From: *International Security*, 3, no. 1 (1978): 162-186.

Israelis and Palestinians: Psychological Prerequisites for Mutual Acceptance

Herbert C. Kelman

Many observers of the Middle East conflict now regard the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as a promising long-run solution to the Palestinian problem. Such a state would live side by side with an independent Israel, based more or less within its pre-1967 boundaries. This solution envisages a Palestinian state that would be free to decide for itself what kinds of links, if any, it wants to establish with Jordan or with any other country. It further assumes that the state would offer opportunities for citizenship and leadership to Palestinians in the diaspora, including elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), provided they accept the principle of peaceful coexistence with Israel.

As of the moment, this two-state option is rejected both by the Israeli government and by the PLO. In Israel, the concept of an independent Palestinian state is considered unacceptable not only by the Begin government, but also by the Labor Party opposition. The Labor Party clearly differentiated itself from the Likud prior to the 1977 elections by declaring its readiness to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and it has continued to press this point while in opposition. However, it has consistently concurred with the Likud in rejecting the two-state option. The PLO, for its part, has never officially accepted this

An earlier version of this article was presented at a symposium entitled "Can an Israeli State and a Palestinian State Co-exist?" which was sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee New York Metropolitan Regional Office on May 24, 1977. Another version was submitted as a working paper to the *New Outlook* 20th Anniversary International Symposium, Tel Aviv, November 1977. It was subsequently presented at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, on December 11, 1977. The analysis presented here is a first attempt to formulate some tentative conclusions from an action research project on the social and psychological dimensions of the Middle East conflict in which I have been engaged for several years along with four colleagues: Samir N. Anabtawi (Vanderbilt University), Edward E. Azar (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Stephen P. Cohen (Lady Davis Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and A. Hussain Tuma (National Institute of Mental Health). I am greatly indebted to my colleagues for their insight, stimulation, and friendship. The ideas presented here are direct products of my interaction with them, although they should not be held responsible for my way of expressing these ideas. I would also like to thank Benjamin H. Brown (Harvard Center for International Affairs) for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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option, despite various hints that it was ready to do so. The resolutions of the 1977 Palestinian National Council (PNC) did show some movement in this direction by speaking for the first time of the Palestinians' right "to establish their national independent state on their national soil" without insisting on the *entire* national soil. At the same time, however, the PNC reaffirmed the official PLO position against acceptance of Israel. In a recent interview with Anthony Lewis,[1] Yasir Arafat repeated his hints that the PLO would agree to a Palestinian state alongside of Israel, but gave no clear indication of accepting the two-state option as a permanent solution.

The rejection of the two-state solution by both sides reflects their continuing reluctance to accept the other or to acknowledge the other's right to a national existence. Such acceptance is clearly required if negotiations are to produce a stable two-state solution (i.e., in effect, a partition of Palestine) or any other settlement that will meet the needs of the two parties. To be sure, a settlement could be imposed from the outside but, in the absence of mutual acceptance, it could not create a stable, peaceful relationship between the parties. This is not to say that mutual *diplomatic* recognition is necessary before negotiations can begin and other agreements can be worked out. Such recognition may well represent the end of the negotiation process rather than its beginning. At the psychological level, however, at least a minimal degree of mutual recognition is essential if Israelis and Palestinians are to enter into serious negotiations, with some confidence that these negotiations will ultimately lead to mutual recognition at the diplomatic level.

Starting with this assumption, this article explores the psychological conditions and processes that are necessary if each side is to accept the reality and legitimacy of the other's national existence. More specifically, it discusses the barriers to mutual acceptance, the meaning of acceptance to each side, and six psychological conditions that would have to be created in order to bring about mutual acceptance.

Dual Perspective

My analysis attempts to look at the problem of acceptance from the perspective of each of the two parties, asking how each perceives the issues. In a sense, then, it is what Ralph White has called "an exercise in empathy."[2] It starts with the as-

1. *New York Times*, 2 May 1978.
2. Ralph K. White, "Images in the Context of International Conflict: Soviet Perceptions of the

sumption that a lasting and just settlement must be responsive to the needs and anxieties of both parties. It is essential, therefore, to understand the perspective that each party brings to the conflict and to enable their differing perspectives to confront each other.[3]

The formulations of the concerns and perceptions of the two sides presented here should be viewed as hypotheses, not as formal research findings. They are not based on standardized interviews with representative samples of Israelis and Palestinians, yielding percentage distributions of responses to specific questions. Rather, they are intended to provide a composite view, based on the conversations that my colleagues and I had with a variety of individuals and groups —including government officials, parliamentarians, community leaders, scholars, writers, and students—on both sides of the conflict. Our respondents are located along the entire spectrum of political opinion, although "moderates"—i.e., Israelis and Palestinians willing to consider an accommodation with each other—tend to be overrepresented. Our discussions were often intensive and many took place in problem-solving workshops and other situations in which Israelis and Palestinians were in fact interacting with each other. In those situations, I was able to hear not only what Israelis and Palestinians say to me, but also what they say to each other. Another unique feature of my experiences is that I have been working with a team of social scientists of both Arab and Jewish origin, who have been organizing workshops and other meetings together, traveling in the Middle East together, and jointly engaging in interviews and discussions with Israelis, Palestinians, and other Arabs. These activities have not only

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U.S. and the U.S.S.R.," in Herbert C. Kelman (Ed.), *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (New York: Holt, 1965), p. 240. See also Ralph K. White, *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, Rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 1970).

3. Confrontation of conflicting perspectives is most instructive when the parties are able to interact directly in a setting that encourages them to express their own concerns openly, to listen to the concerns of the other, and to approach the issues analytically. Third parties can facilitate such direct interactions by arranging, for example, problem-solving workshops—an approach that served as the starting point for the project in which my colleagues and I are engaged (see acknowledgement at the beginning of this article). For a description of this approach, see Herbert C. Kelman, "The Problem-Solving Workshop in Conflict Resolution," in Richard L. Merritt (Ed.), *Communication in International Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972); Herbert C. Kelman and Stephen P. Cohen, "The Problem-Solving Workshop: A Social-Psychological Contribution to the Resolution of International Conflicts," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1976, 13, 79–90; and Stephen P. Cohen, Herbert C. Kelman, Frederick D. Miller, and Bruce L. Smith, "Evolving Intergroup Techniques for Conflict Resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian Pilot Workshop," *Journal of Social Issues*, 1977, 33(1), 165–189. Third parties can also contribute to indirect interactions between conflicting parties by systematic attempts to empathize with and juxtapose their different perspectives, as this article attempts to do.

given us access to unique data, but have also afforded us the opportunity to share each other's perspectives as we review our joint experiences and the insights we have derived from them.[4]

The analysis derived from these various experiences focuses to a large extent on parallelisms in the perceptions, the apprehensions, and the identity concerns of the two sides. There are many differences in the situations in which the two sides find themselves and there is certainly no perfect symmetry in their problems or resources. There are several reasons, however, for placing special emphasis on the parallels that do emerge.

