© Journal of Peace Research, vol. 34, no. 2, 1997, ISSN: 0022-3433, pp. 197–215

Peace Initiatives and Public Opinion: The Domestic Context of Conflict Resolution

BEN D. MOR
Department of Political Science, University of Haifa

Peace initiatives to resolve enduring rivalries are launched in a two-level setting, where foreign policy imperatives interact with domestic imperatives. Public opinion, the support and mobilization of which is required for sustaining an extended conflict, plays a critical role in its resolution, especially when government preferences diverge from majority opinion. This article uses the war-proneness literature to define the domestic context in which public opinion becomes a constraint on accommodation or a trigger for it. In each context, the government must weigh the benefits of pursuing its preferred course of action against the prospects of losing office as a result of public dissatisfaction. This dilemma involves three parameters: the conflict-related beliefs of the leadership, its sensitivity to public opinion, and the structure of public opinion. The values that these parameters assume, and their configuration, comprise the domestic conditions that govern leadership decisions on peace initiatives. A case study of Israeli decision-making on the 1993 Oslo Accord serves to demonstrate the applicability and plausibility of the theoretical analysis.

1. Public Opinion and the Peace Proneness of Rivals

A critical stage in the evolution of prolonged interstate conflict, or enduring rivalry, occurs when domestic conditions favoring a negotiated settlement begin to materialize, but do not yet acquire the momentum that enables a fundamental change in government policy. This situation is characterized by a growing realization on the part of some segments of the leadership and/or the public that a shift to a cooperative strategy would better serve the interests of the state in its conflict with the opponent; however, this realization is not yet strong or widespread enough to overcome the persistence of long-standing patterns of perception, which continue to drive the interaction of the disputants.

If the divergence of domestic preferences with respect to the conflict remains static, failing to produce a dynamic that culminates in a basic policy shift, a stable balance may develop between supporters and opponents of a negotiated settlement, creating in effect a domestic deadlock. The evolution of the interstate rivalry now enters a phase in which conflicting preferences coexist without resolution in the domestic arena of one or both disputants. In contrast to previous phases, where a convergence of preferences supported the continuation of conflict, there are now ripening domestic conditions – at least on one side – for a reorientation of foreign policy. However, in order to get the parties to the table (Stein, 1989a), the deadlock must be broken and the relationship moved to a new phase. Because deadlocks at the domestic and/or strategic levels tend to create dynamics that enhance resistance to accommodation, a 'shock treatment' to the system may be necessary (Handel, 1981; Rock, 1989). Thus, dramatic *peace initiatives* can succeed where incremental diplomacy has failed.

Still, a drastic reversal of a long-standing foreign policy involves two types of interrelated threats for its initiator: rejection by the opponent (of a peace initiative or subsequently in negotiations) and rejection by the domestic public. In order to cope with these threats successfully, then, the leadership has to perform well in a 'two-level game' (Putnam, 1988), where 'central decision-makers strive to reconcile the domestic [Level II] and international [Level I] imperatives simultaneously' (p. 460). A recent dramatic example of this delicate balancing act is the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, which began in September 1993 with a bilateral surprise following the secret Oslo prenegotiations,[1] and has been subject to the vagaries of the two-level game ever since. This case, which will be examined later in this article, is only one of several important rivalries whose termination has featured surprise diplomacy to various degrees: the USA and China, the USA and the Soviet

Union, Egypt and Israel, South African blacks and whites, and recently – Israel and Jordan, and possibly Britain and the IRA.

This article is concerned with *public opinion* as a domestic imperative – a restraint or a catalyst – in decisions pertaining to conflict resolution, specifically the launching of a peace initiative to terminate an enduring rivalry. Peace initiatives are defined here as sharp reversals of foreign policy from a conflictual to a cooperative strategy designed to induce a fundamental change in the nature of a rivalry relationship.[2] As such, they may be seen as the peaceful counterpart of decisions on war initiation, which are likewise sharp and dramatic breaks in the continuum of interstate relations. Indeed, the effects of public opinion on national security policy are usually discussed in the context of war initiation, especially in recent years, with the emergence of the democratic peace literature. But in contrast to the effect of public opinion on the war proneness of states, little attention has been paid to its effect on their 'peace proneness', or their willingness to launch peace 'offensives'.

True, where *short-term conflicts* are concerned, public preferences for violent or peaceful policies can be viewed as different sides of the same coin: to say that the public supports an escalatory strategy in any immediate, incidental dispute amounts to saying that it opposes a conciliatory strategy. In this sense, an investigation of public opinion as a domestic source of war proneness or peace proneness is one and the same. But in the context of enduring rivalries, where a history of confrontations conditions current perceptions and sustained hostility generates an expectation for crises (Vasquez, 1993), the outbreak of war and the outbreak of peace involve different processes at the domestic level. Therefore, the effect of public opinion on peace initiatives cannot be inferred directly from what we know about its effect on war initiation. However, the war proneness literature provides a basis for conceptualizing the interaction between the public and its leaders on issues pertaining to national security.

Another rationale for investigating the role of public opinion in rivalry termination is its neglect in the literature on enduring rivalries. Most studies conceptualize the state as a unitary actor (even where learning is invoked) and seek to describe and explain interactions at the dyadic level. However, as this article claims, there are good reasons for assuming that in enduring rivalries, more so than in incidental conflicts, public opinion exerts an important influence on leadership considerations with respect to conflict resolution.

This article investigates the relationship between public opinion and peace initiatives in the following way. The first part of Section 2 reviews the literature on the domestic sources of war proneness in conjunction with the internal dynamic of enduring rivalries. The objective of the review is to identify the basic domestic contexts in which the possibility of a peace initiative may arise. The argument is that evolutionary processes of rivalry can produce different configurations of leadership and public preferences; once these configurations are specified, they can be analyzed (at least in part) through the different perspectives of the war proneness literature. However, in order to develop propositions on the likelihood of peace initiatives in different domestic contexts, the second part of Section 2 introduces three leadership and public-related parameters that affect decisions to reverse policy. In Section 3, these parameters are applied to the analysis of the Israeli decision-making on the 1993 Oslo Accord with the PLO. Finally, Section 4 summarizes the discussion and offers some suggestions for further research.

2. *Implications from the War Proneness Literature*

Anyone reading the recent literature on enduring rivalries cannot escape the impression that public opinion is considered to be a minor influence in the emergence, evolution, and termination of these conflicts – the state-as-unitary-actor assumption informs most analyses, whether they seek to describe behavior or explain it. The few exceptions that exist (e.g., Levy, 1995; McGinnis & Williams, 1993; Vasquez, 1993) address the effect of the public but do not focus specifically on its role in rivalry termination. Indeed, it is not a priori clear that public opinion exerts such an influence in decisions to launch peace initiatives. For one, the secrecy and surprise diplomacy that are associated with them do not conform to the open and incremental nature of democratic politics, which raises doubts about the input of public opinion.

