the territorial concessions of Oslo were similar to the Camp David peace with Egypt, where Israel had relinquished the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt in exchange for full diplomatic relations. The difference, the religious community argued, was not in the principles followed but the nature of the land being surrendered. Because Sinai had never constituted a part of the divine covenant between God and the Jewish people, it was a legitimate territorial compromise in their view. In giving up the majority of Biblical Israel, however, the Oslo Peace Accords demanded that the Jewish people break its covenant with God. It was the sanctity of the land that prevented its surrender under any circumstance (Rowland 2002: 16-17). Permitting the division of the Holy Land rejected the divine covenant, bringing the wrath of God upon Israel. Simply put, divine retribution was a security threat greater than Palestinian militants.

The Oslo Peace Accords equally threatened Islamic interests because the nationalist rhetoric of the negotiators contradicted the universality and unity of Islam. This threat explains why Muslim Organizations had long "shunned immersion in Palestinian politics" (Litvak 1996: 4). In recognizing Israeli sovereignty, Palestinian leaders would be giving Islamic land to non-believers, abandoning their guardianship over the *Waqf* (religious trust). No border between Israel, the West Bank and Gaza could be accepted. The obligation of every Muslim was to defend divine land, through force of arms, if necessary (Budeiri 1997: 197). No worldly government had the right to negotiate the partition of sacred land (Jamal 2003: 107). Still, this did not mean that coexistence was impossible, provided that Jews accept their subordination under a unified Islamic state (Schultz 1999: 152).

Amid growing disillusionment and increased opposition from religious groups, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators initiated final status negotiations on July 11, 2000. These talks were to address the most controversial of issues, including the future of Jerusalem and the status of refugees. Rather than lead to the much-anticipated establishment of a Palestinian state, diplomacy began to unravel. From the Israeli perspective, Arafat's repeated rejection of Israeli offers for shared control over Jerusalem seemed to confirm Israeli fears that the Palestinians had no desire to end the conflict. Palestinian demands for the right of refugees and their descendents to return to their pre-1948 homes suggested that diplomacy would not resolve Israeli demographic concerns. As Kimmerling and Migdal (2000: 283) wrote, Israelis viewed the "massive return as tantamount to the destruction of their state".

After having unequivocally recognized Israeli sovereignty over more than half of historic Palestine, Palestinians saw Israeli negotiations as a masked desire to establish ungovernable enclaves of Palestinian rule. Israel's refusal to consider the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their former homes was also seen as the failure to take seriously Palestinian demands. It was the passing of September 13, 2000, the expected date of Palestinian Independence, that made diplomacy appear to be an endless process of failed promises.

The political context of these talks was also significant. Final status negotiations began less than a month after the Israeli troop withdrawal from Southern Lebanon on May 22, 2000 that ended its 18-year occupation. Israelis saw the end of military rule as demonstrating their willingness to relinquish territory. Palestinians, however, had a different reading of the events. The dissonance between the meandering negotiation and the success of *Hezbollah* in forcing Israel to concede all the disputed territory seemed to

demonstrate Israel's vulnerability to an uncompromising violent resistance. In other words, perhaps Palestinians had ended the *Intifada* too early.

The September 28, 2000 visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount[4] appeared to validate fears on both sides. The Temple Mount's significance to Israel is its centrality to Jewish identity and religious practice. The Mount has been the focus of Jewish worship for three millennia and was the political capital of ancient Israel.[5] The 1967 decision to permit the Mufti of Jerusalem to administer control over the Temple Mount was a conscious decision to demonstrate the progressive nature of Israeli religious tolerance. In contrast to the ethnic cleansing that had followed the fall of the old city to Jordanian forces in 1948, Muslims were guaranteed access to worship on Judaism's holiest site. Importantly, the agreement to ensure Muslim access to the Mosque at the Southern end of the compound did not forbid Jewish access or even praying on the Temple Mount compound.[6]

The importance of the *al Aqsa* compound[7] is both as an Islamic holy site and a symbol of Palestinian nationalism. The influx of Jewish immigration into the region during the British mandate had strained relations between Jewish and Muslim neighbours. When Jewish worshipers erected a religious fence along the Western Wall of the *al Aqsa Compound* to separate male and female worshipers in 1929, the act was interpreted as Jewish attempts to lay claims to the site. The Mufti of Jerusalem responded by declaring all land below and sky above the compound to be *Haram esh-Sharif* (Muslim property), thereby extending Islamic claims to territory adjacent to the compound's walls (Rowland 2002: 273). This proclamation was accompanied by widespread rioting against the Jewish communities in mandate, escalating into the 1929 *Thawrat al-Buraq* (Western Wall crisis). The centrality of the *al Aqsa Compound* in one of the earliest expressions of Palestinian nationalism made its defence a symbol of Palestinian resistance against foreign control (El-Alami 2003: 132).