First, the inherent dynamics of a conflict interaction have an impact on the way in which each party perceives itself, its adversary, and the conflict between them. As a result, many (though by no means all) of the images developed by the two parties tend to be mirror images of one another.[5] We have found many examples of such mirror images in our conversations with Israelis and Palestinians. One interesting example is that each side describes the conflict as asymmetrical—to its own disadvantage. The Palestinians see the conflict as asymmetrical in that the Israelis hold all the cards: they are in possession of the land, while the Palestinians are trying to acquire it. The Israelis see the conflict as asymmetrical in that, in contrast to the Arabs (though not specifically to the Palestinians), the very existence of their state is at stake. Thus, one of the parallelisms we have found is that both sides insist that their situations are not parallel.

Second, one of the main points that the present analysis is designed to highlight is that—whatever differences there may be in their situations—both sides have genuine concerns and profound anxieties, including anxieties about their national existence. Both perceive themselves, for understandable reasons, as highly vulnerable and each sees great risk in accepting the other. The parallelisms at this fundamental level are at the heart of the analysis.

Finally, the emphasis on parallelisms is more consistent with the impartial approach that is crucial for the present analysis. I want to avoid any implication

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4. It should also be noted that the experiences provided by all these activities are filtered through the special analytic orientation to conflict derived from my social-psychological background. For samples of the scholarly tradition that provides the context for the present analysis see Herbert C. Kelman (Ed.), *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (New York: Holt, 1965); John W. Burton, *Conflict and Communication: The Use of Controlled Communication in International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1968); and Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

5. For social-psychological discussions of such mirror images, see Urie Bronfenbrenner, "The Mirror Image in Soviet-American Relations: A Social Psychologist's Report," in *Journal of Social Issues*, 1961, *17*(3), 45–56; and the writings of Ralph White, cited in Footnote 3.

that I am passing moral judgments or concluding that one side has a more valid case than the other. Thus, it seems better to err on the side of overstating parallelisms rather than differences, without pretending that the two sides are in identical positions.

In addition to the bias in favor of parallelism, the analysis is also marked by a bias in favor of optimistic scenarios. That is, it proceeds from the assumption that there is at least a possibility of finding a mutually satisfactory resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The approach might be called a "best case analysis," in contrast to the "worst case analysis" that strategic thinkers customarily employ. The latter is justified when the analyst wants to avoid the danger of inadequate defense against any possible threat. In the search for a settlement, however, the dangers to be avoided are self-fulfilling prophecies that a satisfactory settlement is unattainable and failure to recognize when opportunities for peace present themselves. These are the dangers that a "best case analysis" is designed to minimize. By envisaging the positive outcomes that might occur under the most favorable circumstances, it encourages the parties to seek ways of creating those circumstances.

It is important to stress that the analysis is not intended to advocate any particular solution or to encourage either side to take any particular action. This does not mean that I pretend to be addressing these issues as a value-free social scientist. I have a strong commitment to the idea that it is better to search for a peaceful solution than to rely on continuing wars; to the importance of finding a solution that is responsive to the concerns for justice on both sides; and to dialogue as a means in the search for such solutions. I therefore do have certain value preferences—certain ideas about better and worse solutions, and better and worse procedures for attaining such solutions. At the same time, I feel that there may be a variety of specific arrangements congruent with the requirements of peace and justice.

My main reason for not advocating any particular solution is the strong conviction that solutions must emerge from the parties themselves. I am particularly cognizant of the fact that whatever actions are taken by either party entail real risks for it. I take very seriously the concerns of each side and thus I do not minimize the risks for Israel in accepting the PLO or the risks for the PLO in accepting Israel. Since they have to live with the consequences of their actions, they are the ones to decide what risks they are prepared to take. They must be reminded, however, that whatever action they take entails risks: There are risks involved not only in the decision to accept the other side, but also in the continuing refusal to do so.

The Current Situation: Mutual Denial of National Identity

We cannot understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unless we realize that we are dealing with two nationalist movements, each struggling for its right to national identity and to national existence. What is especially pronounced, if not unique, about this conflict is that it is marked by a principled non-recognition at a very basic level. Neither side fully recognizes the other's national identity and its right to exist. Indeed, the very peoplehood of the other has been at issue and, to varying degrees, continues to be so. Thus, the core element of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is mutual denial of the adversary's national identity.

On the Palestinian side, the PLO—which, as of now, is the only recognized representative of Palestinian nationhood—denies the legitimacy of Israel as a fundamental tenet of its ideology. One symbolic illustration of this denial is the total absence of the word "Israel" in the resolutions of last year's Palestinian National Council, presumably because the use of the word might imply acquiescence in the legitimacy of the Jewish state. But the rejection of Israel goes beyond the state; it encompasses the very concept of a Jewish nation. Thus, for example, the Palestinian National Covenant explicitly states that "Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nation. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own."

Since the very idea of Jewish nationhood is denied, there is no conception that Jewish nationalism might be the driving force behind Zionism, behind the creation of Israel, and behind the identification of world Jewry with Israel. Various conceptions of Zionism and Israel that are offered—such as those describing Zionism as a form of racism or Israel as a settler state or outpost of Western imperialism—evade the fact that Zionism is a nationalist movement and Israel the political expression of that movement.

The tendency to deny Jewish national identity is not unique to Palestinians, but is quite common in the Arab world. Among the many Arabs to whom I have spoken, including intellectuals and political officials, I have found very few who accepted the *right* of Israel to exist. There are many who, of course, accept Israel as a reality and stress that it is an established fact that must be acknowledged. There are some who go beyond this view to express sympathetic understanding of the Jews' search for a haven in response to their experience of persecution. They see this search, however, in humanitarian rather than in national terms—as the action of a group escaping from persecution, not that of a nation establishing its national homeland, i.e., a political state expressing its national identity. The rejection of Israel's right to exist is accompanied, on the part of

most Arabs to whom I have spoken, by great difficulty in conceiving of the Jews as a nation. The denial of Jewish nationhood is no doubt linked directly to political opposition to a Jewish state: If there is no Jewish nation, then the whole concept of a Jewish state—the basic assumption of Zionism—becomes irrelevant, artificial, and fraudulent. This view of the Jews is probably reinforced, however, by the historical experience of Arabs with Jews in the Arab world. They tend to see these as the "true Jews"—a religious minority who lived happily in the Arab world until the foreign and inauthentic intrusion of Zionism.

