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Introduction

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Cultural Analysis

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The United States Institute of Peace's project on cross-cultural nego-
tiations is a long-standing investment by the Institute in improving
the capacity of the United States and other countries for peaceful
settlement of disputes. It confronts one of the enduring challenges of inter-
national conflict resolution: no matter what interests the two sides in a nego-
tiation might share, no matter how high the stakes for successful agreement,
talks can fail—or produce agreements that fail—simply because cultural
differences preclude clear communication and shared understanding be-
tween the negotiators. The Institute's interest in this issue began with Senior
Fellow Raymond Cohen, whose 1988 tenure at the Institute resulted in
Negotiating across Cultures, a second edition of which was published in
1997 and has become a defining work in the field of intercultural negotia-
tion. The Institute's commitment to the topic was strengthened by Richard
Solomon, who became its president in 1993. As a scholar at the RAND
Corporation, Solomon prepared the classified study that later became
Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests through "Old Friends."
The book was originally issued by RAND in 1995 and was republished
by the Institute in an expanded edition in 1999. The Institute has now
published a total of seven books in a series on cross-cultural negotiation,
including studies on the negotiating behavior of Japan, North Korea, Rus-
sia, Germany, and France, as well as Kevin Avruch's theoretical study,
Culture and Conflict Resolution.[1]

In exploring how cultural differences affect international interactions, this Institute series has repeatedly struggled with definitions of culture, one of the most widely contested concepts in the social science literature. Raymond Cohen sees culture as "human software," as "a grammar for organizing reality, for imparting meaning to the world." As such, he noted, culture "is made up of ideas, meanings, conventions, and assumptions."[2] Cohen ascribes to culture three key features: it is a quality of society, not of individuals; it is acquired through socialization; and it subsumes "every area of social life."[3]

But Kevin Avruch notes that culture can take on either of two meanings, alternatives that have entirely opposite implications for the study of culture in negotiations. "Generic culture," Avruch writes, "directs our attention to universal attributes of human behavior—to 'human nature.' Local culture directs our attention to diversity, difference, and particularism." Ignoring differences in local culture, Avruch points out, means that "negotiation looks the same everywhere. But sometimes you just have to speak louder and slower." This simplified concept of international negotiation is precisely what the study of cross-cultural negotiations is meant to combat by improving theories of negotiation through the introduction of local cultural differences as a relevant variable.

Using a concept of "local culture," however, carries its own dangers, Avruch cautions: "[T]o ignore generic culture is . . . to lose sight of the possibility of intertranslatability across local cultures," to give up on the possibility of reaching intercultural understandings through negotiations.[4] From Avruch, then, we can see that understanding the proper place of local culture in the negotiations process requires modesty, but also a keen eye for differences in meaning that negotiators themselves might well miss in their drive to reach what they believe is common agreement.

But even defining what Avruch would call local culture, cultures specific to different social groups (or, for our subject matter, nations), is a tricky and much-debated business. For the purposes of this volume, we shall set out culture as *the product of the experiences of individuals within a given social group, including its representations in images, narratives, myths, and patterns of behavior (traditions), and the meanings of those representations as transmitted among the group's members over time and through experience.* This definition allows, importantly, for individuals within a group to be differently situated by class, race, or other social

attributes, such that identifiable subcultures can exist within a broader recognized culture.[5]

In analyzing the influence of culture and cultural differences on peace negotiations, we are concerned more particularly with *political culture,* which Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba famously define as "attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system."[6] But given that the groups we are concerned with (Israelis and Palestinians) are ethnonational groups, their political cultures are heavily shaped by their ethnonational identities. For that reason, the narratives of each group's origins, of its relations with its historical rival and other national groups, and of its modern political dilemmas are of particular interest and attention for us in the analysis that follows.