Sharon's 2000 visit to the compound touched nerves on both sides. Guaranteeing access to religious sites for both Israeli and Palestinian worshipers was a central component of the final status negotiations, and would invariably include the *Temple Mount*. Seeking to sidestep this commitment, Arafat repeatedly refused to acknowledge the existence of any Jewish temple on the site (Gold 2007: 261). Arafat's refusal was troubling enough; however, it was the intensity and breadth of violence that followed Sharon's visit that was most disconcerting to Israelis. The Palestinian reaction appeared to justify Israeli fears over continued access to religious sites and the dangers in relinquishing political control over them (Perlez 2000: 2). Perhaps most disconcerting was that the violence was not orchestrated by a handful of militants. Violence was widespread, sustained and popular.

As the Palestinians saw it, Sharon's visit was a symbolic insult at best and a prophetic warning at worst. While the visit did little to change the Islamic administrative control established in 1967, it revealed Israel's intentions to retain sovereignty over the territory

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[4] The Temple Mount (Har ha Bayit) and Holy Sanctuary (Haram al Sharif) refer to the same compound in Jerusalem. Both terms will be used interchangeably.

[5] All Synagogues in the world face the Temple Mount, and one of the many Jewish religious services ends with the prayer "Next Year in Jerusalem".

[6] A rabbinical prohibition against Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount explains the absence of Jewish prayer on the site. This prohibition was never universally recognized and had been questioned in recent years.

[7] The Al Aqsa Compound and Temple Mount refer to the same piece of land.

even as negotiations took place (Margalit 2001: 2). The Israeli response to Palestinian protests sparked by Sharon's visit was even more unsettling. Israeli troops used live ammunition at times against student protesters, exposing how little progress had actually been made throughout the Oslo Peace Process. Not only did this event show the unwillingness of Israel to abandon force in favour of diplomacy, it revealed the extent that Israel would go to in order to retain control over the territories.

Amid growing violence, two events grew to symbolize the futility of the Oslo Peace Process. On September 30, 2000, a day after Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, a gun battle broke out between Israeli troops and the Palestinian Authority near the Netzarim juncture in the Gaza Strip. Caught in the crossfire were Jamal al Durah and his son Mohammed. A French television crew filmed as Jamal tried in vain to shield his son from the gunfire from behind a steel drum. The broadcast of Mohammed al Durah lying dead in his father's lap electrified Palestinian anger and resentment. The scene dramatically captured the impotence felt by the people and the disregard that Israelis had for Palestinian life.[8] After six years of diplomacy and the start of final status negotiations, the peace process had done little to reduce Israeli control over Palestinian life.

The Israeli national consciousness was shaken two weeks later. On October 12, 2000, two solders passing near Ramallah took a wrong turn and accidentally entered the PA administered city. Encountering an angry crowd, the two sought refuge at a PA police station. As word spread, a mob of roughly 1500 people gathered demanding that the two soldiers be turned over. When denied their request, the door of the station was forced open and the soldiers were beaten to death. Images of their bodies being thrown from the second floor window to be mutilated, dismembered and dragged through the streets by a cheering crowd were broadcast internationally.

The images of their gouged eyes and hollowed skulls shook the Israeli public and appeared to vindicate the warnings of Oslo opponents (Asser 2000). From the Israeli perspective, the lynching dissolved any distinction once made between militants and Palestinian citizens and indicted the entire population. The PA's complicity, or at least its inability to protect the lives of Israelis being killed not far from Arafat's headquarters, reinforced Israelis' concern that they had been negotiating with the wrong party (Feldman 2000). The violence "sent a message that many Israelis, including those on the left, read as clear evidence that the Palestinians were not ready for nor did they desire peace" (Rowland & Frank 2002: 273).

Public opinion on both sides turned radically against the diplomatic initiative of their leaders (Barnett 2002: 61). Rather than improve the material reality of Palestinian life, the peace process had resulted in a situation in which Palestinians had less economic opportunity, less mobility and continued to suffer the weight of Israeli military rule that Oslo had deceptively entrenched. Instead of improving security for Israeli citizens, Oslo had established a Palestinian enclave from which terror attacks against civilians could be planned, coordinated and launched. The gradual relinquishment of territory had not secured the country but endangered the nation (Kacowicz 2005: 257). A shared consensus emerged that both sides had been deceived by negotiators (Bowker 2003: 223).

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[8] There is evidence that there are significant inaccuracies in the report, including uncertainty over the culprits in the killing and allegations that the event might have been staged. Its importance, however, lay not in the credibility of a particular event, but in its symbolic reflection of Israel's heavy-handed response.

