

Three scenarios for the Middle East

From the

**2004 State of the Future by Jerome C. Glenn
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American Council for the United Nations University, 2004,
Washington D.C.

Scenario 1. Water Works

Now that peace seems to have been finally achieved in the Middle East, everyone is claiming credit for the success. Historians will document the many causes, but most agree today that when the First Lady of Egypt responded to the worsening water crises by inviting UNEP, UNDP, and the Quartet (EU, United States, Russia, and the UN) to be the co-conveners of an exploratory conference on Middle East water, a new sense of hope began to grow in the region.

Since the previous leadership in Israel had said it would take no significant steps in the Quartet's Roadmap until attacks on Israelis stopped, and since the more militant Palestinians had said they would not stop until Israel withdrew from the occupied areas, a new approach had to be found.

Going beyond the mid-1990s water agreements between Israel and the PLO, the Middle East Water Conference concluded that a series of regional water negotiations would be chaired by a UN Envoy appointed by the Secretary-General and funded by the Quartet. The conference would include delegations from Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Lebanon, plus the Quartet and observers, and would proceed from the premise that regional water scarcity was inevitable without major desalination; the focus had to be not just redistribution of unsustainable current sources but increased water supply. The US representative stressed this throughout the conference, saying that water-sharing agreements alone would not lead to peace, even if the United States agreed to referee infractions. Producing more water was the key to building trust.

Others believed that the real watershed event leading to peace was the resignations of both Sharon and Arafat, which cleared the way for the establishment of SERESER to coordinate the extraordinarily complex set of agreements, projects, study commissions, joint corporations, and oversight of the fund for joint projects in cooperative research that evolved over the years. Quiet talks among moderates on both sides produced the Geneva Accords, which led to further quiet talks sponsored by the Quartet that spelled out the conditions for SERESER—a body that took its name from the first letter of seven preconditions for peace: Secure borders for Israel, Establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state, Resolution of the Jerusalem question, an End to violence by both sides and an effort to build confidence, Social and economic development, Education, and Resolution of Palestinian refugee status.

Still others said that without secret negotiations by the hardliners, none of this would have been possible. Just as Switzerland provided good offices for moderates to meet in secret and produce the Geneva Accords, Switzerland welcomed the meetings of hardliners, which took a circuitous route getting to the negotiations table.

It all started in Iraq. Sunni Muslims did not want Iraq to become the second Shia Islamic Republic, so representatives of the International Muslim Brotherhood (Sunni) approached the US

Administrator in Iraq to offer cooperation, which included efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States had to give greater emphasis to democratization than military management in Iraq and had to prevent breaking Iraq into Switzerland-like cantons, which would give the Shia the upper hand.

Since it was better to have peace with Israel and a democratizing Iraq than an Iran-Iraq Shia juggernaut, Sunni hardliners agreed to meet secretly with Israeli hardliners. The US-Swiss insistence that the meetings begin where the moderates left off in the Geneva Accords delayed the negotiations, but in retrospect turned out to be the only workable framework for them.

Regardless of what historians finally credit as the key trigger for peace, the water negotiations provided a consistent side channel for keeping hope alive. Since water is the most universally recognized human need and the negotiations were more focused than general peace negotiations, they helped to build confidence among the Israelis and Palestinians that peace might be possible. For example, the section of the Wall that enclosed the western mountain aquifer that provides Palestinians in the West Bank with over half their water was rebuilt as a result of the water negotiations. This confidence spilled over into other negotiations in the region, but when these became deadlocked, the Middle East focus returned to the water meetings to restore trust. As water agreements were reached, the Arab Integrated Water Resources Management Network, USAID, the Arab-Israeli joint Regional Center for Research on Desalination in Oman, and UNDP quickly implemented authorized programs, such as emergency water relief systems in Gaza.

The first major success in increasing water supply was the agreement that dramatically accelerated construction of reverse osmosis desalination plants to counter future water scarcity. A commitment to finance the Dead Sea canal and a desalination plant at the Dead Sea to produce water for equal distribution to Jordan, Israel, and Palestine was the first partnership of Israeli technology and Arab oil money. Another agreement followed to build an aqueduct, an irrigation system, and a network of channels from Turkey to Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. These and subsequent projects have made water available to all today through a common infrastructure for the region. Joint Arab-Israeli educational institutions were established to focus on hydrology, hydraulic engineering, and systems for the transport and distribution of the desalinized water. This also provided the confidence to begin building new oil pipelines from the Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, with an outlet in Palestine and another in Israel, which will reduce dependence on geographic pinch points in the Gulf and the Red Sea and will help Palestinian economic development.