More importantly, because the *essence* of a rivalrous relationship is external and interactive, the realist assumption that decision-makers respond primarily to external threats and opportunities may apply to peace initiatives as well.

Still, as McGinnis & Williams (1993, p. 3) note in their analysis of rivalry systems, 'realists underestimate the extent to which foreign policy makers must gain support from domestic groups to successfully implement their preferred policies'.[3] Indeed, the necessity to gain public support is expected to be particularly strong in the case of enduring rivalries, which depend for their existence on the ability of the leadership to *repeatedly* mobilize the public for the kind of sustained effort and occasional deprivation that extended conflict, especially a violent one, imposes on society. Equally important are the political and psychological dimensions of rivalry, which permeate society at both the public and individual levels through socialization and experiential learning. Suffice it to say that because enemies have important psychological, sociological, and political functions (see Finlay et al., 1967; Kriesberg, 1973), the decision to radically change policy toward the opponent is much more difficult than, say, a drastic change in economic policy. At the level of individual policy-makers, the need to maintain consistency within long-held beliefs and to preserve public credibility implies that dissonance can be reduced only if the attitude toward the opponent is adjusted to the new policy (Auerbach, 1986). New attitudes, in turn, have to be imparted to the public in a process of political marketing. Because rivalries tend to monopolize domestic political debates (McGinnis & Williams, 1993), conflict resolution requires that terms of the debate be changed. Ample evidence on this score is provided in Stein's (1989b) study of the 1977–78 Middle East prenegotiations leading up to the summit conference at Camp David.

For these reasons, if decision-makers seek to reorient the state's relationship with a long-standing opponent, it is necessary 'to prepare the home front for a shift from a winning to a conciliatory mentality' (Zartman, 1989, p. 9). Of course, other domestic factors play an important role as well (see Hermann, 1990; Holsti, 1982), at times interacting with public opinion and at times overshadowing it. The leadership's sensitivity to public preferences is neither stable nor uniform, depending on such variables as regime and leadership types, decision-making styles, and political and cultural norms (see Risse-Kappen, 1991). Given the nature of enduring rivalries, however, public opinion is more often than not expected to constitute a significant influence in the rivalry-termination stage.

How does this influence express itself? As noted above, the effect of public opinion on the formation of national security policy has been studied primarily in relation to decisions on war, rather than peace. In addition, whereas studies in this area usually address leadership decision and state behavior in the context of single, incidental conflict, the 'rivalry approach to war and peace' argues for the adoption of a longitudinal and dynamic perspective (Goertz & Diehl, 1995, p. 292). That is, to the extent that the behavior of rivals at any given point in time is influenced by the history of their conflict and by their expectations about its future, 'it becomes increasingly difficult to view specific conflicts as independent phenomena or to extract them from their rivalry streams without distorting the context in which they occur' (Thompson, 1995, pp. 196–197; see also Goertz & Diehl, 1993). Likewise, the study of public opinion as a domestic source of rivalry termination must take into account that public and leadership beliefs, perceptions, and preferences are formed within the context of an extended and dynamic interaction. Unfortunately, the rivalry literature has not applied this perspective to the analysis of public opinion in enduring rivalries.

These difficulties in each of the two literatures suggest that the remedy may lie in integration: the conceptualization of public opinion offered by the war proneness literature can be subjected to the longitudinal and dynamic perspective advocated by the rivalry literature. In addition, the context of decision must be taken into account, namely a choice for peace 'initiation' rather than war initiation. Hence, we turn next to a brief review of the war proneness literature, followed by a discussion of its implications for peace-making.

2.1 *The Democratic Peace and Public Opinion as a Constraint*

One of the most prominent and heated debates in current international relations literature con-

cerns the relationship between regime type and war proneness – the so-called 'democratic peace' phenomenon. At the center of this debate stand the twin empirical observations that '(1) democratic states are in general about as conflict- and war-prone as nondemocracies, and (2) over the last two centuries, democracies have rarely clashed with one another in violent or potentially violent conflict and ... have virtually never fought one another in a full-scale international war' (Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 624). Further research has also substantiated the 'democracy-management hypothesis,' according to which democratic states are more likely to resort to peaceful means when settling disputes with each other (Dixon, 1994), including assistance by third parties (Dixon, 1993) and submission of disputes to binding arbitration (Raymond, 1994). To the extent that these findings are robust and can be associated with characteristics that are inherent to democracies, they pose a serious threat to the validity of the realist (and especially neorealist) view of international relations (Russett, 1993, p. 24).

Attempts to explain the democratic-peace phenomenon have resulted in two basic models. The first, the cultural/normative model, argues that democracies externalize their domestic norms of behavior (i.e., resolution of conflict by peaceful means) to the extent that the international system permits the application of such norms without a threat to national security. This is possible when one democracy confronts another, but less likely to occur when the opponent is a non-democracy, because the latter's norms dominate the interaction. The second, institutional/structural model states that in situations short of emergency, national decision-makers must mobilize domestic support for their policies. This process is much more complex and time-consuming in democratic states than in non-democracies, imposing greater constraints on the former when a decision on war has to be made. When such constraints operate on both parties – as is true of two democracies – diplomatic solutions are likely to be found before the conflict escalates to war. When only one party is structurally subject to such severe constraints, it is likely to circumvent them by imposing emergency conditions that allow it to rally domestic support more quickly.[4]

What view of democratic public opinion as a domestic source of war proneness do these models espouse or imply? The normative model assumes that leaders and public alike share a belief in nonviolent means of conflict resolution, and in the application of these norms to the management of conflict with other states that uphold them, i.e., other democracies (see also Morgan & Campbell, 1991, p. 208). Shared beliefs in this case preclude a domestic divergence of preferences on basic strategy (with the possible exception of weak and unstable democracies, where democratic norms are not entirely institutionalized; see Maoz, 1989). Because the model does not provide for conditions under which the leadership and the public are at odds over foreign policy, no explanatory power is gained by introducing public opinion as a distinct domestic factor.[5] (To be sure, the public plays a role in bringing to power moderate, nonbelligerent leaders, but this is assumed to be a fixed feature of democratic systems.)