Ignoring the mounting violence and growing disillusionment, diplomatic efforts continued. By October 2000, these were being conducted in direct opposition to popular opinion. Chicago Tribune reporter Hugh Dellios (2000) explained the situation on October 15, 2000:

> Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak faced warnings from right-wing lawmakers not to renew any peace overtures toward the Palestinians, while Palestinian President Yasser Arafat faced a backlash from protesters who warned against any attempt to stop their renewed intifada.

The chasm between the public opinion and elite agenda narrowed when the peace process was finally abandoned in January 2001, nearly four months after the outbreak of the Intifada.

Public Opinion Indicators of Security Policy Change
A key lesson of the Oslo Peace Process is that significant security policy change requires the alignment of elite agenda with public opinion. The decision by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to abandon the Oslo process in January 2001 was a reluctant elite response to the dramatic change in the opinions of their respective publics. Waves of protests, violent demonstrations and death made diplomacy untenable. Both Israeli and Palestinian leaders proved unable to impose a peace deal upon an unwilling population. As (Pundak 2001: 35) stated "without the support of these two constituencies, any hope of peace and stability was lost".

This reflects the belief that successful security policy change requires public consent. In her 2001 examination of French military policy, LeBalme (2001: 188) argues public support is a crucial component of security policy change. Balzacq (2005: 181) concurs when emphasizing that securitization entails more than the articulation of threat explaining that "a common structured perception" of threat must be reached.

While public opinion is often depicted as constraining or reactionary to elite policy initiatives, sensitivity to domestic opposition can reverse this relationship. In what Abramson et al (1991) term the *electoral retribution thesis*, the political costs associated with adopting policies that overtly challenge public opinion generally outweigh any perceived benefit. It is worth noting that this is not restricted to elected government officials. In the summer of 2006, the Israeli army launched a major offensive into southern Lebanon after the militant organization *Hezbollah* kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. Concern over domestic backlash is visible in an interview with the group's leader Hassan Nasrallah on Lebanese television. In explaining their miscalculation in kidnapping the Israeli soldiers, he is quoted as saying "if there was a one percent possibility, we would not have done that. We would not have done any capturing" (CNN 2006).

This suggests the merit in studying public opinion indicators of security policy change. In the same way that a discourse analysis of official statement reveal the agenda and policy preferences of political leaders, public opinion indicators reveal the domestic pressure that can compel world leaders into policy change. In his research, Hafez (2006: 17, 20) found that increased Palestinian support for suicide attacks against Israel preceded a wave of suicide bombings that occurred in 2001. As seen in Figure 1, public opinion in favour of attacks increased from 26.1 percent in 1999 to 66.2 percent in 2000. The number of

suicide bombings against Israel jumped from 2 attacks in 2000 to 29 in 2001.[9] It is relevant that non-state actors conducted these attacks, suggesting the public's influence on non-state international actors such as *Hamas* and *Islamic Jihad*.
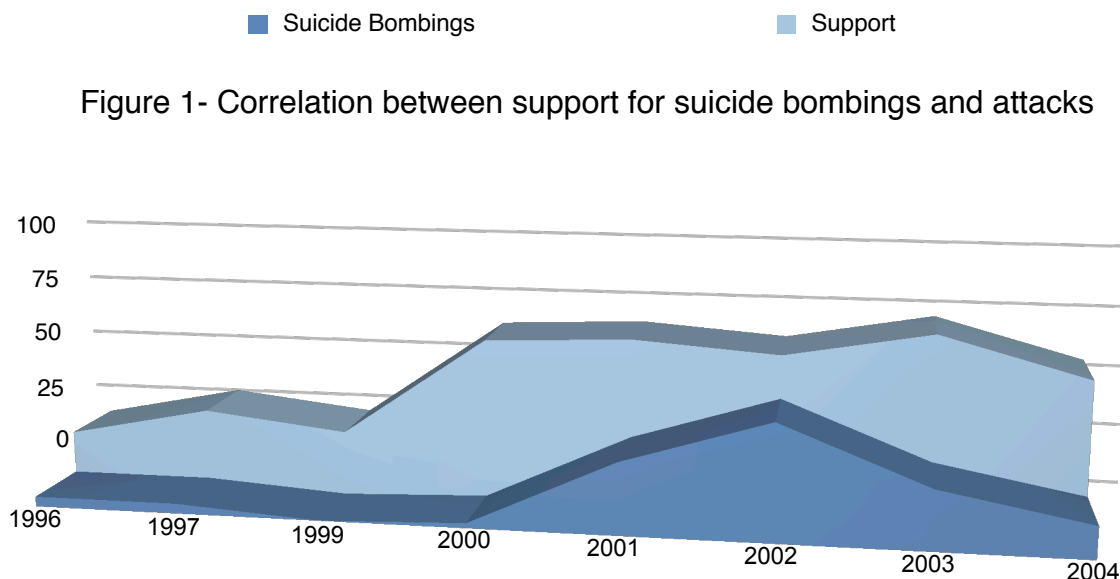

Figure 1- Correlation between support for suicide bombings and attacks

An investigation of the Oslo Peace Process reveals that a similar change in public opinion preceded both the collapse of the diplomacy and outbreak of violence.   Three leading public opinion research centres in the region were to identify the time of public opinion change: the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre (JMCC), the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS) and the Tami Steinmetz Centre for Peace Research.