Meanwhile, many of the 4.1 million registered Palestinian refugees were in desperate need of education. The collapse of the USSR, the expulsion of Palestinians from Arab Gulf countries, and the closing of most PLO institutions after their forced departure from Lebanon in 1983 meant that access to secondary, informal, and higher education became more and more difficult for refugees. At the same time, the UN Relief and Works Agency had less money to provide refugees with basic services, let alone quality education. The construction of the Wall further complicated access to education, so tele-education seemed the only reasonable course. With UN and EU endorsements, the Palestinian Authority and Palestinian Diaspora gained the political will to raise the initial money from wealthy Arab donor states and personalities to create tele-education programs and initiate an education Peace Corps to support tele-education in refugee camps. As these programs began to show signs of success, such as students getting scholarships to universities and others creating on-line businesses, Israel—as a sign of good will—contributed to expanded operations. This triggered matching funds from Arab countries.

Al-Quds Open University of Palestine and the Open University of Israel jointly implemented the unofficial tele-education program with help from several NGOs and UNESCO, enlisting renowned educators and providing new tele-curricula that emphasized respect and hope for the future. Tele-education reached more women and taught the next generation the value of individual efforts to

succeed, since their education was self-motivated and self-paced. Tele-education joint learning activities among Palestinians and Israelis broke down stereotypes, led to enough trust to organize some face-to-face meetings, and increased the commitment and ability to achieve peace in the region.

These developments led to the Great Peace March organized by youth groups. Some of the youth leaders came from the tele-education classes; others were alumni of the Peace Child projects that quietly brought teenagers from both sides together over the years. The youth groups called on the political leaders of both sides to end the hostilities and sign the peace accords, the same accords that later some of these "next generation" leaders would implement as civil servants in the Governments of Palestine and Israel.

While the Great Peace March was being covered by Aljazeera, CNN, and the BBC, the President of Katun stunned the UN Security Council in a closed session by advocating a medical solution: "Diplomatic, military, political, and economic strategies to make peace in the Middle East have failed. It is time to take a public health approach," he said. "All countries have processes to take mentally ill people into custody when they are a danger to themselves and or others, and give them tranquilizers against their will. If so for one person, then why not for two? If so for two, then why not for many?" The Security Council Members could not understand where the President was going with this. He continued, "Clearly much of the Middle East is mentally ill; therefore, I propose that the Security Council authorize a UN force to put tranquilizers in the air and water systems of the conflicting parties until peace is achieved."

No one knew what to say. Was he serious? The silence in the Security Council became unbearable. Finally the President of Katun said: "You know I am right and you know it will not happen. So I propose instead that a UN Peacekeeping Force be equipped with tranquilizer bullets, sticky foam, and other non-lethal weapons and be deployed in areas of conflict or potential conflict." The President pulled out a piece of paper and read: "This UN Force would:

- Enforce the UN General Assembly resolution that clearly defined the borders.
- Oversee the Israeli withdrawal from all areas occupied by it since the 1967 war.
- Protect the Quartet's pollsters who are assessing Israeli and Palestinian views on the proposed borders to make sure that the agreements would survive regime changes within Israel and Palestine.
- Enforce the agreement on religious rights that guaranteed access to holy places in Jerusalem to all creeds."

The UN Security Council approved the recommendations. Within weeks of the arrival of the UN Peacekeepers, SERESER's operations were expanded, all Arab states formally recognized Israel as an independent state, and the UN General Assembly welcomed Palestine as the newest UN member state. Hardliners on both sides of the secret talks in Switzerland insisted that some public process be created to "set the record straight," and through SERESER Archbishop Tutu was called in to help establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission, instead of the streets, became the focus of much of the heated debate. And like the water negotiations, the commission became a moderating influence to reduce the violence and to focus on issues of justice. "Town meetings" were held throughout the region to discuss the UN's role. The Israeli delegation in the hardliners' negotiations addressed the Israeli resistance to UN Peacekeepers by getting an agreement that UN forces would have a US commander.

Even before these political agreements were completed, the UN Special Coordinator's Office, or UNSCO, brought together the leaders of the Palestinian Elected Local Councils to design a

comprehensive social and economic development process that included self-help participatory planning for local development in the Palestinian territories. People began to assume responsibility for developing their own communities, while seeking external technical and financial assistance.

UNSCO, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and SERESER, helped bring in external assistance for this development process by calling representatives together from different international agencies (World Bank, IMF, EU, USAID, UNDP, and international NGOs) and the local coordinating committees representing the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee, the Local Aid Coordination Committee, and several Palestinian NGOs. Business and religious leaders were also included. New Palestinian leaders who emerged from inter-religious dialogues and the water negotiations earned the respect of their Israeli counterparts, making cooperation possible.