In contrast to the normative model, the structural one assigns a distinct role to public opinion: it 'follows the Kantian premise that democratic consent of the governed serves as a powerful restraint on decisions for war, because it is the citizens who inevitably end up paying the costs, fighting the battles, and repairing the damage' (Dixon, 1993, p. 44). The restraining effect of the public, however, does not *necessarily* imply that democratic publics are essentially 'peace loving'; indeed, they may be war-prone but still a constraint on war initiation, if the leadership has reasons to be concerned about its incumbency should the war prove unsuccessful (Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 1992). But the structural model does not rest on the anticipatory effects of public opinion, because it argues that the time-consuming process involved in mobilizing and winning public support is what arrests the external escalation dynamic and buys time for diplomatic moves (for a different perspective, see Morgan & Campbell, 1991). This reasoning is consistent with the assumption that the public in democracies is basically averse to war, even with respect to non-democratic opponents (or else it would not be necessary for the leadership to impose emergency conditions, as is assumed in the Maoz & Russett [1993, p. 626] formulation). At a minimum, this argument applies to wars that are expected to be of high risk

and cost (such as preventive wars, which Schweller [1992] shows are the exclusive preserve of declining non-democratic states) or that disrupt a relatively desirable status quo (Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman, 1992, p. 297).

What can one deduce from these conceptions of the democratic public about the issue of peace initiatives by democracies? This question is relevant only with respect to the structural model, because the normative one, as noted, does not assign a distinct role to public opinion. Leaving public opinion aside, the predictions of the normative model with respect to war initiation can be reproduced in the case of peace initiatives: when the rival is a democracy, the state should be peace-prone, because norms of compromise can be safely externalized; on the other hand, a non-democratic rival is likely to exploit democratic peace overtures to force unilateral concessions, thus reducing the incentive to launch them. This implies two points: first, democracies are unlikely to employ surprise diplomacy as a means of conflict resolution: it is unnecessary vis-a-vis other democracies, where a shared belief in reciprocity (Leng, 1993, p. 28) allows for incremental change, and too risky with non-democracies, which do not share this norm; second, if surprise diplomacy is resorted to in the case of a non-democratic opponent, it is likely to be a bilateral rather than unilateral surprise (see note 1), because the former is safer domestically (we return to this point below).

The implications of the structural model, in turn, depend on what one means by the public's 'aversion to war', which is assumed to be responsible for the difficulties involved in enlisting public support for war initiation. If an aversion to war means a strong preference for peace, then public-mobilization constraints should be minimal (though other institutional constraints may of course operate). Indeed, such a preference may act as a constraint on a leadership that is interested in *maintaining* the conflictual status quo. On the other hand, an aversion to war may not indicate a strong preference for a negotiated settlement: the public may prefer other changes of policy that could significantly lower the costs of conflict, such as unilateral disengagement or an effective deterrent strategy which prevents war but does not bring peace.[6] This interpretation is consistent with the structural model; however, it implies that peace initiatives would also require mobilization efforts by the government.

In contrast to the democratic peace theory, other perspectives on the war proneness of states do not dichotomize state behavior around the regime-type variable. Hagan (1994), who reviews these contending approaches under the title of 'statist', argues that they make two basic points: (1) 'domestic political constraints may occur across the full range of domestic political systems', not just in democracies (p. 192), and (2) 'regime structure notions such as democracy provide only a partial basis for judging the variety and complexity of domestic constraints' (p. 194). Statist approaches focus on the *leadership* as mediating between a variety of domestic constraints and the external imperatives of the anarchic system. The orientation of the leadership and its structure, as well as the nature, scope, and intensity of domestic constraints, cannot be inferred directly from regime type.

Of more concern to us here are three statist perspectives on modes of elite-public interaction which, though addressing the issue of war proneness, may be helpful in understanding the effect of public opinion on decisions for peace.[7] When these perspectives are considered in conjunction with rivalry dynamics, they suggest the following general idea (to be elaborated on below): As a rivalry evolves, the domestic context undergoes change in terms of the structure of elite and public preferences. Specifically, a *convergence* of preferences – that is, when the elite and the majority of the public are in basic agreement about what kind of strategy the state should pursue in the conflict – is necessary in order to sustain an enduring rivalry and therefore likely to apply throughout most of its course. Likewise, a convergence of preferences is ultimately required if a peaceful settlement of the rivalry is to become a new and stable status quo. However, in the transition period, and because of the differential impact of rivalry dynamics, a situation of preference *divergence* is likely to develop.

Specifically, two domestic configurations of diverging preferences can be defined: (1) a pro-conciliation leadership (and its supporters in the public) that confronts an eroding, but still dominant public opposition to a change in existing policy; (2) a pro-status quo leadership (and its respective supporters) that is subject to growing

public pressures for a shift to a cooperative strategy.[8] These configurations – in contrast to those of convergence – are of substantive interest because they impose a genuine dilemma on the leadership, namely force it to weigh the benefits of pursuing its preferred course of action against the prospects of losing office as a result of public dissatisfaction. It is within these domestic contexts that public opinion becomes a prominent (level-II) imperative, or the kind of domestic constraint described by the structural model. The statist perspectives help understand the *origins* of each preference configuration, or domestic scenario.

2.2 *Defining the Domestic Context of Peace Initiatives*

The first statist perspective deals with leadership use of external diversionary strategies designed to cope with domestic threats to its incumbency, or to the regime itself (see Levy, 1988, 1989). Hence, war initiation is expected to divert attention from internal problems by focusing on an external enemy. Of relevance here is the dynamic created by scapegoating rhetoric: even if the leadership is subsequently interested in diffusing tensions, it may find itself unable to back down due to domestic pressures of its own making.[9]

This dynamic does not apply just to short-term conflicts (i.e., single wars). Indeed, it is in the nature of enduring rivalries that their dynamics create their own domestic impediments to a diplomatic settlement. Throughout the duration of these conflicts, policies that are designed to protect and enhance national security tend to produce powerful coalitions (especially in the defense establishment) that benefit from the continuation of the status quo and oppose efforts to change it (Handel, 1981; McGinnis & Williams, 1993). Once a rivalry system is in place, the continued perception of external threat becomes an interest of advantaged groups, and their political advocacy works to reinforce the conflict in the public eye.

The conduct of rivalry also necessitates increased defense spending and the occasional mass mobilization of human and economic resources. The justification of these (and other) measures often involves the demonization of the rival. As images become entrenched, however, it becomes all the more difficult to terminate the rivalry: a vicious circle is created when prolonged deadlocks sustain and reinforce the already-pervasive belief that the conflict is inherently insurmountable, thereby adding to its intractability (and 'stability'; see Cioffi-Revilla & Sommer, 1994; Goertz & Diehl, 1995). As Finlay et al. (1967, p. 23) note, 'the strength of patterned or traditional responses not only creates resistance to new approaches or to changes in views, but also sets in motion self-fulfilling prophecies'. Jervis (1976, p. 310) mentions the 'inherent bad faith model' as one type of political image that is particularly resistant to change because it allows almost any behavior of the opponent to be interpreted as consistent with hostile intentions (see also Heradstveit, 1979). Although Jervis refers to the perceptions of decision-makers, statements that convey such attitudes to the public are part of its socialization to an enduring rivalry.