To Israelis—and indeed to most Jews around the world—the definition of Jews as a purely religious group constitutes a denial of an obvious reality, rooted in their personal experience and their national consciousness. They can see it only as a blatant effort to undermine the legitimacy of Israel as a state designed to give expression to Jewish national identity.

Turning now to the other side of the coin, Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationhood tends to be reluctant and half-hearted. Golda Meir's statement some years ago, in which she rhetorically asked "Who are the Palestinians?" and in effect denied their existence as a national group, is often taken as an indication of Israeli views on the matter. Actually, there has been considerable change in Israeli thinking since the time of Meir's statement. One concrete indicator of the change is that the term "Palestinians" is now used routinely in the Israeli press and broadcast media. The existence of a Palestinian people as such is no longer a matter of debate for large segments of the Israeli population, including most intellectuals and political elites. Indeed, the official policy of the Labor government acknowledged the force of Palestinian nationalism and the need for a solution that would provide for an expression of Palestinian identity.[6] With the election of the Begin government, to be sure, the issue has again come to the fore. While Begin has acknowledged—since Sadat's visit to Jerusalem—that there is a Palestinian problem, which he proposes to resolve through limited Palestinian self-rule, he persists in denying the reality of Palestinian nationhood. He refuses to speak of Palestinians as a people, insisting that there are only Palestinian Arabs, just as there are Palestinian Jews. Since Begin is Prime Minister, his views on the matter have obvious significance. Nevertheless, they are not widely shared within Israel and do not represent the mainstream of Israeli thinking.

Even those Israelis who acknowledge the force of Palestinian nationalism, how-

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6. This position was reiterated by Shimon Peres, leader of the Labor Party, when he said, in his response to Sadat's speech to the Knesset (November 20, 1977): "We are aware of the existence of the Palestinian identity. Every people has the right to decide its own identity and this does not depend on the authorization of another nation."

ever, are generally unprepared to accept it on its own terms—a tendency reflected in the official position of the previous government. Attempts have been made to define Palestinian nationalism in terms more convenient to Israeli policy. Thus, for example, historical arguments and observations about the ethnic character of Palestinians have been used to support the idea of a Jordanian/Palestinian state as the appropriate vehicle to give expression to Palestinian national identity. These arguments may have a certain degree of logical validity, but they ignore some of the central dimensions of Palestinian nationalism, such as (1) the significance of political independence and sovereignty to the expression of Palestinian identity; (2) the need of Palestinians to differentiate themselves from other Arab states, based on the Palestinian experience in the Arab world since 1948; (3) the centrality of the territory of Palestine in forging Palestinian nationalism, which views return to that territory as an essential condition for the restoration of justice; and (4) the role of the PLO as the symbol and recognized agent of Palestinian nationalism and independence.

In sum, for both sides, psychological resistance to the idea that the adversary is a bona fide nation continues to be a powerful element in the conflict. To be sure, there has been some movement. Palestinians cannot totally ignore the phenomenon of Israel and the support for it among world Jewry. Similarly, Israelis cannot totally ignore the phenomenon of the PLO and the support for it among Palestinians (as well as others) around the world. Still, resistance to accepting the nationhood of the other remains very strong. Perhaps this formulation is too pat, but one might summarize the situation as follows: Palestinians (and certainly other Arabs) are increasingly accepting the *reality* of a Jewish state and hence—by implication—of a Jewish nation, but they have not accepted the *principle* of Jewish national identity. By contrast, Israelis (with the notable exception of Begin) are increasingly accepting the *principle* of Palestinian national identity, but not its *reality*—i.e., the concrete political forms in which this identity seeks to express itself. Each still regards the other's nationalism as in some sense unnatural, historically unjustified, and a fiction (or perhaps a fraud) promulgated by a fanatical minority.

Though it is not my purpose here to urge any particular policy or action on Israelis or Palestinians, I am prepared to argue that a realistic policy must proceed from an awareness by each side that its adversary has all the characteristics of a nation, expressing itself through a national movement with its own dynamic and its own political forms. A group becomes a nation once its members perceive themselves as such, and are ready to define their identities, to pursue their interests, and to engage in costly and self-sacrificial actions around that perception.

There are, of course, certain objective conditions that give rise to a national movement and if these conditions are not met the movement is unlikely to succeed. However, for outsiders to insist that a group lacks the formal characteristics or the historical justifications for nationhood—i.e., that it *ought* not to be a nation—is an exercise in futility. It is equally futile to downplay the authenticity of a nationalist movement by claiming that it is merely the handiwork of an aggressive elite that does not represent the population. All nationalist movements are in part acts of creation, in which an enterprising elite—in the pursuit of its own ideology and interests—takes the leadership in mobilizing national sentiments. Such an elite cannot succeed, however, unless there are national sentiments to be mobilized. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians have amply demonstrated the existence and authenticity of such sentiments.

The resistance of each side to recognizing the nationhood of the other is rooted in the view that their respective national identities are inherently incompatible and that the fulfillment of one can be achieved only at the expense of the other. This view is a direct consequence of the fact that the two nationalist movements focus on the same land. For Palestinians, acknowledging Jewish nationhood implies acceptance of the right of Jews to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Many Palestinians see this as tantamount to qualifying or abandoning their own claim to Palestine and thus destroying the raison d'être of their national movement. For Israelis, acknowledging Palestinian nationhood implies acceptance of the right of Palestinians to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza. Many Israelis fear that such a state—particularly one that would carry the name "Palestine"—might suggest support of the Palestinians' claim to the whole of Palestine and thus cast doubt on the legitimacy of Israel.

Each side seems concerned, then—perhaps at a partly unconscious level—that acceptance of the other's nationhood would undermine the moral basis of its own claims. This is not to say that they are afraid the moral basis of their claims would be destroyed; each side is sufficiently convinced of its moral position to feel immune against that danger. What they may well be afraid of, however, is that their own moral claims would become more ambiguous, less self-evident, and more subject to debate if they recognized, even implicitly, that there may also be some moral basis to the claims of the other side.