Palestinian Elected Local Councils received training from Shrouk (the local participatory planning and development process in Egypt) on how to mobilize local groups of people, help them assess their resources, and plan their future. With UNSCO guidance, this self-help approach attracted resources and expertise. Some Palestinian youth from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Canada returned to mobilize local Palestinian youth grassroots programs that were financed and launched by wealthy US and Arab millionaires who saw the benefits of bringing young people who had been fully exposed to democratic principles and the Information Age into direct contact with their Palestinian peers. The self-help participatory program ran in juxtaposition with tele-education to supplement each other, and the education Peace Corps and self-help volunteers worked together.

As the local participatory planning processes became more popular, their results became connected to development budget decision making of the Palestinian Authority and SERESER. As Palestinian young people began to see results, their faith in their future increased; this in turn focused their energy on development of their communities. As a result, Islamic militia groups found fewer volunteers. Natural local leaders emerged throughout the process in each community. Those leaders fed the evolution of representative government based on liberal economic principles. Regular transactions between Palestinians and government officials made the government more accountable to its citizens and provided a trust-building mechanism that was critical to the evolution of democratic culture.

Probably the most difficult issue other than the return of refugees was jurisdiction of Jerusalem. Proposals to declare Jerusalem an international city, establish a UN Trusteeship, and even set up time-sharing arrangements were debated. Finally it became clear that Israel would agree to return to its 1967 borders, including those within Jerusalem, and the Palestinians would agree to give up the right to return to Israel except in special humanitarian situations. All refugees did have the right to return to the new nation of Palestine. All agreed that a plan for peacefully sharing holy sites had to guarantee free access to these areas that would recognize the religious rights of all creeds.

But it was not until a unique process created a time-sharing agreement that UN Peacekeepers could oversee the arrangement. A preliminary "calendar-location matrix" was proposed, which eventually identified all the possible "time slots" and holy sites. It included the times of day when the highest demand locations coincided with the highest demand times of year. Parties who wanted access to the various date/location combinations in the matrix were given the opportunity to rank their preferences from highest to lowest. Each party rank ordered all the cells in the matrix. Initially UNSCO and then SERESER (selected by agreement by all the parties) used the rankings to assign a party to each of the date-location slots. Statements by the respected leadership of the three religions supported the idea and accepted that only a lay administration of the matrix process could lead to an eventual agreement.

There were conflicts, but SERESER used its judgment to complete the matrix. Some seemingly impossible impasses were solved by giving jurisdiction for alternating years. Others were resolved by the special lay committee for ongoing disputes. Once the master calendar-location matrix was filled in, it was made public for final commentary. With minor modifications, the final Jerusalem Matrix is still used today.

One factor that helped heal the region was the Arabic television series "Salaam-Shalom" about two girls—one Palestinian and one Israeli. They met in a peace camp and made a pact to counter the hatred in their communities. Although the Peace Child exchanges between Palestinians and Israelis included only a small number of teenagers, it did stimulate conversations on both sides that added to the belief that peace might be possible one day. The idea was approved by the hardliners' talks in Switzerland, which, it was rumored, even suggested several story ideas.

Each week the girls on the television show confronted seemingly impossible obstacles, and each week they overcame them with extraordinary compassion and intelligence. Television sets across the world showed how the girls used cell phones connected to the Internet to create mini swarms of sympathizers who ran to the area and overwhelmed an impasse. "Copycat" peace swarms began to appear in the real world. Young people armed with their "peace phones" started to call everyone in their areas to calm emotions at checkpoints and other areas of confrontation.

Almost immediately after the first few peace swarms, a Peace Phone Internet weblog and photo gallery was set up, opening a worldwide window on the process and creating a near-instantaneous "global fair witness" to the outcomes of each swarm. The "before" and "after" photos on the weblog, together with the weekly "Salaam-Shalom" television shows, added global pressure for more rational negotiations that finally drew the lines for peace.

Radio talk shows were alive with discussions about each TV program. The one most vigorously discussed had the girls creating a peace swarm to support Archbishop Tutu's suggestions on how to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As "Salaam-Shalom" was recognized as a successful television series, an adults' version followed that had politicians and other leaders challenged to solve more sophisticated problems of balancing peace and justice. Dismantling settlements in the West Bank nearly caused a civil war. The Wall took a longer time. Both transitions were helped by the active involvement of the media and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

With the evolution of democratic processes in the region and continued security guarantees from the United States, Israel surprised many in the Middle East when it ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a gesture of long-term good will and allowed IAEA inspectors to verify their dismantling of nuclear weapons. These actions led even the skeptics to nod their heads and say that this time maybe it really would be a lasting peace.