This description, then, implies that a domestic divergence of preferences – consistent with the first scenario mentioned above – can result from the self-reinforcing dynamics that sustained conflict generates. The process by which leadership preferences begin to diverge from majority opinion deserves a separate discussion, which cannot be undertaken here. The important point, though, is that the imperatives of reselection in democracies restrict a pro-accommodation leadership to public positions that do not radically depart from the confines of the national consensus as shaped by previous governments. A leader who attempts a fundamental challenge to the prevailing view of the conflict is unlikely to be elected in the first place, or returned to a second term in office. Thus, the diversionary perspective, when interpreted in the context of an enduring rivalry, suggests that processes which sustain rivalries are extremely difficult to reverse: even if decision-makers come to realize that the conflict cannot be resolved unilaterally (Zartman, 1977) and prefer a negotiated settlement, their hands are tied by the legacy of the past.

The second statist perspective that has implications for peace-making addresses domestic resource extraction for the purpose of maintaining military infrastructures (see Kennedy, 1987; Lamborn, 1991; and Rosecrance & Stein, 1993). The argument is that crises of extractive capacity, which erode the military-economic basis

of foreign policy, act to reduce the war proneness of the state, even when international imperatives (on which realists focus) call for a different response. With respect to ongoing wars, the literature on public opinion and foreign policy has observed that 'governments lose popularity directly in proportion to the length and cost (in blood and money) of . . . war' (Russett & Graham, 1989, p. 243). In enduring rivalries, the costs of conflict have to be borne over extended periods of time and (in some cases) through several cycles of violence. In addition to the economic burdens of sustained conflict, their conduct calls for the 'extraction' of mental and psychological resources, especially in war-ridden rivalries. However, as these costs begin to accumulate, attrition may gradually weaken the effects of socialization, especially if the prospects for a unilateral resolution of the conflict appear to be dim. In the words of Kriesberg (1973, p. 164): 'A constituency for more moderation is likely to develop after conflict behavior has been pursued at increasing cost without signs of successfully attaining the proclaimed ends.' Under such circumstances, it is more difficult for the leadership to galvanize the public for war (through scapegoating or otherwise) and increasingly easier for the political opposition to convert public opinion to the cause of peace.

This scenario is also implied by a third statist perspective, which addresses the rise to power of hardliners and the power-politics orientation they endorse and practice. Vasquez (1993, p. 199) argues that 'the presence of hard-liners is an important prerequisite for a war of rivalry, for, without their influence, it is unlikely that the bargaining tactics most associated with crisis escalation would be taken'.[10] What affects the preference for hardliners or accommodationists are the lessons drawn from the last war, specifically whether it was worth the costs (which favors the former) or not (which favors the latter). The outcome of the war (defeat or victory) determines the stability of the postwar domestic political context (pp. 207–210). Because rivalries are more likely to develop between equals (Mor & Maoz, 1996; Thompson, 1995, p. 205; Vasquez, 1993, pp. 75–83), unilateral outcomes are difficult to achieve, and the costs of repeated confrontations without prospects for a unilateral resolution eventually lead to the belief that additional violence is unlikely to justify the costs, even if the opponent is a non-democracy (Schweller, 1992). In that context, the position of accommodationists in the elite and among public opinion leaders is enhanced (see Kriesberg, 1973).

Thus, the latter two perspectives suggest a second scenario, according to which the socialization of the public to a prolonged conflict – an impediment to a negotiated settlement in the first scenario – can be gradually eroded by the economic and psychological burdens of protracted conflict. This process is surely more complex than the description provided here. For our purposes, however, the essential point is that the dynamics of enduring rivalries can also produce a second configuration of diverging preferences, in which public opinion can become a force for peace rather than a constraint on its pursuit (Levy, 1988; Morgan & Campbell, 1991; Russett, 1989).

Under either of these two scenarios, the impact of public opinion may be direct (e.g., through elections, mass demonstrations, etc.), or it can be more subtle, influencing the coalition-building process among political elites (Risse-Kappen, 1991; Vasquez, 1993). The precise mechanism by which democratic public opinion exerts its effect on policy outcomes cannot be examined here.[11] The important point is that when either of the two scenarios applies, the basic argument of the structural model (as conceived by the democratic peace literature) can be invoked: public opinion is a constraint on government action that must be taken into account in explanations of war proneness, or, in our case – peace proneness. However, the model is too general to permit a discussion of specific government responses in each scenario. We need, therefore, a more differentiated conception of how public opinion exerts its influence on leadership decisions for peace.

2.3 *The Analysis of Domestic Contexts: Three Parameters*

In contrast to the structural model, the statist perspective reminds us of 'the need to view domestic political constraints within the context of the core beliefs and interests shared by the state's leaders' (Hagan, 1994, p. 198). Hagan argues that two implications follow from this position: first, that 'the impact of domestic

politics in all but the most extreme political situations should be seen in the context of the broader orientation of the regime', and, second, that this impact 'can ultimately be gauged by the extent to which leaders are able to implement their preferences' (ibid.).

These points are reflected in a formal analysis that I conducted elsewhere (Mor, 1996), which showed by means of a decision model that policy choice in each of the two scenarios described above depends on three parameters: (1) the structure of public opinion (i.e., the size of the gap between supporters and opponents of accommodation); (2) the leadership's conflict-related beliefs (i.e., the leaders' own preference for a negotiated settlement, independently of public opinion); and (3) the leadership's sensitivity to public opinion. The third parameter determines how strongly in the decision calculus of the leadership its own preferences are weighted in relation to public opinion (when there is a domestic divergence of preferences). Clearly, the more sensitive the leadership is to public opinion, the smaller is the majority opposition in the public needed to thwart initiation (when the leadership supports it) or induce initiation (when the leadership opposes it). Also, given a fixed level of sensitivity, the stronger the leadership's own preferences, the larger is the majority opposition in the public needed to thwart initiation (when the leadership supports it) or induce initiation (when the leadership opposes it).

The introduction of the two leadership-related parameters – and their interaction with the structure of public opinion – suggests a more differentiated conception of how public opinion constrains decisions on rivalry termination. Specifically (and as shown by the formal analysis), different combinations of parameter values yield different decision outcomes, so public opinion is not a fixed constraint that dichotomizes in accordance with regime structure. At the *extremes*, peace initiatives in conditions of diverging preferences are most likely when, in the first scenario, the government strongly prefers a negotiated settlement, the gap favoring opponents of such a settlement is small, and sensitivity to public opinion is weak; in the second scenario, peace initiatives are most likely when the government weakly prefers the status quo, the gap favoring supporters of an initiative is large, and sensitivity to public opinion is strong.[12] Between these two extremes, the specific combination of parameter values determines whether an initiative is rational for the government (assuming, of course, that external conditions are favorable as well).