Such ambiguities are particularly threatening because the stakes for each side are extremely high. They are not merely concerned about having a good case so that they can win debates or improve their bargaining postures. Rather, both sides are deeply afraid about their continuing national existence. Recognition of these genuine fears on both sides is essential to any understanding of this con-

flict. Due to a combination of historical traumata and current realities, each group perceives itself as particularly vulnerable and feels that its survival as a national group is in the balance. The anxiety about national survival is magnified by anxieties about personal survival, since the destruction of the nation is seen in the context of wholesale massacres. Each side, of course, tries to belittle the fears of the other. Often, they do not understand the basis of the other's fears. They take them as being groundless and hence inauthentic. When such fears are voiced by leaders on the other side they are viewed as propaganda ploys; when voiced by common citizens, they are viewed as products of the leaders' propaganda. These fears, however, though they may often be used for propaganda purposes, are very real—not only to the masses, but to the leaders as well.

Let me give an illustration of how these fears may manifest themselves. Golda Meir's statement about the Palestinians, mentioned above, is constantly reiterated by Palestinians and other Arabs. Even though the statement has not represented Israeli mainstream opinion for many years, it is brought up as an indicator of what Israelis really think about the Palestinians. A parallel on the other side can be found in Ahmad Shukairy's famous statement about driving the Jews into the sea. Again, this statement has not represented Palestinian or Arab policy for a long time, but is constantly brought up as an indicator of Arab intentions. Why do these statements persist so long in the consciousness of the two sides? In part, they are being reiterated because they make very good debating points. In large part, however, they persist because they articulate what each side believes to be the adversary's *real* intentions and thus touch off profound existential fears. The Israelis believe that destroying Israel and driving the Jews into the sea is precisely what the Palestinians really want to do and would indeed do if they ever had the opportunity. The Palestinians believe that destroying Palestinian identity—as well as Palestinian lives—is precisely what the Israelis want to do and are systematically preparing to do (and, moreover, that some of the Arab states may in their own ways be ready to cooperate in such a program).

In sum, fulfillment of the other's national identity is perceived by each side as equivalent to the destruction of its own identity. Under the circumstances, it is understandable that each is reluctant to accept the other's national identity and its right to a state expressing that identity. To do so, in their view, would be to participate in a process that directly imperils their own national existence. Thus, neither side can be expected to make a move to accept the other unless and until it develops a sense of assurance that its own existence is secure.

Even if one of the parties were prepared to make the first move in accepting the other, it is not at all clear that the other would reciprocate. In fact, each side is

on record as refusing to accept the other regardless of the other's actions. The Israeli government insists that it will not negotiate with the PLO even if the PLO accepts the existence of Israel; the PNC insists that, even if a Palestinian state were established in part of Palestine, this would not mean acceptance of Israel. In other words, non-recognition remains, for each side, a matter of basic principle and thus unconditional. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable possibility that acceptance by one side would set into motion a dynamic process conducive to reciprocation. Whether or not being accepted by the other is a *sufficient* condition for acceptance of the other, we must certainly assume that it is a *necessary* condition. That is, neither side will accept the other unless it has already been accepted by the other or is absolutely certain that its own initiative will be reciprocated.

The Psychological Meaning of Acceptance

It follows from the above analysis that neither side will engage in a process of negotiation, which implies acceptance of the other or looks to such acceptance as a hoped for outcome, unless (as a minimum) it feels assured that acceptance by the other is a likely prospect. What does acceptance by the other mean to each of the parties? What does each side want when it speaks of acceptance?

From the perspective of the Israelis, it is essential that not only their existence, but also their legitimacy be accepted by their neighbors. That is, they want Israel to be recognized as a permanent entity in the Middle East, a state with the same acknowledged right to existence as other states, rather than one whose neighbors are pledged to subvert it and ultimately destroy it. A corollary of this view is that the state must have normal relations with its neighbors, at the levels of diplomacy, commerce, scientific and cultural exchange, tourism, and so on.

Israelis have several reasons for attaching such importance to acceptance on these terms. First, I think it would be a mistake to underestimate the role of straight security concerns. In view of their genuine fears about national survival, Israelis feel that continuing non-acceptance of the legitimacy of their state and of its right to exist is an open invitation to military attacks by their neighbors, and a form of legitimization of such attacks. Even if they were convinced, however, that there was no serious threat to their security and that they could defend the state effectively against military attacks, Israelis would find continuing non-acceptance highly obnoxious. The status of Israel as a small state, surrounded by declared enemies with whom it has no interchange, creates a feeling of claus-

trophobia that has become increasingly disturbing to many Israelis. Aside from the realities of restricted movement, this situation provides too many reminders of the ghetto experience that characterized so much of Jewish history (despite obvious differences between the well-armed, independent Jewish state and the defenseless, disfranchised ghetto population). This sense of claustrophobia may contribute to the apparent increase in emigration from Israel. It may also account for the great enthusiasm Israelis have shown for open bridges and open borders. Quite apart from their propaganda value, these manifestations speak to the great need of Israelis for interchange with their neighbors.

Non-acceptance by its neighbors, now that it has spread to most Third World states, is also the root of Israel's political isolation in the international arena. Such isolation would be troubling to any nation; again, however, it may take on special meaning in the context of Jewish history. It is not too difficult to assimilate this isolation to the pariah status of the Jew, a central element of the Jewish historical experience with devastating consequences. Furthermore, many Israelis are concerned about the effect of continuing non-acceptance and isolation on Israeli society itself. They are afraid that Israel's international status may push its internal climate in the direction of a garrison state or a self-righteous enclave, thus endangering fundamental Jewish and Zionist values. Finally, acceptance of Israel's legitimacy is important to Israelis as a confirmation of the moral basis of their state.

For all of these reasons, the insistence on acceptance, from the Israeli perspective, is not merely a bargaining ploy. Rather, it must be understood as an expression of profound psychological concern.

From the perspective of the Palestinians, it is essential that they be accepted as a national group, entitled to its own independent state. Such a state, in their view, must be equal to other states, having the same degree of sovereignty that is granted to all recognized polities in the international system. They want to be free to choose their own government and to decide for themselves—like any other sovereign actor—whether or not they wish to federate, confederate, or link up in other ways with any other state or states. Palestinians generally assume that acceptance of their right to such an independent state presupposes acceptance of the PLO as the body that represents them and speaks for them.