In emphasizing the ethnonational content of Israeli and Palestinian political cultures, we do not mean to exclude other elements that make up their cultures, nor do we mean to reduce the political cultures of these two groups to the meanings of their iconic symbols (say, Masada for Israelis or Deir Yassin for Palestinians).[7] But the study of ethnic conflicts shows that the symbolic ingredients of ethnic identity, and particularly the status over time of issues, individuals, or places that symbolize something important about an ethnic group's national narrative, heavily color such communities' political culture. Indeed, ethnic identity and its symbolic manifestations have been shown to affect groups' perceptions of issues central to their conflict, such as the prerequisites of security, the intentions of their adversary, and the definition and purposes of political power and sovereignty.[8] Thus, in an identity conflict such as the Palestinian-Israeli one, the cultural variables that complicate the negotiating process affect not only the communications between the negotiators but many other aspects of the negotiations process as well, suffusing, ultimately, even the substantive issues—land, money, political power—that are themselves under discussion.

Culture in the Oslo Peace Process

Because culture so colors the mutual perceptions and interactions of ethnic groups in conflict, it would be simplistic in the extreme to argue that cross-cultural miscommunications are the main story of culture's importance to the attempt at Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement assessed in this volume.

Furthermore, none of this volume's authors believes that cultural differences between Israelis and Palestinians are the primary cause for the parties' failure to agree on a negotiated solution to their century-old conflict.

The failure of the Oslo process, which ran from 1993 through 2000, has already been dissected in several studies by analysts and by participants in the negotiations.[9] In particular, the failure of the Camp David final-status talks in July 2000 has been the subject of voluminous journalistic and partisan disputation.[10] The existing literature yields a laundry list of potentially blameworthy factors: botched American mediation, inattention to confidence-building measures, a failure to attract Arab and international support, the gradualist structure for the peace process created by the 1993 Oslo agreement, and the personalities of, inter alia, Yasser Arafat, Binyamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, and Bill Clinton. With so many errors and deficiencies to choose from, it is perhaps less remarkable that the Oslo peace process ultimately failed, and more remarkable that any of the negotiations during this period succeeded.

One also need not argue that attention to the influence of culture in inter-ethnic negotiations means assuming that cultural differences themselves present gargantuan barriers to agreement. As William Quandt points out in chapter 2, all international negotiations involve overcoming differences in communication to achieve common agreement. A determinist view of culture's influence on the negotiating process would suggest that most, if not all, international negotiations should fail, an empirically unsustainable claim. Avruch's reminder of the existence of a generic human culture also serves as a corrective to such an analytic error.

Moreover, it is not mutual cultural ignorance that we claim has complicated the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. All three of my coauthors emphasize, in fact, that Israelis and Palestinians are not cultural strangers but share an intimate acquaintance and mutual history that is nonetheless a source of great controversy and mutual grievance. Over the course of their century of conflict, those Israelis and Palestinians who have engaged in negotiations have evolved sophisticated appreciations of each other's national narrative. The Oslo process began with mutual recognition by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of each other's fundamental relevance and legitimacy as the political embodiment of Jewish and Palestinian national claims, respectively. But this sensitivity has proved insufficient to enable the sides to reach a negotiated agreement. Our research

suggests that one factor contributing to this insufficiency is that each community's collective pathologies, developed over the course of the conflict, continue to shape and in many ways constrain the negotiators' well-developed style of interaction.

Rather than presenting culture as a definitive explanatory variable, the authors of this volume are arguing for the relevance of culture to the broader story of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, beyond the narrow question of face-to-face encounters between negotiators, and for the idea that insights into the intercultural dynamics of the negotiations will provide valuable lessons for future Israeli and Palestinian negotiators and, more broadly, for scholars of negotiation and ethnic conflict.

As the authors in this volume reveal through their detailed analysis of Israeli and Palestinian negotiating styles, culture plays a subtler and more multifaceted role than merely provoking misunderstanding. Cultural factors influenced the assessments and decisions of individual leaders and negotiators, shaped the domestic institutions and political environment in which policy decisions on negotiation were made and carried out, and shaped each party's perception of their relative balance of power and how best to respond to it. Culture's role in this case, and in other negotiations of identity conflicts, is best understood as an intervening variable that operates at different levels, through the impact of cultural identity and cultural categories of thinking on political leaders, on the domestic politics of each side that constrain the negotiations, and on each side's evaluation of the other's beliefs and intentions regarding the conflict being negotiated. This intermediary and multidimensional role for culture will be explored in greater detail in the book's conclusion.