With respect to democracies, one can make two assumptions about parameter values: (1) because centrist candidates tend to be favored in elections, the leadership is likely to hold *moderate* positions for or against accommodation with the rival state; and (2) sensitivity to public opinion is generally high (with some variation expected over the electoral cycle).[13] When these assumptions apply, the structure of public opinion has a particularly strong effect on government policy. If we now add the assumption of the structural model that public opinion is essentially averse to war (provided this aversion translates into strong support for accommodation), then the extreme conditions for the second scenario are approximated. In this case, a moderately 'hawkish' government is not only unlikely to initiate war (as the structural model maintains), but it is likely to be pressured into an active pursuit of peace. Moreover, at the dyadic level, the rationale for circumventing public opinion when the opponent is a non-democratic (and hence unconstrained) state is not applicable to peace-making as it is to war. However, whereas the structural model is designed to explain a dichotomous choice (for or against war), there are various alternatives for pursuing peace. Thus, the government may try to assert its own preferences – at least in the short run – by moving slowly and gradually on the peace front, which reduces the likelihood of a policy reversal. Whether such a strategy can succeed in the long run depends on the rival's response (hence the importance of the external level) and on the public's tolerance for a protracted process of peace-making.

The structure of democratic public opinion is of greater consequence if, contrary to the assumptions of the structural model, rivalry dynamics produce and maintain a majority opinion that opposes a settlement – as in the first scenario. If public opposition to accommodation is widespread, then *none* of the extreme conditions favoring an initiative is approximated. In fact, this particular combination of parameter values – weak to moderate leadership preferences for a negotiated settlement, a sizeable

public opposition to accommodation, and a high sensitivity to public opinion – is *least* likely to produce an initiative. Under such circumstances, some kind of political shock (external or internal) may be necessary for the parameter values to change in a favorable direction (see also Rock, 1989, p. 17). This argument is consistent with the findings of Goertz & Diehl (1995), who showed that over 90% of the enduring rivalries that terminated during their period of study (1816–1976) did so in the aftermath of a political shock.

A serious shock may significantly narrow the gap between opponents and supporters of accommodation, but it may fail to produce a domestic convergence of preferences in favor of this alternative (see below). If a domestic deadlock develops instead, preventing (as in the first scenario) the government from launching an initiative, the *opponent* may acquire the incentive to do so, if it is less constrained. A well-timed diplomatic initiative – in particular, a unilateral surprise that capitalizes on the effects of an earlier political shock (e.g., Sadat after the 1973 war) – can induce a further change in parameter values, bringing the rivalry system closer to full reconciliation. Specifically, a political shock can generate perceptions that conflict is too costly a course to pursue; however, an additional input to the rivalry system may be necessary in order to convince the public that a peaceful settlement with the opponent is at all feasible. A peace initiative, when directed at a democracy, cannot change structural features that generate a high sensitivity to public opinion; but it can affect leadership and public preferences by providing evidence of the opponent's peaceful intentions (to the extent that policy preferences are conditional on such evidence).[14] As we shall note later, a public initiative creates a self-binding commitment that credibly signals an interest in peace (Maoz & Flesenthal, 1987)

In the absence of a political shock, there is a unique set of conditions under which the first scenario may still yield an initiative even if public opposition to accommodation is strong. The statist approach suggests that 'when leaders have strong preferences on a foreign policy issue, they are willing to override even strong opponents and hope that domestic controversies may be contained to acceptable levels' (Hagan, 1994, p. 196).[15] This argument implies that the value of the first parameter approximates the extreme condition mentioned above for the first scenario, namely that the government strongly prefers a negotiated settlement. However, if sensitivity to public opinion remains high, then government preferences are weighted less than the public's. According to the structural model, the high-sensitivity condition is violated in democracies only in emergency conditions associated with an impending war. On the other hand, the statist approach (besides arguing that sensitivity may be high in non-democracies as well) suggests that the availability of strategies for *coping* with domestic opposition can reduce its effect on foreign policy (Hagan, 1994, pp. 194–198). By implication, if a particularly strong democratic leadership has the ability to shape public opinion, then sensitivity to its structure declines: current public opinion is not a formidable obstacle because it is subject to change following post-initiative political marketing.

It is doubtful, though, that democratic elections in the context of an enduring rivalry (which is usually at the center of the political debate) can produce a domestic configuration in which widespread public opposition to accommodation coexists with a government that is both strong and very dovish. Thus, if we return to our earlier assumption that democratic politics is associated with moderate (centrist) leaderships and a high sensitivity to public opinion, then a peace initiative in the first scenario of diverging preferences is likely only when majority opinion opposing accommodation is *small*: the leadership is too sensitive to public opinion and not sufficiently dovish to override greater public opposition to a policy reversal.

This conclusion should to be viewed in conjunction with an earlier observation, namely that for a rivalry system to persist the government must secure the continued and widespread support of the public in order that it withstand the hardships that protracted conflict imposes. The implication is that before the government can contemplate a peace initiative (or respond to one), public support for the continuation of rivalry must be eroded to such an extent that a domestic deadlock develops. This is a minimal condition for a basic policy reversal; in the context of an enduring rivalry, it does not develop

overnight (though a political shock can accelerate the process), but rather depends on the gradual effect of rivalry dynamics, such as those already mentioned in relation to resource extraction.

If a domestic deadlock ultimately evolves into majority public support for accommodation, then conditions of domestic preference divergence give way to conditions of preference *convergence*. In this case, the public is no longer a constraint on leadership choice (although the government may still seek to maximize majority support for a policy reversal) and the external, bargaining level becomes the dominant influence in the final decision. Once the public-as-constraint argument no longer applies (or is significantly weakened), the validity of the structural model is undermined, at least with respect to the role of public opinion. The normative model, on the other hand, becomes applicable if we interpret preference convergence as some kind of domestic agreement on norms of external behavior (in this case, conflict resolution). If the normative model can be viewed in this light, then the dyadic-level considerations it addresses now become relevant. Their implications for peace-making were examined earlier (see Section 2.1). We conclude with a brief discussion of how public opinion affects bargaining at the external level.