Public Rejection of Diplomacy
The JMCC was established in 1988 by a group of Palestinian journalists and researchers. The centre's purpose was to provide a reliable source of information on public opinion in the West Bank and Gaza. Research focused on both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well issues of domestic concern. Using data collected in five JMCC polls, [10] Figure 2 shows a clear drop in Palestinian support for peace between February 1999 and December 2000. When both the strong and moderate support for Oslo are combined, general support for Oslo in the four years prior to the outbreak of the second Intifada never falls below 60 percent. This contrasts with the almost 30 percent drop in support from a combined 60.4 per cent in 1999 to 32.7 percent in 2000.

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[9] While more extensive research would be necessary, there is strong suggestion that the drop in suicide attacks in 2002 was in part caused by the Israeli offensive and construction of the security fence that reduced the number of successful attacks. An avenue for additional investigation might benefit from including the number of failed attempts.

[10] Five polls were examined for this graph: JMCC, No. 15, 1996; JMCC No. 24 1997; JMCC 1998 No. 29; JMCC 1999 No. 30; JMCC 2000 No. 38; JMCC 2000 No. 39; JMCC 2001 No. 40.

Strongly Support   **Somewhat Support**
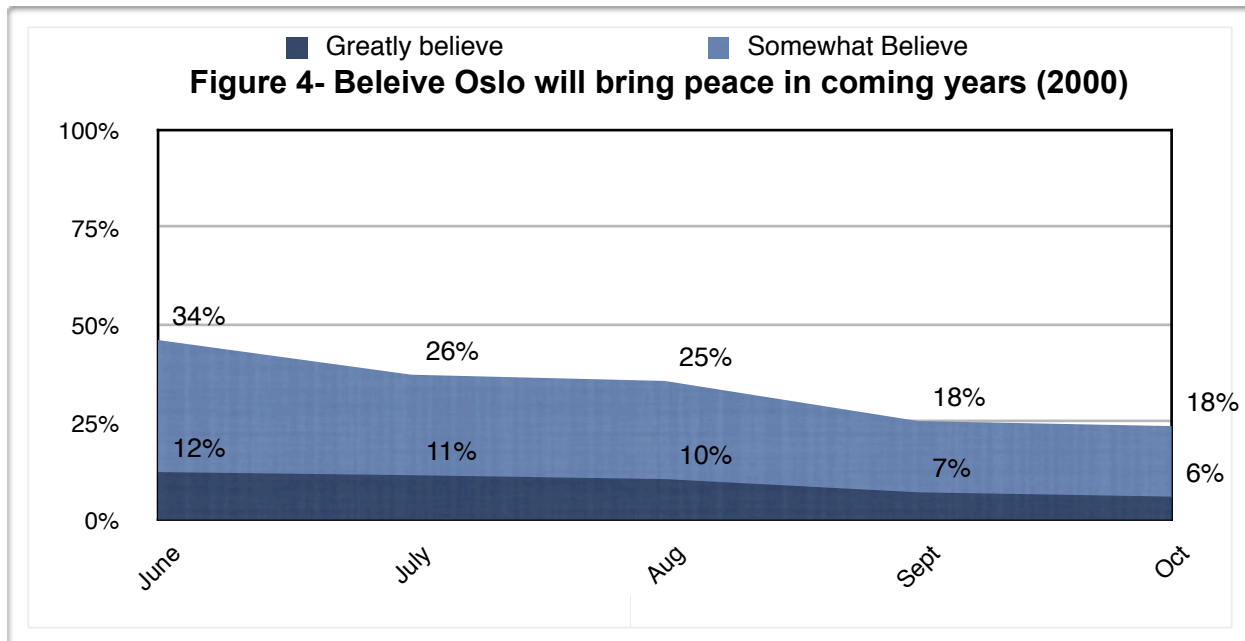
Figure 2- Palestinian Support for Oslo
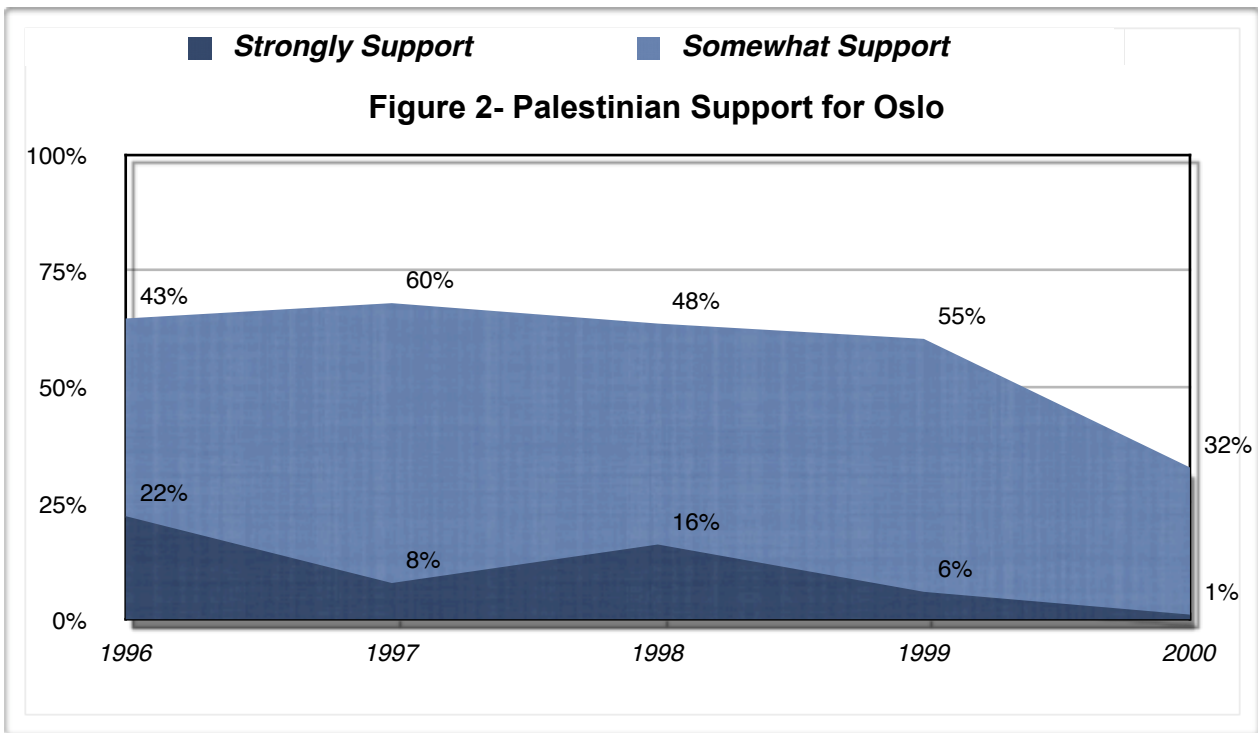
The JCSS was founded in 1977 at Tel Aviv University with the purpose of conducting security research on Israeli public opinion. Its August 2001 report produced by Asher Arian included the results of Israeli opinion polls. The graph in Figure 3 shows a 20 percent drop in just one year in the number of Israelis who stated that they had confidence in negotiations. Whereas in 1999, 67 percent of Israelis indicated that they had confidence in negotiations, by 2001 that number had declined to just 30 percent of respondents (Arian 2001: 29).

Figure 3- Israeli Confidence in Negotiations
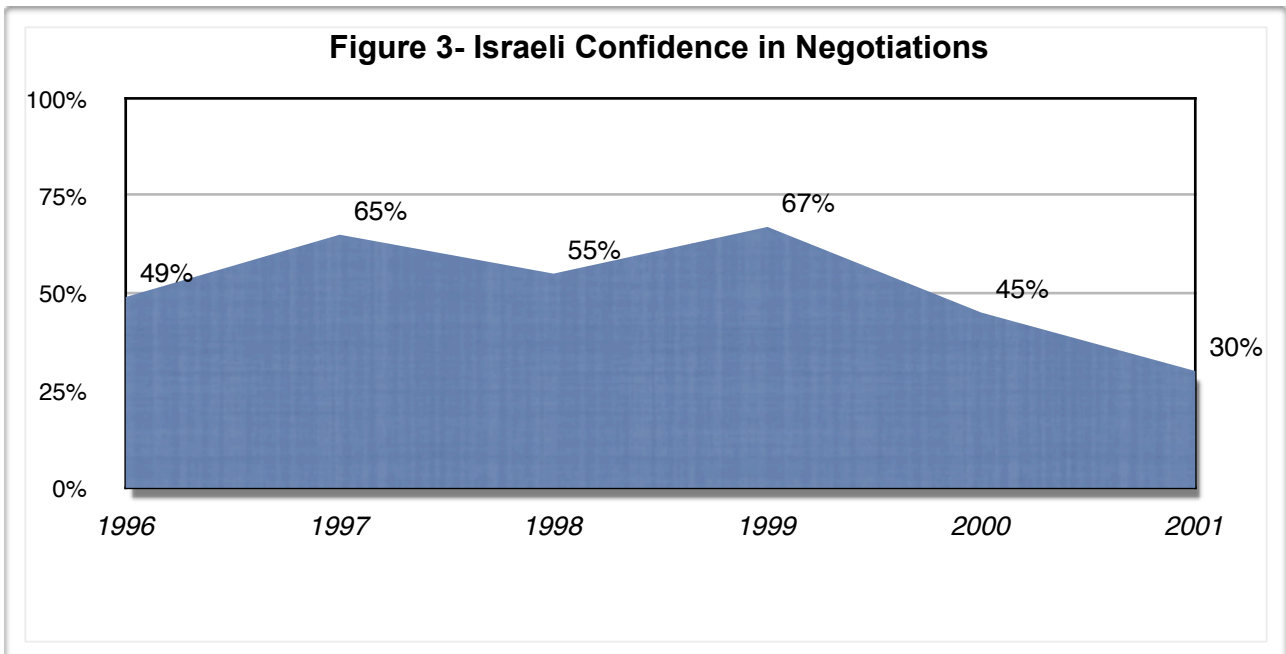
The Tami Steinmetz Centre for Peace Research was established in 1992 to provide frequent systematic research into the Oslo peacemaking process. Since 1994 the centre has compiled a monthly chronicle of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes to peace, known as