Why is acceptance on these terms so important to the Palestinians? Again, we must start with the Palestinians' genuine concern about their national existence. They want a sovereign, independent state as an affirmation of their separate national identity—as explicit recognition that they are a *nation* rather than a mere collection of refugees. An independent state, under specifically Palestinian

rule, is of special significance to them because it contrasts with their bitter experience of decades of refugee status and second-class treatment in most of the Arab world. Independence from Jordan (while keeping open the possibility of some relationship, as long as they can enter into it as equals) is particularly important to many Palestinians because of their experiences with Amman, culminating in the events of 1970. The fact that a majority of Jordanians are Palestinians does not make a Jordanian/Palestinian state, under Hashemite rule, a satisfactory substitute for a Palestinian state. Not only does a Jordanian/Palestinian state fail to satisfy the quest for independence, but many Palestinians fear that they would be oppressed in such a state, and not free to express their Palestinian identity.

Furthermore, it is essential to Palestinians that their state be centered on Palestinian soil, because it is the loss of that homeland that is the mainspring of their national movement. The establishment of a state on Palestinian soil would address itself to the sense of injustice that pervades the Palestinian experience. It would represent at least a partial acknowledgement that an injustice has been done and is being rectified by the creation of an independent state. Finally, the central role assigned to the PLO by so many Palestinians in their view of national acceptance derives from the fact that the PLO is the only organized and acknowledged body that symbolizes, expresses, and promotes Palestinian nationhood and independence. This does not mean that all Palestinians—particularly among the West Bank and Gaza populations—are enthusiastic about the current PLO leadership. However, they see no alternative to the PLO as the carrier of Palestinian national independence.

For all these reasons, then, acceptance of their national rights, from the Palestinian perspective, cannot be divorced from the concept of an independent state on Palestinian soil or from the agency of the PLO.

Neither Israelis nor Palestinians see any indication in the pronouncements of the other side that acceptance, as they conceive it, is in the offing.

Israelis are often told that, under the proper circumstances, the PLO is ready to accept Israel. Yet, when they read the 1977 PNC resolutions, they see no sign of such readiness. The resolutions imply acceptance of an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, but even in return for such a state (which is in itself much more than the Israeli government is prepared to give) they explicitly rule out acceptance of Israel and peace with it. It is difficult to persuade Israelis that their doubts about PLO intentions are unfounded. A strong minority within the PLO, which cannot be ignored, is against any kind of settlement with Israel. Even the

majority, though prepared to take a flexible stand, has not indicated a commitment to ending the struggle—including the military struggle—once a Palestinian state is established.

On the other hand, there is another minority within the PLO that seems committed to accepting Israel and ending the struggle in return for an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza. Within these territories themselves, the population also seems to favor a settlement along these lines. How much weight these sentiments will ultimately have remains open to question, but there is at least some basis for arguing that acceptance of Israel by the PLO is a possible outcome if appropriate steps are taken and if the dynamics of the interaction are allowed to play themselves out. Assuming this is so, however, what would it take to assure the Israelis that acceptance (at least minimally in line with their own definition of it) is indeed a possibility, and thus to persuade them to enter into the process that would presumably bring it into effect?

The Palestinians, on their part, also see no indication of Israeli readiness to offer them the kind of acceptance they desire. Even the Labor government made it clear that it would not accept an independent Palestinian state was of the Jordan and that it would not negotiate with the PLO. Palestinians, understandably, take such statements at face value, just as Israelis take at face value the resolutions of the PNC. They are not inclined to gamble on the proposition that these statements might not represent the Israelis' last word. Their distrust of Israeli intentions has been magnified since the election of a Likud government.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the Israeli position is more open than it seems. There is a minority—small, but not without influence—that favors the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. There are many others who are willing to consider different options—and their numbers as well as their flexibility may increase if it becomes clear that current policies stand in the way of negotiating an overall settlement. The frequent statement by Israelis that they are prepared to give a great deal in return for real peace should not be dismissed as mere rhetoric. Israeli public opinion has been profoundly affected by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem last November, which for the first time created the widespread feeling that real peace is within the realm of possibility. There are clear indications that opposition to the Begin government's policies is crystallizing within Israel because these policies are seen as insufficiently responsive—particularly on the West Bank issue—to Sadat's initiative. To be sure, the Israeli public remains opposed to an independent Palestinian state. At the same time, polls have shown a majority to be in favor of dialogue with Palestinians. If Arafat were to associate

himself with Sadat's initiative, and if an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue were indeed to take place, it could conceivably alter the meaning of a Palestinian state and of the PLO in Israeli eyes.

I am not suggesting that PLO acceptance of Israel will automatically be reciprocated by the Israelis, just as I did not suggest that Israeli acceptance of Palestinian national rights would be automatically reciprocated by the PLO. However, there is at least some basis for arguing that acceptance of the Palestinians by Israel is a possible outcome if appropriate steps are taken and if the dynamics of the interaction are allowed to play themselves out. Assuming this is so, what would it take to assure the Palestinians that acceptance (at least minimally in line with their own definition of it) is indeed a possibility and thus to persuade them to enter into the process that would presumably bring it into effect?

This brings us to the question of the psychological conditions that might help to provide such assurances to both sides, thus allowing each to entertain the idea of accepting the other.

Psychological Prerequisites for Acceptance

The psychological prerequisites for acceptance cannot be brought about by mere manipulation of perceptions independent of the realities that these perceptions represent. It is impossible to divorce psychological conditions from the objective (political, military, diplomatic) conditions on whch acceptance depends. Thus, for example, a central element in creating the psychological conditions for acceptance is the perception by each side that there have been significant changes in the other side, and that further changes are likely to occur in response to new events. Perception of change, however, is not independent of the reality of change: A fundamental requirement for the perception of change is that change has really occurred and that there is a demonstrable basis for predicting further changes. The psychological conditions cannot substitute for the objective ones, but must accompany them. The psychological question is: *If* changes have really occurred, and if there are sound reasons for anticipating further changes, how can the parties be persuaded of these facts? The question is far from trivial because the dynamics of conflict create a strong tendency to dismiss change on the part of the adversary, both because new information is assimilated to a rigidly held negative image of the adversary and because there is great fear of underestimating the adversary's hostile intentions and thus being caught off guard. In this connection, it is important to keep in mind that there are dangers not only in perceiving changes that have actually not occurred, but also in failing to per-

ceive changes that have in fact occurred. Moreover, the relationship between perception and reality is more complex than is often assumed, for perceptions not only represent realities, but often create them by way of self-fulfilling prophecies.