Fearon's (1994) analysis of bargaining in international disputes suggests that 'audience costs make escalation in a crisis an informative although noisy signal of a state's true intentions' (p. 577). Thus, when audience costs are high (as is usually the case in democracies), there are substantial costs for backing down after escalation; knowing this, the opponent interprets escalation as a credible sign of commitment and resolve, and realizes that further escalation may increase domestic costs to such an extent that attack becomes rational. Where peace-making is concerned, the situation is more complex. Although audience costs can be used to credibly signal peaceful intentions, the opponent can exploit those costs to extract unilateral concessions. In a security crisis, such exploitation is deterred by the real possibility that additional demands may render an attack rational. In non-coercive diplomacy, this option is not immediately relevant to the bargaining situation, which means that the initiator of a public peace overture is subject to two threats: domestic costs in the case of a failed initiative (a threat the opponent may try to exploit) and external (as well as domestic) costs if the initiative invites demands for greater concessions.

This argument explains why democracies often prefer *secret* prenegotiations to unilateral public initiatives: because the former strategy does not create audience costs, it is not an effective means of signaling commitment to peace, but it does significantly reduce exit costs in the case of failure. Bilateral surprise, in contrast to a unilateral initiative, allows a leadership with high audience costs to assess the outcome of negotiations before it is made public. By employing this strategy to peace-making, the leadership forgoes both the signaling advantages and shock benefits that a unilateral public initiative provides. But if domestic costs are expected to be high – which, again, depends on the structure of public opinion – secret negotiations may be the more rational course to pursue. This dimension of peace initiatives – specifically, how public opinion interacts with the imperatives of the external level of bargaining – is another aspect of peace-making that should be explored further.

3. *The 1993 Oslo Breakthrough: An Illustrative Case Study*[16]

This section examines one of the most dramatic peace initiatives in the history of the Middle East conflict, the Oslo negotiations between Israel and the PLO, which lasted from December 1992 to August 1993 and led to the joint Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government, signed by the two parties in Washington, DC, on 13 September 1993. Specifically, we are interested in the role that Israeli public opinion played in Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's decision to sharply depart from Israel's long-standing policy of not recognizing and not negotiating with the PLO. That decision (and the corresponding one by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat) marked the transition from bitter rivalry to accommodation in the century-old conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.[17]

The analysis of this case is designed to demonstrate the empirical applicability and plausibility of the theoretical propositions suggested in the previous section. It is not

intended to be a rigorous test of these propositions, which would require precise operationalization and measurement of parameters and their values, as well as the consideration of additional cases. This task is left for the future. For now, we will settle for reasoned approximations of the three parameter values – the structure of public opinion, the conflict-related beliefs of the leadership, and the sensitivity of the leadership to public opinion. After obtaining these values, we will attempt to show that Israeli policy toward the PLO both before and during Oslo was *consistent* with the behavior that we associated with such values. Specifically, the parameter values in the pre-Oslo period should have been within a range that made an Israeli initiative unlikely, and vice versa for the Oslo period. This implies an emphasis on *transition*, namely a shift in parameter values that enabled the Israeli leadership to reverse policy.

The structure of Israeli public opinion on dealing with the PLO can be evaluated in a straightforward manner, given the widespread availability of public opinion polls. A highly reliable source is Arian (1995), who has been studying Israeli attitudes on a wide range of security matters for more than three decades. According to the data he provides, public support for peace negotiations with the PLO gradually grew over the 1987–93 period. Specifically, approval rates for negotiations 'under conditions that exist today' were as follows: 33% in 1987, 34% in 1988, 40% in 1990, 29% in 1991, 43% in 1992, and 52% in 1993.[18] When those expressing *opposition* to negotiations were asked whether they would support them under specified conditions – 'if the PLO undergoes basic changes and announces that it recognizes the state of Israel and will completely give up acts of terror' – approval rates were as follows: 49% in 1987, 35% in 1988, 12% in 1990, 16% in 1991, 45% in 1992, and 51% in 1993. In 1994, after the Oslo Accord had been signed, public approval for negotiations rose to 60%. The variations in the rates of support reflect the impact of various events, primarily the intifada and the Gulf War (in which the PLO adopted a pro-Iraqi stance). The general trend, however, is clear, and was detected in other studies and surveys as well (see the discussion in Arian, 1994, 1995; Goldberg, Barzilai & Inbar, 1991).

In contrast to the structure of public opinion, the beliefs of the leadership and its sensitivity to public opinion cannot be established in a straightforward manner. We will therefore settle for reasoned approximations of these parameters, beginning with sensitivity. It seems safe to assume that in a parliamentary democracy the value of the sensitivity parameter is generally high, with variations influenced by the electoral cycle. It is also reasonable to assume that the closer the competition between the major parties (or the coalitions they can form), the more attentive they must become to public opinion: small majorities in parliament are not only unstable but also incapable of providing the kind of broad-based legitimacy that democratic leaders seek for major reversals of foreign policy.

During the period under examination, Israel held two national elections, in 1988 and in 1992. The 1988 elections resulted in a National Unity government (as did the 1984 elections), because neither of the two large parties – Labor, with 39 parliamentary seats, and Likud, with 40 seats – could form a majority coalition in the 120-member Knesset. The National Unity government fell in March 1990, and the very fragile balance between the Labor and Likud blocs, both in the voting public and in the Knesset, prevailed once again. The June 1992 elections significantly strengthened Labor (44 MKs) and weakened Likud (32 MKs), but left largely unaffected the stalemate between left and right. In the pre-Oslo period, the Rabin government rested on a 62-member coalition which, in addition to Labor, also included the liberal-dovish Meretz party (12 MKs) and the ultra-religious Shas party (6 MKs). The latter's cooperation on foreign-policy issues necessitated continuous concessions on religious affairs, to which the former was opposed, a situation that generated one coalition crisis after another. In addition, Rabin's reluctance to rely on the vote of the two Arab parties (5 MKs) in matters pertaining to national security further diminished the prospects for a more-than-minimal pro-conciliation coalition in the Knesset. In these circumstances, then, public legitimacy for a foreign-policy initiative became all the more important, raising the government's sensitivity to public opinion. One manifestation of this sensitivity was the very frequent use of public opinion polls by Rabin's staff in the Prime Minister's Office.