Scenario 2. The Open City

The white smoke signaled the election of a new pope. He assumed the office with humility and fervor. His priority, he announced, was facilitating peace around the world, particularly in the Middle East. He began his mission by addressing the Jerusalem question. Although his advisors cautioned you can only blunt your authority, its unsolvable, he maintained that God had given him this mission and as far as he and the church were concerned this took priority over politics. The fact that it is a difficult mission, he said, only raises the stakes of the test. Is it more difficult than the tests that God gave Jesus, Moses, or Abraham? The cardinals were mute but whispered among themselves, the church will be in chaos

He personally called the leaders of the Jewish orthodox and reformed sects in Israel and their counterparts in the Muslim world, as well as Buddhist and Hindu leaders. (The non-involved religious leaders were invited to provide added credibility to the proceedings.) The new US president and EU leaders gave secret and subtle signals that they endorsed such a meeting. Deft use of the media particularly live interviews on CNN and 60 Minutes made it hard for the religious leaders who were invited by the pope to refuse to meet and talk.

When the plans were made public, Muslim hardliners called this a new Christian crusade. Jewish right-wingers were also not very interested in the views of the Catholic Church, recalling the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem during the Crusades.

Yet the meeting plans continued and the religious leaders met on neutral ground, at an isolated ranch in New Zealand, and called their historic session Religious Leaders for Peace, or RLP. That the Chief Rabbi of Israel and the Grand Mufti met in the same room was viewed as a worthy accomplishment and a milestone in its own right on the way to peace, since attending the meeting carried the very real risk of being ostracized by conservatives in their own camps.

At the first meeting, the initial coolness worsened a bit after each member justified his or her position as God-given. Then the pope said, Yes. God has blessed each of you as you have said, and he has also given us brains with which to reason, and that is what I pray we can do. This issue of Jerusalem pertains to religious law and custom; it should be above secular self-interests and politics and we can at least begin to discuss how to resolve it. It is too simple to say that Jerusalem can be a city-state like the Vatican; there are three religions involved here. We must ask God for guidance.

Perhaps the meeting went ahead because Jews, Palestinians, and Arabs were war-weary; perhaps the governments realized that the possibility of progress without some help from outside was not good; perhaps it was the general belief that the issue had progressed to the point of being much too important to be left to governments; perhaps the rise of interest in religion around the world caused people to be open to considering a higher way.

The religious leaders began with points of agreement: free access to the holy sites should be guaranteed. How ludicrous it would be, they agreed, if one religion were to attempt to deny access to anyone of another religion who wanted to pay homage there. The plan must be beyond political, ideological, and economic interests. It grew from these seeds of agreement. Jerusalem should be an open city under no nations sole jurisdiction, but under religious protection and authority. They recognized that the problem of Jerusalem does not affect just Israel or a future state of Palestine but is of global concern.

Their proclamation recognized that Jews, Muslims, Christians, and other faiths have to work toward a sharing of Gods gifts.

But the question before the group was how to proceed.

- One participant pointed out the UN had already laid the foundation. In late 2003, a UNESCO conference had noted that two of its resolutions had strong support from both Israeli and Palestinian representatives.
- The UNESCO participants reiterated their support for the initiative taken by the director-general to prepare a comprehensive plan of action to safeguard the old city of Jerusalem (al-quds); and invite him to send as soon as possible, in cooperation with the concerned parties, a technical mission and to establish, within a year, a committee of experts entrusted with proposing, on an exclusively scientific and technical basis, guidelines for this plan of action.

- Several participants argued that each group Christians, Jews, and Muslims should have definitive borders in the old city based on their history and tradition.
- Other participants focused on governance issues: a subgroup suggested that the city have a constitution and a representative administration, involving the three religions but also including a UN representative with a double vote for five years or until normalization without the UN presence could be achieved.
- Another acrimonious issue: some of the delegates felt the Temple Mount should be an open area not belonging to any jurisdiction; others said that the open city idea would not work because of problems of security, customs control, and so on. They argued that the UN failed in 1947 to enforce its plan for internationalization of Jerusalem, and it was not plausible that such a plan would succeed today. It was an idea whose time came and went.
- Finally, some people said they wanted no part of the UN at all but suggested another international organization be created for these purposes to establish clear goals with respect from all the actors and with plain authority to carry out the results of the negotiations and make them permanent.