Six psychological conditions must be created if a process of acceptance is to be set into motion. Each requires actions by both parties that are complementary and actions that are reciprocal to those of the adversary. For example, the first condition requires of the Israelis to make an active effort at understanding the perspective of the Palestinians—not an easy task, since it calls for some degree of empathy with their adversary. This action requires *complementary* action on the part of the Palestinians, in that they must try to communicate their own perspective in such a way that the Israelis can more readily understand it—which again is difficult since it requires an attitude toward the adversary as someone to be persuaded rather than overpowered and out-maneuvered. At the same time, the Israeli action requires *reciprocal* action on the part of the Palestinians, in that they in turn must make an active effort to understand the perspective of the Israelis. This Palestinian action, of course, also requires complementary action by the Israelis in communicating their own perspective in such a way that it will be understandable to the Palestinians. This interactional framework should be kept in mind as we examine each of the six prerequisites.

1. *Each side must acquire some insight into the perspective of the other.* Thus, for example, Israelis must come to understand why it is difficult, even for the most moderate Palestinians, to agree to the acceptance of Israel without having a clearer picture of what the Israelis are prepared to give them in return. Israelis must realize that acceptance of Israel represents the Palestinians' last and most valuable card. They see such acceptance as an irreversible step, by which they would be giving up a fundamental part of their struggle—thus, a step they are unwilling to take unless they are convinced that their minimum conditions will be met. At the moment, they do not feel at all convinced of that prospect. They are afraid that, whatever they do, Israel will not give up the West Bank and Gaza; that, even if it does, it will not permit the Palestinians to develop an independent existence within these territories; that it will pose continuing threats of military intervention and reoccupation of these territories; and that the expansionist dynamic of the Jewish state will eventually reverse the process by which a Palestinian state may be established.

Reciprocally, the Palestinians must come to understand that Israelis—not only the masses, but also their political leaders—are genuinely concerned about the security implications of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. They are

satisfied that such a state will not be able to resist pressures from the Soviet Union to establish a military presence there; that it will not be able to resist pressures from such groups as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to use the state as a base for terrorist excursions across the border; and that it will be subject to internal conflict and instability conducive to a Lebanon-type civil war, whose effects could easily spill over the border into Israel. Israelis feel that an independent Palestinian state would not be consistent with the kinds of security arrangements that they consider essential. For example, demilitarization of the West Bank and Gaza could be negotiated if these territories were a part of a Jordanian/Palestinian state; if they constituted the entire state, however, demilitarization would represent an excessive infringement of that state's sovereignty. At the most profound level, most Israelis do not believe that a Palestinian state would be accepted by its leadership as a permanent solution. It would merely serve as a staging area for continuing the military struggle against Israel, whether by terrorist or conventional means. Thus, from the Israeli perspective, agreeing to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza would mean giving up their trump card—withdrawal from occupied territories—without any assurance of real peace and security in return for that irreversible step.

Though each side may consider the other's concerns to be unfounded, it is important that it understand the perspective that gives rise to them. Only through such understanding will each side be able to make sense of the other's reluctance to accept it, and to identify the steps that it must take on its own part if progress toward acceptance is to be achieved.

2. *Each side must be persuaded that there is someone to talk to on the other side and something to talk about.* It has generally been assumed that there is no one to talk to on the other side; those who sound reasonable have tended to be dismissed as insincere or nonrepresentative. Questions have also been raised about their long-term "responsibility"—that is, their ability to maintain control and to deliver on any commitments they might make. Similarly, it has been assumed that there is nothing to talk about—the tendency has been to view the demands of the two sides as mutually exclusive and to think of the adversary as prepared to negotiate only your own surrender.

Acceptance of the idea that there is someone to talk to and something to talk about implies a differentiated view of the other side and a recognition that change has occurred. Both are difficult in a conflict relationship. The parties usually do not make the deliberate efforts that are needed if differences and changes in one side are to become apparent to the other side. In fact, because of

internal political considerations, the more moderate elements often find it necessary to play down new departures from a militant line. They wrongly assume, however, that the changes they prefer to keep quiet are completely obvious to the adversary. Approaching the matter entirely from their own perspective, they are painfully aware of how difficult the change has been, of the lengthy struggle that brought it about, and of the persistence of internal divisions over it, and they cannot imagine that such a controversial change would escape the adversary's notice. From the adversary's perspective, however, the change may appear negligible, since he evaluates it not in terms of the difficulty in achieving it, but in terms of the amount of movement toward his own preferred position.

For example, the changes reflected in the 1977 PNC resolutions were produced by a lengthy and difficult struggle within the PLO, and thus seemed considerable to those involved in the struggle.[7] For Israelis, however, they represented imperceptible movement, constituting at best a tactical shift without any willingness to accept the existence of Israel. Conversely, the Israeli-American working paper of October 1977 on the resumption of the Geneva conference represented a significant and controversial departure in Israeli policy, in that it accepted the participation of Palestinians in Geneva in their own capacity rather than as part of the Jordanian delegation, and the separation of Palestinian political issues from the refugee problem.[8] For Palestinians, however, these concessions were obscured by the document's continuing exclusion of PLO participation, and by its failure to contemplate an independent Palestinian state. The PLO leadership saw no evidence in this document of change in the Israeli position.[9]

Thus, if the two parties (or elements within them) are to persuade each other that there is someone to talk to and something to talk about, they must find ways of communicating more clearly and convincingly the differences that may exist within their respective communities and the changes in thinking that may have occurred, rather than rely on the unrealistic assumption that all of this is obvious to the other side. Moreover, these developments have to be seen in their larger context. For example, current positions of the PLO must be seen in the context of changes and realignments within the Arab world, to which Palestinians clear-

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7. See, for example, Sabri Jiryis, "Towards an Independent Palestinian State—a Palestinian View," *New Outlook*, August 1977, 20(5), 43–50, 52 (translation of an article which originally appeared in *Shu'un Falastiniya*).
8. This analysis of the working paper is derived from a stimulating seminar presented by Mattityahu Peled at the Center for International Affairs on October 20, 1977.
9. See Marvine Howe, "P.L.O. Rejects U.S.—Israeli Plan for Peace Conference in Geneva," *New York Times*, 23 October 1977.

ly cannot be oblivious. Current positions of the Israeli government must be seen in the context of changes in Israeli thinking since 1967, which include a decisive shift away from the notion that the Arab-Israeli conflict can be ended by a military solution. And the positions of both sides must be seen in the context of changes in U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

3. *Each side must be able to distinguish between the dreams and the operational programs of the other side.* For Israelis, the PLO's reiteration of its commitment to a united Palestine is an indication that acceptance of a West Bank-Gaza state is merely a tactical move and that the PLO hopes to use such a state as a staging area for the destruction of Israel. Israelis are often told that pronouncements about a united Palestine are not to be taken literally—that they represent a dream which Palestinians cannot be expected to abandon, even though they no longer anticipate that it will be turned into reality. Israelis do not find this reassuring. They take dreams seriously, because they know from the history of the Zionist movement—which began with the dream of a Jewish state—that dreams can become operational. If they are to be reassured, Israelis will have to be shown convincingly that the Palestinians make clear distinctions between dreams that merely represent verbal commitments to basic ideological principles and dreams that represent blueprints for programmatic efforts. Israelis will have to be persuaded that, while Palestinians are unlikely to abandon the dream of a united Palestine as a basic tenet of their ideology, they can nevertheless proceed with functional acceptance of Israel and arrangements for a stable peace. The argument that the dream does not represent an operational program can be made more persuasive to the extent that Palestinians can set out concretely what the main lines of their operational program actually are.