Assessing the value of the leadership-beliefs parameter is also problematic, but not as complicated as are attempts to measure 'belief systems' in general. There are a few considerations that facilitate evaluation in this particular case. First, because we are interested in policy preferences rather than preferences for outcomes, we need not be concerned about the tautology involved in inferring the latter from the former ('revealed preference'). Second, although our theoretical discussion referred generally to a state's leadership or government, we need not address *aggregate* preferences in this case. By all accounts, very few individuals were engaged in the decision-making process on the Oslo negotiations, and the decision to adopt their outcome was made by Prime Minister Rabin (with some prodding from Foreign Minister Shimon Peres), not the government at large. So the beliefs that are pertinent in this case are those of the two top leaders of the Labor party, especially Rabin, whose pronouncements on negotiations with the PLO have been closely followed in the Israeli media.[19] However, public statements on policy positions (which comprise most of the evidence due to the recency of the case) can sometimes be misleading, for reasons brought out by our earlier discussion: even if the decision-maker has shifted his or her position, disclosing this fact may be politically too risky if only because public opinion is not ready to accept change. Hence the value of non-public statements, such as the testimony of Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin (1993, p. *vii*), who recalls that during a 1980 visit to France he had a private conversation with Peres in which the topic of negotiations with the PLO came up. In response to Beilin's question about the necessity of holding talks with the Palestinian organization, Peres said: 'I do not doubt it, but I don't believe that public opinion in Israel will be ready to accept the PLO as a partner for negotiations.' He then added, 'This may be the tragedy of our life.' If this exchange reflected a pro-conciliation position on the part of Peres, he did not reveal his preferences until much later.[20]

In fact, Inbar (1991, p. 74) argues that hints of Peres's real PLO stance could be detected in statements issued in February–March 1988. However, an overt position on this issue would have brought down the National Unity government (in which Peres was foreign minister at the time) and would have forced Labor into national elections (in November 1988) with a PLO position that was strongly opposed by the public. We argued earlier that under the first scenario of diverging preferences (when the leadership supports an initiative but majority public opinion opposes it), the configuration of parameter values *least* likely to produce an initiative consists of (1) weak to moderate leadership preferences for a negotiated settlement, (2) a sizeable public opposition to accommodation, and (3) a high sensitivity to public opinion. Indeed, the latter two conditions certainly existed at the time: not only was sensitivity to public opinion at its highest prior to the national elections but, moreover, the gap favoring opponents of rapprochement with the PLO was 32%. However dovish Peres's PLO position was – and some doubt that his preferences could be characterized as such (e.g., Agid-Ben Yehuda and Auerbach [1991]) – he could not override such opposition, neither as foreign minister to superhawk Shamir, nor as Labor leader running for elections. We also noted earlier that when such parameter values apply, some kind of political shock may be necessary for them to change in a favorable direction. This subsequently occurred with the Gulf War (as an added impact to the grinding effects of the intifada).

Because the domestic conditions for an initiative did not exist at the time, external changes were insufficient to produce a reversal in Labor's PLO policy: neither King Hussein's disengagement from the West Bank (in July 1988), which dealt a blow to the 'Jordanian option' favored by many Laborites, nor the Algiers resolutions of the Palestinian National Council (in November 1988), which paved the way for a renewal of a US–PLO dialogue,[21] could effect a change in the official position of the Labor Party on the PLO issue (Inbar, 1991, p. 60). During the period following the collapse of the grand coalition (in March 1990), which left Shamir and Likud in office (until June 1992), government preferences and public opinion on the PLO were in conformity: the hawkish position of Likud was supported in the public by a 20–42% gap favoring the opponents of peace negotiations with the PLO. Thus, neither of the two scenarios of diverging preferences applied during that time period. Instead, domestic

conditions of preference *convergence* existed, supporting the status quo.[22]

By the time Rabin assumed office in June 1992, public opinion on negotiations with the PLO was already undergoing a transition: during the previous year, support for this alternative increased from its Gulf War-low of 29% to 43% – which was registered at the time of Rabin's election – narrowing the gap between opponents and supporters to 14%. To recall our earlier proposition: if democratic politics is associated with moderate (centrist) leaderships and a high sensitivity to public opinion, then a peace initiative – in the first scenario of diverging preferences – is likely only when majority opinion opposing accommodation is *small*. When Rabin was elected, the elements of this proposition were *beginning* to materialize. First, the new Prime Minister was a centrist candidate who pledged in his campaign to conclude an interim accord with the Palestinians – residents of the territories, not the PLO – within nine months of assuming office. (His election thus reflected the unfolding changes in public opinion, which increasingly favored a more accommodative policy.) Second, sensitivity to public opinion remained high after the elections, due to the narrow majority in the Knesset, as we saw above.[23] Third, the gap in public opinion favoring opponents of negotiation was gradually narrowing. Yet, however favorable domestic conditions were becoming, it is very doubtful that the first scenario even applied (let alone a convergence of preferences in favor of an initiative) – the missing ingredient was leadership beliefs: although Rabin was a centrist, he continued to oppose direct negotiations with the PLO (as had Shamir before him).

Indeed, after he became Prime Minister, Rabin continued to express a preference for the framework established in Madrid.[24] In a government meeting held upon his return from a visit to the USA in August 1992, he spoke strongly against abandoning the policy of not talking to the PLO leadership in Tunis. Citing reports of the latter's pressure on the local Palestinian leadership (with which Israel was negotiating in Washington), he warned that an Israeli readiness to talk to the PLO would weaken the leadership in the territories, 'which thinks differently [from the PLO under Arafat]' (*Hadashot*, 17 August 1992). Speaking to the Daily Newspaper Editors' Committee, Rabin reiterated his belief that the PLO leadership in Tunis, especially Arafat, sought to obstruct the ongoing negotiations for fear that its power position would be undercut by a deal between Israel and the leadership in the territories (*Jerusalem Post*, 30 November 1992).

Yet, at the same time, in late 1992, Rabin began to realize that the Israeli–Palestinian autonomy talks were not making progress. This prompted him to investigate the PLO's positions indirectly. At the end of November 1992, when Arab MK Abd al-Wahab Drawshe returned from Tunis after conducting talks with top PLO officials there (in violation of the law prohibiting such contacts), Rabin invited him to report on his trip. Although the meeting did not go well (with Rabin accusing Arafat of being an obstacle to peace), the fact that it took place at all – and in the public view – indicated not only that the Prime Minister's rejectionist position was softening but that he was ready to risk criticism on a highly sensitive issue. It is suggestive that following the meeting he instructed the Justice Minister to begin work on legislation designed to abolish the law against contacts with the PLO, which was eventually repealed in February 1993 (*Hadashot*, 27 November 1992).