When the debate seemed endless and agreement elusive as ever, the pope moved the group for prayer at the holy sites, at the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, and at the graves of Palestinians, and asked that the religious leaders pray for forgiveness of violence, for wisdom, for the spark of leadership, and for the insight needed to form a plan. It was a poignant and catalytic moment. A plan was drafted and the leaders pledged to maintain contact and work under their God for peace.

The Religious Leaders for Peace report that emerged from the meeting was directed to the Secretary-General and asked that the UN General Assembly enact a resolution to declare Jerusalem an open city of a new design and that the governments of affected nations support the plan with required legislation. The UN's role would be codified by the UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Under this plan, Jerusalem's leader would be elected every six years by the General Assembly, with the rule that no sect would have control for more than one consecutive term. Terrorism in the area would be dealt with harshly.

Publication of the RLP conference recommendations evoked widespread public acclaim and a few pockets of dissent and grumbles of sell-out and worse, but it was clear that the weight of public sentiment had begun to build an unprecedented momentum for peace. Even the most extreme factions felt the ground shift under them; what God wanted was now redefined.

Religious leaders around the world discussed the potential consequences of RLP. Although they did not put it so directly, the mullahs, mashaikhs, and orthodox rabbis in the Middle East faced a central issue of preserving power and face.

For the mullahs, there were new arguments. Muslim believers had long said that all of Palestine was given by Allah to the Muslims. Yet a holy man said the Jews had a right to be in the Middle East as surely as we ourselves do. The holy Quran tells us of the Promised Land for Jews.

It says that God had promised the Holy Land to Moses and his followers on their way out of Egypt (the Quran 5:2021), so Muslims cannot casually dismiss the concept of the Promised Land. Muslims need to develop methods to attract Jews to come back in a way that is not threatening to Arabs and Muslims. Imagine if Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan could develop policies and provisions that say:

We would welcome any Jew who wants to come to this part of the world, being part of the promised land, to come and live, we'll give you citizenship; you want to buy a house, buy land, fine; you want to have your relatives come live or visit, fine; do your work, live with your community, build your synagogue, have your own laws to govern your family and community life. But do not threaten a national entity. And come to any part, come to Syria, come to Egypt, come to Iraq, and come to Jordan, whatever you believe the promised land to be.

Such a solution would be based on a religious understanding of God's promises to Jews and Muslims alike. And he added: without intending to be cynical, we can expect in return from the Jews an equal admission of the right of our displaced people to return to their homes as well.

Turmoil. Chaos. Other Muslim clerics interpreted the holy word in their own ways but no matter what spin was put on the proposition, Quran 5:2021 was clear enough and could not be rationalized away. Terrorism needed to be declared a religious crime. The threat of a fatwa for those who disagreed helped end the suicide bombings. Some extremists said that they would continue, that violence worked, that the holy Quran could be read and interpreted in different ways, but the die was cast and the momentum for peace built.

In Israel, orthodox rabbis who steered the far right were at a loss. By providing a religious basis for the Jews to exist in the area, the Muslims had, in a single stroke, eroded the political power of the Israeli far right. Check, maybe checkmate. The rabbis issued this statement:

Jews accept that the way to fulfill the promise of God does not include depriving others of their homes; and if Muslims and Arabs recognize the sincere attachment of Jews to the promised land and make serious efforts to accommodate that promise & we are in for a deep peace, not a superficial one that has been broken, stepped upon, and tarnished, for 55 years. We vow to extend the Jewish idea of the sanctity of the home to others and will help bring about a future that makes homes, all homes, holy and safe.

The idea that started in New Zealand among religious leaders took on political reality: the retaliatory bulldozing stopped. Religious leaders urged that seek-and-destroy missions be put on hold, and they were.

The fanatics did not yield immediately. From one side: We will bomb until Israel topples. And from the other: We will retaliate with all our strength; we were weak once and it cost 6 million lives. Yet slowly the power base of the extremists eroded as it became clear that support was disappearing, and they gradually became irrelevant. In Israel and the future state of Palestine, a movement toward secularism accelerated.

Against the background of improving conditions (removal of the Wall, a workable social net for Palestinians, ending of the killings), education of young Muslims changed. The schools that once taught hatred for the Jews moderated, turning to if not enthusiastic tolerance, then at least an acceptance of laissez faire a reasonable first step for moderates on both sides. The schoolbook texts damning Israel were withdrawn; in their place were books teaching tolerance and the positive elements of each religion's work in the region. This so-called Cordova program was launched by three Arab countries (including Syria and Egypt) and was based on the successful collaboration of all three religions under Spain's Moorish golden age in the tenth century to teach tolerance, cooperation, and the values of a win-win peaceful world. Exchange programs were extended to provide education for teachers in other settings: Israelis in Arab universities, Arabs in Israel. Schools in the region were created to teach both Arab and Israeli children. To change from hate to tolerance could not be instantaneous, but it began with the hope that the new generation would do better than the old and would carry visions of peace into adulthood.