Palestinians, for their part, take very seriously the Zionist dream of the ingathering of the exiles. This dream nourishes what they see as the expansionist dynamic of Zionism, leading to policies of settlement and annexation of occupied territories. They are afraid that such policies might be pursued not only by an Israeli government dominated by the Likud, whose platform explicitly calls for incorporation of the West Bank and Gaza in Israel, but also by a government that expresses its willingness to withdraw from these territories. The Palestinians do not feel confident that, if they recognize Israel and accept a West Bank-Gaza state, the future of that state will be secure—i.e., that it will not be encroached upon by an Israel responding to the pressures of Jewish immigration. If Palestinians are to be reassured on this score, they must be shown convincingly that the Zionist dream of the ingathering of the exiles is not being translated into operational programs of mass immigration and Jewish settlement. Pales-

tinians will have to be persuaded that, while Israelis are unlikely to abandon such a basic tenet of Zionist ideology as the principle of open Jewish immigration to Israel (expressed through the Law of Return), this principle will not threaten the integrity of a Palestinian state. The argument can be made more persuasive if Israelis can show concretely that plans for Jewish immigration and settlement are predicated on an Israel living within its agreed-upon borders.

The distinction between dreams and operational programs becomes easier to draw when we realize how ideological changes typically come about. Change does not usually come about through the logical process of abandoning one set of beliefs and replacing it with an alternative set. Rather, new—and sometimes contradictory—ideological principles develop alongside of the old ones. The latter are not explicitly rejected and are often, in fact, ritualistically proclaimed, but they become increasingly nonoperational. It is not enough, of course, to understand that this is the typical course of change; each side must also see that the process of developing a new set of beliefs has in fact been set into motion on the other side.

4. *Each side must be persuaded that mutual concessions will create a new situation, setting a process of change into motion.* Parties in conflict tend to underestimate not only the amount of change that the adversary has undergone, but also the prospects for change in the future. They anticipate that the adversary's actions in the future will replicate his actions in the past, regardless of any new elements that might enter into the situation, including new actions on their own part. In short, they give little credence to the dynamics of a changing situation.

Thus, Israelis will have to be persuaded that the establishment of a Palestinian state is likely to alter the situation in significant ways, so that the bases for their current fears would be removed. According to this view, for example, the PLO, once charged with the responsibility of running an independent state, would not constitute a threat to Israeli security: they would be too occupied with internal problems to engage in external adventures; they would have a vested interest in maintaining peaceful relations with their neighbors; and, in any event, they would be restrained by the Arab states on whom the Palestinian state would be heavily dependent. To persuade Israelis of the validity of this analysis, it is not enough to insist that these changes will "obviously" take place with the establishment of a Palestinian state; it is not obvious to them. Rather, it is necessary to construct fairly specific scenarios, which envisage in detail the probable consequences of the creation of a Palestinian state under differing circumstances.

Similarly, Palestinians will have to be persuaded that, once they recognize

Israel and make it clear that they accept partition of Palestine as a permanent solution, a new dynamic process will be set into motion, assuring the establishment and security of a Palestinian state. According to this view, official Israeli pronouncements notwithstanding, a change in the PLO posture is likely to change Israeli perceptions of the PLO and of an independent Palestinian state, thus making the two-state option more acceptable to them. Again, however, to persuade Palestinians of the validity of this analysis, it is necessary to construct fairly specific scenarios, which envisage in detail the probable consequences of a change in PLO posture. The Palestinians, like the Israelis, have a very real need for reassurance that concessions will not place them in a position of irreversible disadvantage.

5. *Each side must be persuaded that structural changes, conducive to a stable peace, have taken place or will take place in the leadership of the other side.* This condition is closely related to those already discussed—particularly the second and fourth—in that it refers to the perception of change and of the prospects for future change. I am singling it out, however, because the perception of the other side's leadership is central to each party's assessment of the range of possibilities open to it and of the probable consequences of various moves. There is a tendency to assume that the leadership on the other side is static—that, aside from minor adjustments in personnel and tactics, it has not changed and is not likely to change. Evidence of structural change in the other side's leadership is therefore particularly important before each side is willing to risk a change in its own posture.

Thus, Israelis have to be reassured that, within the PLO, the moderate elements are in fact in control and likely to remain so. Though this may be assumed by knowledgeable observers, the evidence is not persuasive to most Israelis. They point to the hard-line positions taken by PLO spokesmen as well as in the PNC resolutions. Even if those positions represent compromises forced on the leadership by rejectionist elements, they raise the question among Israelis whether rejectionists have the power to exercise a veto over the leadership's actions —and whether they will continue to hold such power. Thus, Israelis will have to be persuaded not only that the leadership is moderate, but that—with movement toward a settlement—it will gain increasing control over the organization and will in fact be able to make its policies stick.

Israelis must also be persuaded that the PLO as an organization is undergoing a transformation. It can be argued that, as the PLO becomes the internationally recognized symbol and focus for Palestinian nationalism, it is being transformed from a guerrilla organization into a political organization with

many of the features of a government-in-exile. Thus, many Palestinians—and this is especially true for the increasingly important constituencies of the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza—support the PLO not necessarily because they are particularly devoted to the organization or its leadership, but because they see it as the embodiment of Palestinian national identity and the vehicle for an independent state. This analysis suggests the possibility of significant change in the Palestinian posture, not through the replacement of the PLO by another agency, but through gradual transformation of the PLO itself. Among other things, for example, the local leadership of the West Bank and Gaza may be more heavily represented and take a more active leadership role within the PLO. To be persuaded of the validity of this analysis, Israelis would need concrete evidence of such a transformation process in the structure and behavior of PLO leadership. PLO actions in the wake of the Sadat initiative make Israelis even more skeptical in evaluating such evidence.