the *Peace Index*.[11] Figure 4 shows a shared pessimism with regards to the peace process between June and October 2000 (Peace Index 1994-2001: http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/).

Figure 4- Beleive Oslo will bring peace in coming years (2000)

Legend: ■ Greatly believe ■ Somewhat Believe

Data points (Somewhat Believe): June 34%, July 26%, Aug 25%, Sept 18%, Oct 18%
Data points (Greatly believe): June 12%, July 11%, Aug 10%, Sept 7%, Oct 6%

Growing Demands for Force

While public opposition to the Oslo Peace process might be considered a delayed rejection of the peace talks, demands for military force clearly communicated the change in policy preference.   Opinion polls at the time reveal growing animosity and aggressiveness on both sides. The declining support for the Oslo Peace Process was accompanied by increased vilification on both sides. Figure 5 presents the finding of a joint research report with the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research and the JMCC of opinion polls conducted in both 1999 and 2000. Whereas in 1999, 20.5 percent of Israelis described Palestinians as violent, by 2000 this number had more than doubled to 46 percent. Similarly, while 58 percent of Palestinians saw Israelis as inherently violent in 1999, this figure had jumped to 87.5 percent by 2000 (JMCC 1997 No. 24; JMCC 1999 No. 30; JMCC 2000 No. 39).

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[11] The peace index can be viewed monthly on the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research webpage (http://www.tau.ac.il/peace/). The permanent questions on its monthly polls are:

1. Do you believe or not believe that in the coming years there will be peace between Israel and the Arabs?
2. In general, do you consider yourself a supporter or opponent of the peace process between Israel and the Arabs?
3. What is your opinion on the agreement that was signed in Oslo between Israel and the PLO (Agreement of Principles)?
4. Do you believe that the Oslo Agreement will bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinians in the coming years?