With RLP, the UN mission, the diminished teaching of intolerance, the acceptance by many Muslims of the idea of a Jewish presence in the Middle East, the end of suicide bombings and the retaliation they evoked, and the softening of the teachings that had inflamed rather than calmed, all that remained was to cement the nervous peace that existed.

With violence from both sides almost at an end, a tenuous ad hoc confidence was built from the bottom up through hundreds of thousands of projects and business ventures that involved both Muslims and Israelis. The projects were large and small (from agricultural cooperatives to jointly owned shops), local and national (from new schools open to all students to lower import and export restrictions between Israel and Arab countries). And with this improved spirit of confidence, the ventures grew in number and significance, economic development grew, jobs became plentiful, unemployment dropped, and in a marvelous demonstration of social feedback, nascent prosperity bred more confidence and cooperation. Travel into and out of Israel was normalized, controlled only by passports and visas. A NAFTA-like free trade zone was established (covering Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan) to improve the competitiveness of the region in the global economy, to decrease dependence on outside big powers, and to help transform domestic economies. In addition, expatriate communities of Jews and Arabs established functional ties aimed at making this new pan-Middle East a reality. Through investment, leadership, and pressure, expatriates became a powerful force that moved the process forward to the benefit of their nations and of their nation's businesses, economies, and people.

Outside observers marveled at how the need for employees eradicated the prior need for travel restrictions. It was only possible, they said, when the end to suicide bombings and retaliation was a credible fact. Some years ago, someone had said, End the suicide bombings and the response to them and everything is possible. He was right.

A joint project sponsored by international Christian aid agencies, Arab oil sheiks, and Jews around the world contributed not only to the elimination of poverty in the region but also to growing religious and cultural understanding.

A special Israeli-Palestinian fund was also established for reconciliation; thanks to this fund, victims of torture and arrests and the families of people killed by the army and terrorists of both parties obtained compensation. It would have been too much to hope that all violence ceased as if a switch were thrown to move from darkness to light; even in the most peaceful setting there are violent people. And so it was in the Middle East. But now nations and their people disavowed isolated acts and labeled them inhumane and counter-religious.

In a year of growing economic cooperation, an Israeli-Palestinian commission was appointed to review the status of refugees. They negotiated an agreement specifying a particular number of Palestinians who would have the right to return to Israel and of Israelis who could remain in the Palestinian areas. Israel argued that this limitation in the number of migrants was in fact no different from any country setting immigration limits. Palestinians responded by saying that Israeli limits would keep people from the locations of their birth and their families. The Israelis were clearly concerned about being outvoted by the immigrants (Palestinians called them repatriates) in their democratic society. The issue promised to be inimical to the process, but compromise was finally reached by accepting a limit based on census data that recorded ethnicity and by restricting the vote to people who had lived in the country for more than seven years. In addition, should a Palestinian state be established, Israeli settlers in Palestinian areas and Palestinians living in Israel would be given the opportunity for dual citizenship.

Post-Arafat, post-Sharon politicians followed their vocal populations. A historic proposal came to the UN from Israel, based on discussions and contributions of Israeli and Palestinian constituents. There was skepticism about requesting a role for the UN, but in fact there was nowhere else that this proposal could be made. It rested on the tradeoff between the need for Israeli security and the need for a permanent Palestinian state. Israel agreed to withdraw from all areas it had

occupied since the 1967 war, to close appropriate settlements, and to cede these areas to the new state of Palestine. Israeli settlers in the areas would be given dual citizenship. It called for the free and open recognition of an independent Israel by all Arab states, with a sovereign right to exist in perpetuity. From the Palestinian point of view, the recommendation clearly defined the borders of the newly proposed state (roughly as in the Geneva accords). Since the Palestinians had participated in the definition of the resolution, it was clear that the recommended borders would be acceptable. The resolution also called for enforcement by the UN (a much debated point) and defined sanctions and penalties for violation of the provisions of the resolution. In a move never seen before but perhaps reflecting a pattern for the future, the resolution was ratified by a plebiscite, helping to ensure that when the agreement was accepted by the UN it would be supported by people in these countries.