It is in part because of the complications introduced in considering a case of ethnonational conflict, in which cultural identity is at the heart of the dispute under negotiation, that this volume represents a departure from the Institute's previous work on this topic. Previous studies in this series have examined a single country's approach to a variety of negotiations with different partners on different topics. In this volume, we approach the question of national differences in negotiations through the prism of a *dyadic interaction*—the Oslo peace talks between Israel and the PLO. By focusing on a single country's negotiating behavior without reference to its interlocutor, previous studies sometimes ended by reducing the valuation of cultural variables to either-or dichotomies, such as the distinction

between high-context societies (wherein the identity and social position of a negotiator may be more important to interpreting his meaning than the content of his communication) and low-context societies (wherein the content of communication typically trumps its social context).[11] Considering a single nation's cultural behavior in isolation risks essentializing the scholarly view of the society under discussion, and at the extreme can send the analyst in the direction of the "national character" or "modal personality" studies popular several decades ago.[12] Examining a dyadic interaction, in contrast, allows the analyst to examine cultural variables in a relative fashion, preventing reductionism and helping create a spectrum of values for cultural variables to replace the dichotomies still prevalent in the literature.[13] Moreover, examining an interaction between two sides in great detail facilitates thicker description of the cultural context for the negotiations: the way in which cultural factors shape each side's approach to negotiations generally, to their historical relationship with their interlocutors, and to the specific issues under dispute. Finally, studying a single case of negotiation between two national parties reveals how the two national styles interact—a particularly relevant angle when studying negotiations between ethnic groups in conflict, whose national identities and cultural ingredients are interrelated and often defined to a great degree by reference to one another. The dyadic approach reveals, for example, that Israel's habitually forceful, divide-and-rule approach to negotiating might be generally effective with Arab states and outside powers, but spectacularly ineffective when interacting with the Palestinians' culturally, historically, and institutionally determined approach to negotiating with Israel.

This volume roots its discussion of culture's role in a detailed examination of Israeli and Palestinian negotiating behavior from the outset of the secret Oslo talks that led to the Declaration of Principles (signed in Washington, DC, on September 13, 1993), through the Camp David summit in July 2000 and the abortive Taba negotiations that continued almost until the end of Bill Clinton's presidency in early 2001. In chapter 2, William Quandt surveys this history of rapprochement between Israel and the PLO and discusses the international and domestic political factors, most notably U.S. mediation, that facilitated the talks and influenced their progress and ultimate outcome.

In chapter 3, Omar Dajani, a former legal adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team and a former UN mediator, undertakes a study of Palestinian negotiating behavior, which by itself has frequently baffled Israeli inter-

locutors and outside mediators and contributed to Israeli suspicion of Palestinian intentions with respect to peace. Dajani reveals how elements of Palestinian identity and national development have shaped the structure of the Palestinian national movement's leadership, its conduct of the negotiations, and its attitude toward core subjects at issue in the talks, producing an indecisive and dysfunctional policy process within the PLO that crippled its ability to negotiate effectively.

In chapter 4, Aharon Klieman, a distinguished analyst of Israel's international relations, traces the impact on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations of a long-standing cultural clash within the Israeli political elite: a struggle between diplomatic and security subcultures for dominance over Israel's negotiating style and strategy. By limning this battle as it played out within and among Israel's political leadership and as it affected Israeli domestic politics, Klieman reveals how Israelis' communal identity and self-perception relative to their Arab neighbors has deeply and decisively affected the Israeli approach to negotiations with the Palestinians in ways that can only be described as shortsighted and ultimately, in the final status negotiations, counterproductive.

In chapter 5, I draw on the findings of the previous chapters to illustrate culture's influence, as an intervening variable, on the international, domestic, and individual levels of analysis in interethnic negotiations. I show how, in particular, negotiations in identity conflicts such as the Israeli-Palestinian case display an extreme sensitivity to domestic pressures that complicates the two-level game of the negotiating process and raises the bar for success. The chapter also provides some lessons for future negotiators in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and in other ethnic conflicts.

Rather than arguing, as a facile prescription, that intercultural understanding is the missing key that can unlock the door to Israeli-Palestinian peace, this volume suggests that a better understanding by political leaders and negotiators of how culture shapes their operating environment might improve their odds of success the next time Israelis and Palestinians are able to face each other across the negotiating table.