**Figure 5- Percentage that view each other as Violent**
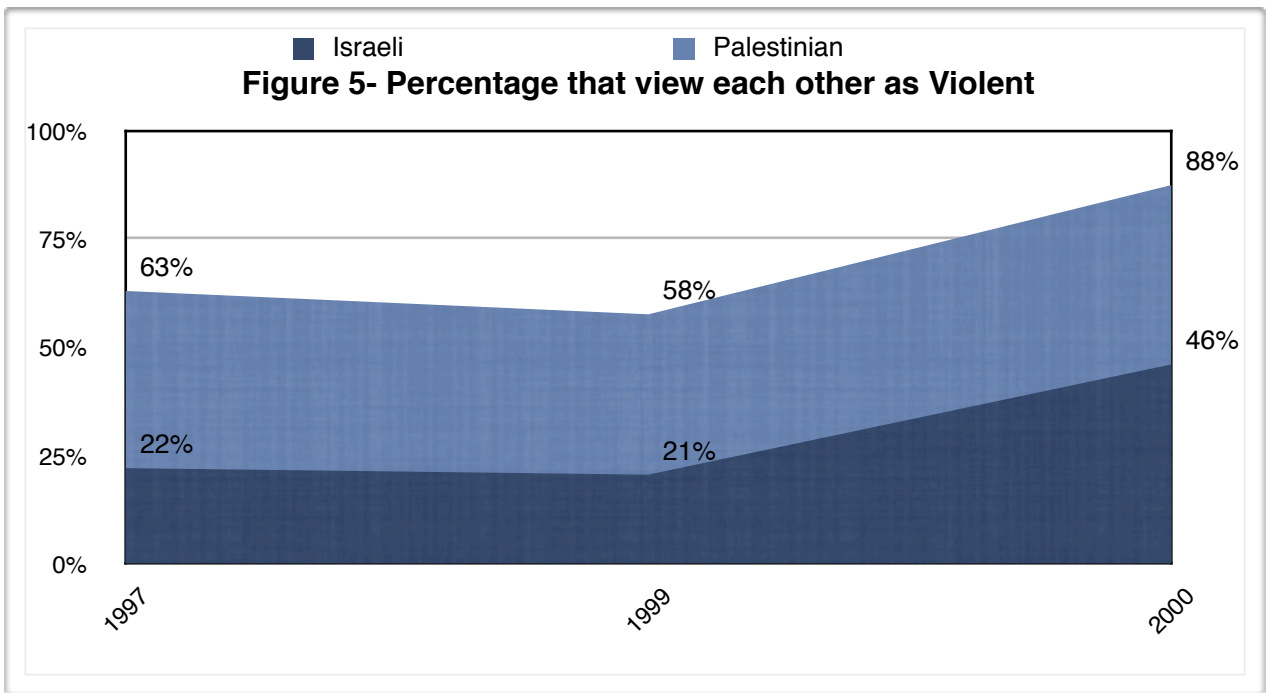
The growing pessimism and increased hostility attributed to the other side effectively translated into an increased support for the use of violence. Results from the same 2001 report published by the JCSS are shown in Figure 6. It shows a growing number of Israelis favoured a military response to their security concern rather than a diplomatic solution; respondents in favour of military response rose from 31 per cent in May 1997 to 53 per cent in January 2001. These figures constitute a 22 per cent jump in four years (Arian 2001: 20). According to Arian, who authored the report, the significance of this increase was that "this was only the second time since 1986 that a majority of respondents preferred bolstering military capacity over peace talks (Arian 2001: 21).

Figure 6- Israeli Support for Military Force
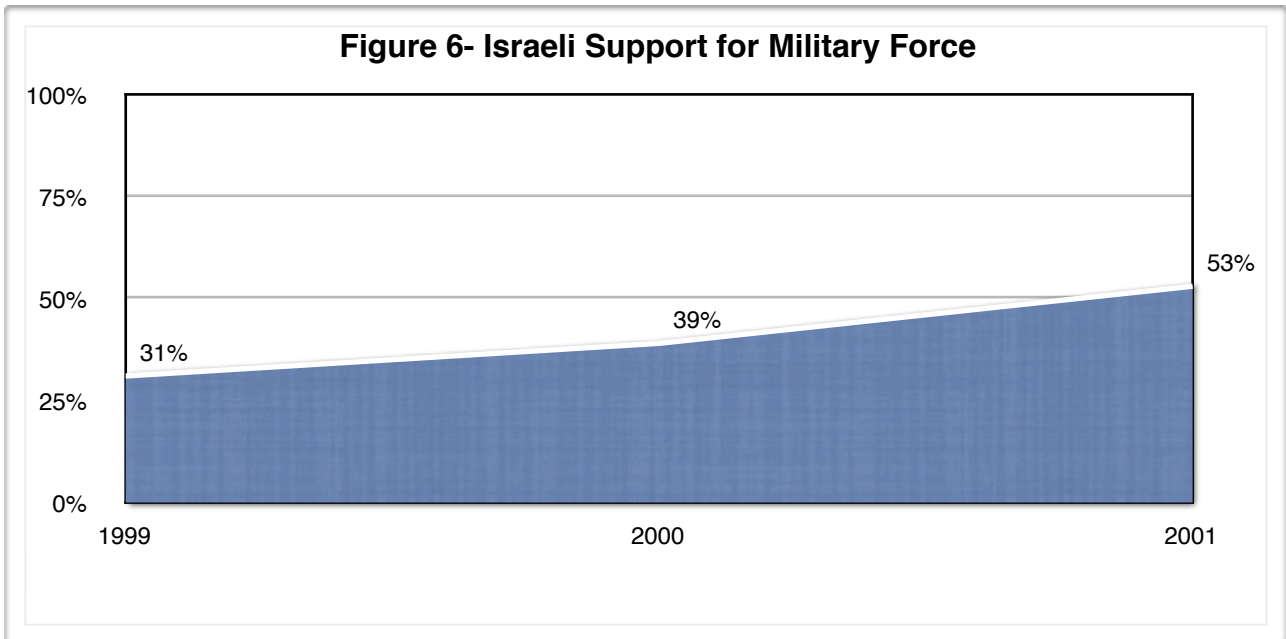
There was also an equivalent increase in Palestinian support for military action against Israelis. Figure 7 shows the results of three JMCC polls conducted between 1997 and 2000. While support for political force was relatively stable between 1997 and 1999, the

graph shows that by 2001, over half of respondents supported the use of force (JMCC 1997 No. 20; JMCC 1999 No. 31; JMCC 2000 No. 39).