Extremists on both sides attempted to derail the plebiscite and the agreement and to intimidate people through various atrocities. But these just caused the public to revile extremism even more, and the vote approved the resolution overwhelmingly.

Thanks to the economic boom, the successful peace process, and the growing political culture, both Palestine and Israel became islands of democracy and prosperity. The beneficial influences flowing from them contributed to profound political changes in the Middle East. The situation in Lebanon became much more stable thanks to the return of Palestinian refugees to Palestine and Israel and to the dismantling of militia such as Hezbollah. Muslims and Christians in Lebanon followed the good example of Palestine and confirmed the peace treaty; Lebanon became the prosperous country it used to be.

And the mullahs, mashaikhs, and rabbis, reflecting on the events since the RLP conference, said it was Gods destiny. The rest was details. Inshallah.

Scenario 3. Dove

In Israel, it started with a simple idea: end the retaliatory violence. The plan was code-named Dove. Israeli leaders debated the possibility in secret; the debate occasionally became public for a short while in the Knesset, but by and large it was secret. The idea of Dove was to turn world opinion, possibly even the preponderance of Palestinian and Arab opinion, against the idea of suicide bombings. The hawks of the argument said, There are only two responses to the violence of bombings: Turn the other cheek until they tire of killing us, or An eye for an eye. The Talmud teaches the eye for an eye approach; our public and the world will think us weak if we abandon it; the enemy will see our turning the other cheek as a sign of capitulation. We must continue to respond even though it is a dark tunnel we go down. Their opponents said, But in history, an eye for an eye was meant to limit retaliation, not escalate it: so that a small injury only evoked a small response. We have tried the club and as you say it has only led us down the dark tunnel where our only alternative is stronger force. We drive them into a corner with our escalating retaliation. If we were to just stop unilaterally announce it the world would see the Palestinians in a new light. Now they are seen by many people as freedom fighters simply because we respond. If we stopped they would soon be seen for the terrorists they are. And perhaps if we stopped, moderate Muslims would rally and take the initiative to press for peace on their side.

While that secret Israeli debate was going on, Islamist extremists had their own secret debate. The coincidence in timing was extraordinary perhaps it was simultaneous exhaustion on both sides that led to these secret internal discussions. The Islamist hawks argued for increasing the scale of their activities, moving from high-explosive missions to other lethal forms that would involve more people and thus become even more visible, frightening, and persuasive to the Israelis. The forms that might be used were obvious enough and easily available: from chemical

and radioactive toxins to small nuclear weapons. They said: Don't the Israelis know that suicide bombing is our only effective weapon? They must realize that scale is important to our cause. Just consider how effective the operation in New York was in disrupting the West and changing the nature of the conflict. We brought it home to them. Our cause is now on the minds of all people around the world. It unleashed immense forces that can only lead to our victory. Measure our success by the West's frustration in Afghanistan and Iraq, by the spread of global terrorism, by the impotence of the UN. We must keep faith in our ultimate victory.

Their opponents in this argument were radical in the opposite sense. They said: Consider what you have said. Our actions have wakened the sleeping giant. Libya has capitulated. UN inspections are starting in Iran. We are hiding in Afghanistan and Iraq. Does this lead to our goal? Does this help us to establish our own safe homeland and the condemnation of Israel for its misdeeds? The response: How you have changed, brother. We used to say it was our mission to eliminate Israel and take back our homeland, now you're willing to settle for condemnation.

Yes, perhaps this argument is a bit different from before, but it recognizes a reality Israel will not be eradicated. The West will not permit it. Do you not see how our present course works to the disadvantage of establishing our own homeland? It is costing us the best and brightest young people who could be the leaders of that country. If we desist, if we change tactics, then who will be seen as the aggressors? Who will fare better in any negotiations? What excuse will their Prime Minister then have for breaking our homes and killing our people? The response: But can we stop the suicide bombing even if we wished? Would we have to gun down our own people? The question hung in the air.

So each side had its reasons for wanting to stop and turn to a new path but, like the sorcerers apprentice, the momentum carried the bombings and escalating retaliations on and on.

Then an unexpected event changed the tide:

Israeli Refuseniks Say They Will Not Participate in Bombing Attacks

Israeli press, public, and politicians condemn 27 pilots as unfit to serve

JERUSALEM - Twenty-seven Israeli reservist pilots last week joined the Refusenik movement, saying they would not participate in bombing attacks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which often injure civilians. We refuse to participate in Air Force attacks on civilian populations, the pilots said in a petition delivered to the head of the air force, Maj-Gen Dan Halutz. We refuse to continue harming innocent civilians.