Notes

1. Richard H. Solomon, *Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests through "Old Friends"* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999); Michael Blaker, Paul Giarra, and Ezra Vogel, *Case Studies in Japanese*

Negotiating Behavior (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002); Scott Snyder, *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999); Jerrold L. Schecter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior: Continuity and Transition* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998); W. R. Smyser, *How Germans Negotiate: Logical Goals, Practical Solutions* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003); and Charles Cogan, *French Negotiating Behavior: Dealing with La Grande Nation* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003). The Institute has also turned the spotlight on U.S. diplomats; see *U.S. Negotiating Behavior,* United States Institute of Peace Special Report 94 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, October 2002).

2. Raymond Cohen, *Negotiating across Cultures: International Communication in an Interdependent World,* rev. ed. (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 12.

3. Cohen, *Negotiating across Cultures*, 10.

4. Kevin Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 10.

5. This definition draws heavily on Theodore Schwartz's definition as cited and amended by Avruch in *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, 17–19.

6. Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 13.

7. Masada is the site of a Herodian palace, but more famously of a mass suicide by early-first-century Jewish guerrillas who preferred death to capture by the Romans. Masada is thus a symbol for modern Israelis of resilience and determination in the face of continual besiegement. Deir Yassin was a Palestinian village, about one hundred of whose inhabitants were massacred by Jewish fighters during the 1948 war that established the state of Israel. It is a concrete symbol for Palestinians of the 1948 *nakba* (catastrophe) and of how Zionism's realization was their own victimization.

8. See Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Symbols and Security in Ethnic Conflict: Confidence-Building in the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process, 1993–1995" (PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, 2000), 39–51; Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Mary Kay Gilliland, "Nationalism and Ethnogenesis in the Former Yugoslavia," in *Ethnic Identity: Creation, Conflict, and Accommodation,* ed. Lola Romanucci-Ross and George A. De Vos (Walnut Creek, CA: Sage Publications, 1995) at 203–204; and Stuart Kaufman, "Spiraling to Ethnic War: Elites, Masses, and Moscow in Moldova's Civil War," in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict,* ed. Michael E. Brown, et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 169–199.

9. Third-party accounts (post–Camp David) include Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995–2002,* trans. Susan Fairfield (New York: Other Press, 2003); Robert Rothstein, Moshe Maoz, and Khalil Shikaki, eds., *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: Oslo and the Lessons of Failure—Perspectives, Predicaments, and Prospects* (East Sussex, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2002); and William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967,* rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

First-person accounts include Martin Indyk, *Unintended Consequences: The Clinton Years in the Middle East* (New York: Frank Knopf, forthcoming spring 2005); Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2004); Eytan Bentsur, *Making Peace: A First-Hand Account of the Arab-Israeli Peace Process* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement,* trans. Philip Simpson (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999); Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed the Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998); Mahmoud Abbas, *Through Secret Channels: The Road to Oslo— Senior PLO Leader Abu Mazen's Revealing Story of the Negotiations with Israel* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1997); Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1995).

10. See, most notably, Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "Camp David: A Tragedy of Errors," *New York Review of Books* 48, no. 13, August 9, 2001, 59; Benny Morris, "Camp David and After: An Exchange. 1. An Interview with Ehud Barak," *New York Review of Books* 49, no. 10, June 13, 2002, 42, and replies and rejoinders June 13, 2002, and June 27, 2002.

11. See Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall, *Hidden Differences: Doing Business with the Japanese* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1987).

12. The concept of discerning national character according to shared cultural practices was developed inter alia by Ralph Linton in *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1945) and explicated in his foreword to Abram Kardiner and others, *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), vii–viii. A example of such studies in the Middle Eastern context is Raphael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (New York: Scribner, 1973).

13. Indeed, this dyadic approach follows in the tradition of Raymond Cohen's pioneering work in the field of cross-cultural negotiations, *Culture and Conflict in Egyptian-Israeli Relations: A Dialogue of the Deaf* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). Cohen's analysis of Arab-Israeli negotiations, however, focuses on the linguistic and other differences in meaning evident in face-to-face encounters by diplomats.