As for Palestinians' perception of Israeli leadership, the primary requirement at this point is reassurance that the present leadership and its particular program for settling the conflict are not permanent fixtures of the Israeli political scene. Some Palestinians may see the policy of the Begin government as merely a continuation, in more explicit and militant terms, of what has been Israeli policy all along; others may see the present government as representing a major shift toward a more hard-line policy, consistent with the opinion shifts in the Israeli electorate. In either conception, the present leadership is seen as representing a stable consensus and firmly entrenched in power. The election victory of the Likud thus confirmed the worst fears of many Palestinians and has increased their wariness about accepting Israel.

To be reassured, Palestinians will have to be persuaded that the hard-line postures of the present government are capable of transformation or that, failing such transformation, it will be replaced by a more moderate leadership. As evidence for the Begin government's capacity to act pragmatically, at the expense of ideological commitments, observers have cited its recognition of the existence of a Palestinian political problem, its willingness to leave open the question of sovereignty over the West Bank, its acceptance of some degree of Palestinian participation in the peace process, and its proposals for Palestinian self-rule. Palestinians will have to be convinced that these steps represent concessions at all and, if so, that they are not just tactical accommodations which leave the basic Israeli posture untouched. In particular they will have to be convinced that they themselves can help to accelerate a process of transformation in the Israeli posture by moving toward acceptance of Israel.

Palestinians must also be persuaded that there is a more moderate alternative leadership, with enough potential support in the Israeli public, that can replace the present leadership if it proves incapable of transforming itself in the face of new events. They will have to be shown in detail how such a prospect fits available information about the structure of public opinion and of political groupings within Israel. For example, they will want to know how firm the public support for the present government is, what evidence there is for fluidity in Israeli public opinion on settlement of the conflict, and what circumstances can be expected to produce what kinds of changes in public opinion. Similarly, they will want to know how the opposition parties in Israel are mobilizing their resources, what new political groupings are emerging, what alternative policy options are being generated, and by what scenarios a change in political leadership is expected to materialize. Beyond that, they need reassurance that, in or out of power, the hard-line elements in the electorate will not have the capacity to veto or reverse any future settlement that might be achieved. The political debate within Israel that has been generated by Sadat's initiative and Begin's response to it may provide some tests of these possibilities.

6. *Each side must sense a responsiveness to its human concerns and psychological needs on the part of the adversary.* The critical element here is an exchange of symbolic gestures that convey a recognition of the other's fundamental concerns. What constitutes meaningful gestures is far from obvious. Identification of such gestures often requires cooperative effort: Each party must be willing not only to offer gestures to the other, but also to communicate what gestures from the other it would find meaningful.

One type of gesture that would be particularly meaningful to Israelis is one that indicates that the adversary accepts them as fellow-human beings. For example, the refusal of most Arabs in diplomatic settings to shake hands with them is profoundly disturbing to Israelis. Some regard the Israeli preoccupation with handshakes as propagandistic or laughable; it is not. The refusal to shake hands symbolizes to Israelis their exclusion from the human category. A reversal of that custom may well have a significant psychological impact, as was evidenced by the profound Israeli reaction to Sadat's round of handshakes with Israeli officials upon arriving at Ben Gurion Airport.

For the Palestinians, a particularly important symbolic gesture would be an acknowledgement by Israelis that a historical injustice has been done to them. Such an acknowledgement would be greatly strengthened by a public indication of willingness to rectify the injustice—even if only in a partial or symbolic way. For example, some statement about the right of Palestinians to compensa-

tion or (under specified conditions) to return would fulfill this purpose. A different kind of symbolic gesture might take the form of some acknowledgement of the special position of Israeli Arabs. Gestures of this nature would be seen by Palestinians as Israeli recognition of their human needs and may serve as important indicators to them that Israel is serious in its commitment to peace.

The identification of specific gestures that would be meaningful to each party is a challenge to the seriousness and imagination of both.

Conclusion

It is clear that official, public recognition, when it comes, will have to be simultaneous, since neither side is prepared to take the first step in view of the risks that such a step would entail. Simultaneous recognition can come about only when each side has explored the implications of accepting the other and has assured itself that the risks are tolerable. Such assurance depends on creating the kinds of psychological conditions that I have been discussing.

There is a wide gap between listing the conditions and creating them. I have described some of the new insights and understandings that each party will have to gain, and some of the messages, signals, and assurances that each will have to convey to the other, before mutual acceptance becomes a serious possibility. But there are powerful reasons—both objective and subjective—why these understandings do not exist and these messages are not being exchanged. Indeed, a major function of this analysis has been to stress that—contrary to what is sometimes maintained—these conditions do not now exist. Each party is inclined to impute to the adversary greater knowledge than he possesses; for example, it is assumed that the adversary "knows very well" that there is someone to talk to or that concessions will create a new situation.

Listing a series of conditions that do not exist is in one sense discouraging, because it shows how great a distance remains to be covered—although discouragement about the possibilities for mutual acceptance between Israelis and Palestinians is hardly new. In another sense, the listing of necessary but nonexistent conditions may be encouraging, because it suggests that there may be something to be done—it outlines an agenda for action. The critical question is: *What* can be done? What procedures may help to create the conditions conducive to mutual acceptance?

These conditions can best be created through direct interaction between the parties, in which they confront their mutual concerns, play out various scenarios, experiment with possible gestures, and jointly look for ways of redefining areas of

conflict so that they can become amenable to resolution. These kinds of interaction cannot take place in an official context since, in the absence of mutual acceptance, the parties refuse to meet with each other. Moreover, even if they are willing to enter into discussions without prior recognition, official public negotiations do not provide a suitable framework for the kind of interaction proposed. What is needed, instead, is an opportunity for preparatory discussions, preceding and eventually accompanying official negotiations. These discussions should take place in a situation in which representatives of the two parties can interact unofficially, privately, with minimal risk, and without prior commitments. The norms of the situation must be conducive to new learning, to an analytical approach to the conflict, and to a cooperative problem-solving orientation. This would be the kind of situation in which the parties could listen to each other, could express their own concerns in the light of the concerns expressed by the other, and could give and receive signals.

I can say from experience that, despite the obstacles, interactions of this sort can be arranged. They can provide valuable opportunities for sharing of perspectives, for learning about the substance and depth of the other side's concerns, for gaining insight into the process of change, for specifying the range within which mutually acceptable solutions can be sought, and for identifying necessary and possible steps toward breaking the present impasse. Such interactions cannot substitute for the difficult, painful process of diplomatic negotiation, centering around the very real conflicts of interest that separate the two sides. They can, however, pave the way for negotiation by helping to create the psychological conditions required for mutual acceptance.