Last week's Refuseniks are part of a small but vocal movement opposing Israel's policy of targeted killings, in which helicopters and planes drop bombs or fire missiles to kill terrorists hiding in civilian areas.

This was part of a peace movement small but vocal, Reuters said, not generally known outside of Israel. In fact, moderates in both the Palestinian and Israeli camps had been in contact for some time. They talked on an Internet peace site, usually using pseudonyms; they said peace was achievable, a remarkable statement to be made when killing and retribution were all around them. History, they said, will condemn us for not taking a position and acting on our moral convictions. Life as it is today is unacceptable.

The movement was visible outside of the region. The idea that moderates might gain power and that this new force might help bring peace was enticing. The unspoken question at the UN, in Washington, in London, and everywhere people of good will searched for peace was, What can be done to encourage this movement? Within Israel, within the ranks of the Palestinians, there

was opposition, of course. Peace movements such as Mothers for Peace in Israel had come and gone were times different now, would one killing, one murderous bomb, one ill-conceived assassination tip the scale? Some hoped it would; some feared it would. At the UN, the newly established Gandhi award recognized the moral courage required to call for moderation. Because it could make the recipients targets, it was given anonymously, with the announcement delayed until peace was achieved. The United Nations established an Academy of Non-violence as a permanent institution. The Refuseniks, who were arrested for resistance against military authority, were adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International. A wide-scale movement for their liberation was initiated, and finally they were released from military prisons. Their leader was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, but the principal reason for progress was that each side could say: See, there is a partner on the other side.

The refusal movement came at the same time the politicians were searching for a way to change course. These forces came together and steps, at first tenuous, moved the violence toward peace. Following the practices of Gandhi and King, the movement grew and, in echoes of the Vietnam era, when dissent grew in the United States and politics followed, dissent in Israel and among Palestinians became mainstream.

Here's what happened next. It was like a chess game. Leadership on both Israeli and Palestinian sides changed as a result of many factors: increasing external political pressure, new elections, aging of the principals, and political infighting all played a role. Popular support grew on both sides, spreading from the vocal Refuseniks to the broader population. With the new leadership in place and the movement toward peace swirling around them, the game moved forward. The Israelis got a guarantee that the bombing would stop and the instigators would be arrested and punished. The Palestinians got an ironclad agreement that the Israelis would withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, end building new settlements (existing settlements could remain, with dual citizenship for their populations), and stop the retaliatory raids. The Palestinians called it an end to occupation. The Israelis called it a victory for peace.

Within months, the Israelis negotiated a series of treaties and agreements not only with the Palestinian Authority but with essentially all Arab states, stating that Israel had a right to exist and that there would henceforth be a state of non-aggression in the area. Palestinians and neighboring states welcomed Israel's agreement to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in return for their own promise to remain non-nuclear and allow international inspections under the UN.

Other problems still had to be resolved in this game of give and take. First was jurisdiction over Jerusalem (eventually it became an open city, with its own democratic government, open to all religions, with responsibility to guard and protect all holy sites). Second was the problem of Palestinians who wanted to return to Israel. Israel perceived that an avalanche of migrants would upset the political structure; as a result, immigration quotas were established. Lebanon, Jordan, and, to an extent, Egypt and Syria, helped by absorbing some of the migrants. Cynics searched for hidden agendas but peace was in the air. The extreme Muslim minority became invisible and this was a matter of concern, but conspiracy theorists aside, the silence was welcome.

As this give and take progressed, both the United States and the EU stayed back from direct participation but helped in other ways. Foreign capital flows into the region were encouraged through trade and capital incentives. The United States mounted a diplomatic campaign to defuse Arab financial support of the militants and it slanted its support for Israel away from arms. The rationale for these policy shifts was simple: for a constructive Israeli-Palestinian process to unfold, outsiders needed to stop feeding the fire. Some politicians wanted to help the process along in other ways (and reap some political benefit), but wiser heads prevailed and the two parties were largely left to work out the agreements themselves.

When it was clear that the chess game was evolving, foreign capital did flow into the area, as had been hoped. New businesses were established, and unemployment among Palestinians dropped sharply. It was a self-fulfilling cycle: the move toward peace sparked the environment for peace. With new large-scale water projects, large portions of the Negev Desert were made fertile and habitable.

And the crown jewel: both parties presented a formal joint statement to the UN Security Council, declaring that they considered resolutions 194, 242, and 338 fully realized and asked that the UN monitor for a time the progress and adherence to the agreements. When the UN agreed, bells of peace that seemed so tentative at first sounded long and deeply.