Figure 7- Palestinian Support for Military Response
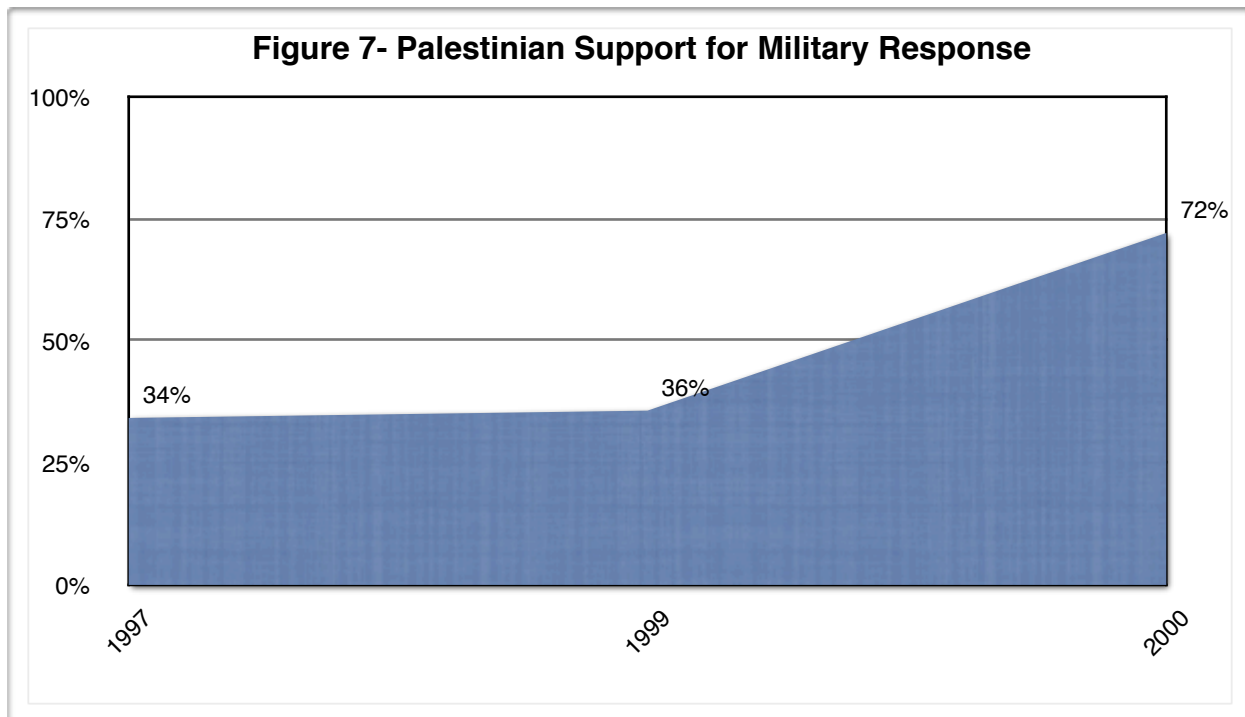
As with the public's rejection of Oslo, demands for political force preceded the sanctioned violence of the Palestinian Authority. Luft (2000) explains, despite failing to enforce public order, Palestinian forces did not participate in the escalating violence in the early days of the *al Aqsa Intifada*. As the violence continued to flare, the PA reoriented its PA security apparatuses preserving public order to waging the violence... so as to lead the forces on the street" (Kurz 2005: 138)   This mirrored Israeli's shift towards unilateral military action. Where the Palestinian leaders altered their policy in order to ensure, Israelis kicked the leadership that had sanctioned the peace process out of office. In their place they elected Ariel Sharon, the pioneer of the settlement movement, military hero who was hated by Palestinian and left wing Israelis alike. A year after his victory, he launched the encompassing operation *Defensive Shield* that militarily seized all the territories the peace process had relinquished to the Palestinian Authority.

Conclusion

Security policy change requires the alignment of elite agenda and public opinion. The Oslo Peace Process emerged from a shared belief that ongoing violence was a greater national threat than territorial compromise. The decision by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to abandon the Oslo process in January 2001 was a reluctant elite response to the dramatic change in the opinions of their respective publics. Not only does the failure of elite-driven diplomacy highlight the constraining influence of public opinion on security policy, it suggests a reversal of roles between a securitizing public and their elite audience. Opinion polls conducted during the Oslo Peace Process not only show the dwindling public support for diplomacy, they reveal calls for a policy shift towards unilateral military force.

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