In March 1993, during a Washington meeting with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Rabin offered the assessment (already shared by Peres and his aides, as well as by military intelligence chief Major General Uri Saguy) that only Arafat could conclude a deal on behalf of the Palestinians. However, in response to a question by Dennis Ross (US Special Middle East Coordinator), Rabin answered that 'there was no way he could talk to Arafat' (Makovsky, 1996, p. 41). The turning point seemed to have occurred a month later, when the Washington talks were resumed and the Palestinian delegation once again failed to make any new proposals. According to Israeli Health Minister Haim Ramon, a close confidant of the Prime Minister, 'Rabin became convinced in April or May [following the deadlock in the Washington talks] that we needed to talk to the PLO ...' (ibid., pp. 38–39). As Rabin himself told the *Jerusalem Post* on 31 August 1993, after the Oslo breakthrough had been publicized: 'For a long time, I believed that a Palestinian force would possibly be able to arise among the resi-

dents of the territories and develop its own capabilities. After more than a year of negotiating [i.e., in June or July of 1993] I reached the conclusion that they are unable to do so. They did not come to Madrid without a decision from Tunis. They did not do anything without faxes and phone calls from Tunis.' In an interview to *Haaretz* a few days later (3 September 1993) Rabin reiterated this rationale, stating that four months earlier (that is, in May) he came to realize that no agreement could be reached with the Palestinian delegation, despite his hopes to the contrary. It was at this point that he agreed to examine discretely the possibility of concluding an agreement with the PLO.[25]

Thus, during the first half of 1993, changes in both public opinion and Rabin's attitude toward the PLO coincided to yield a domestic *convergence* of preferences in favor of accommodation: by early 1993, trends in public opinion yielded for the first time a small majority in favor of direct negotiations with the PLO; by the middle of the year, Rabin's position on this issue shifted as well. The Prime Minister, whose office conducted its own polls, was aware of the shift in public opinion and knew that he could count on public support for a policy reversal (Makovsky, 1996, p. 133). Moreover, that support was likely to be even more robust if the Oslo negotiators could secure certain concessions and guarantees that would make a deal with the PLO more palatable to the Israeli public. (We saw earlier that *conditional* support for such a deal was higher than 52%.) In other words, by mid-1993, the domestic conditions for a peace initiative were ripe.

Still, Rabin withheld his true preferences from the public and kept the Oslo negotiations under strict secrecy (for details, see Corbin, 1993, 1994). In fact, in early May he stated that despite the evident weakness of the Palestinian delegation, he was opposed to negotiations with the PLO because this would necessarily entail a discussion of the final (as opposed to the interim) settlement of the conflict, including the right of return of Palestinian refugees (*Haolam Haze*, 5 May 1993). He repeated this point in an address to the Labor Knesset faction, adding that 'the Palestinians in the territories do not have the same interests as the PLO in Tunis' (*Jerusalem Post*, 18 May 1993). He was even more insistent in an interview (first of its kind) to *Al-Quds*, an Arab newspaper published in East Jerusalem, saying that he would 'take steps' against members of the Palestinian delegation who would declare themselves members of PLO organs (*Maariv*, 10 June 1993). When the government held a debate (following a report on the tenth round of negotiations in Washington) on a proposal, raised by a group of Meretz and Labor ministers, to re-examine its position on PLO participation, Rabin and Peres opposed a change in policy (*Haaretz*, 5 July 1993). Even as late as August, Rabin continued to insist that 'Israel would not change its policy and would not conduct direct negotiations with the PLO even in the future' (*Maariv*, 11 August 1993).[26]

All this was taking place while government officials were negotiating (since May) with PLO officials in Oslo: if initially the prospects of the Oslo channel did not seem particularly promising, after May Rabin (who 'jumped on the wagon absolutely') and Peres (who had become 'fully devoted') began to follow the process closely and intimately.[27] For several months, then, the discrepancy between declaratory and actual policy, which was to last until the end of August, was designed to maintain secrecy and allow the Oslo talks to unfold without obstructions.

Given that the domestic conditions favored an initiative, it is reasonable to ask why the Oslo negotiations were conducted under such strict secrecy and why it was necessary to engage in an elaborate plan of deception from May to August. Our theoretical discussion of this issue suggested that bilateral surprise, in contrast to a unilateral initiative, allows a leadership with high audience costs to assess the outcome of negotiations before it is made public. Hence the democratic preference for this form of bargaining. Rabin was concerned that negotiating directly with the PLO would necessarily entail the introduction of a new political agenda, to which he was opposed. The secrecy of the Oslo channel enabled him to assess, at low exit costs, the concessions he would be required to make in order to arrive at an acceptable agreement with the PLO.[28] The advantages of secrecy were thus twofold: first, it provided for a relatively safe opportunity to discover whether the *external* conditions for an initiative existed – independently of domestic opinion; second, because

some of the popular support the Prime Minister could count on was *conditional*, knowing what concessions could be obtained from the PLO was necessary in order to estimate in advance the extent of support that an agreement would receive. Finally, surprise had a desirable impact on the domestic opposition: as Peres (1993, p. 4) noted, 'sometimes ... what comes by surprise generates much less opposition than what was expected'.[29]

4. *Conclusion*

The Oslo case study enabled the evaluation of some of the propositions that were developed in the theoretical part (although parameter values were approximated rather than measured with the precision required for testing). In the years before Rabin came to power, the domestic context was not conducive to a policy shift: majority opinion opposing rapprochement with the PLO coincided with leadership preferences under Shamir and was too large for Peres to risk the elections of 1988. When Rabin assumed office, support for negotiations with the PLO was still weak (though growing), and the Prime Minister himself opposed a deal with the Palestinian organization. In that sense, Rabin's preferences converged with majority opinion, ruling out an initiative. Indeed, during that time Israel pursued the Washington track, which excluded PLO representation. The figures on *conditional* approval for negotiations, on the other hand, indicate that there was a conditional majority for a policy reversal when Rabin came to power. However, because that majority depended on specific concessions by the PLO, secret probes of the latter's position had to precede a public shift in Israel's policy. This is precisely what Rabin did toward the latter part of 1992, prior to the Oslo negotiations.

By early 1993, unconditional support became majority support for the first time, though by a very small, and hence unstable, margin. Arian (1995, p. 106) writes that 'Israeli public opinion became more comfortable with the idea of negotiating with the PLO, even though the Israeli leaders clung to old formulas of excluding the organization'. This was true for a short while, when preferences diverged. By mid-1993, however – and possibly earlier – Rabin shifted his position and preferences converged in support of negotiations. Seeking to maximize support beyond the narrow margin of early 1993, the Prime Minister was determined to publicize the decision to hold talks with the PLO *in conjunction* with a concluded agreement that would win greater public approval. Hence the preference for a bilateral surprise over a unilateral initiative.

Although the Oslo case lends credibility to the theoretical discussion, it is useful in conclusion to point out some weaknesses and unanswered questions in the current study. First, the analysis focused on public opinion to the exclusion of other variables that play a role in conflict resolution, at both the domestic and international levels. Ignoring these factors risks inflating the impact of popular opinion on decisions to launch peace initiatives. In particular, the role of external factors is likely to be vital in conditions of preference convergence, when public opinion is a diminished constraint (though other domestic imperatives may operate). Hence, this study does not assume that preference convergence is a sufficient condition for a policy reversal; it does assume, however, that some configurations of diverging preferences rule out a peace initiative. The existence of some (minimal) configuration is therefore a necessary condition, and some propositions in this respect were offered. However, they should be tested comparatively in other cases as well, employing a more structured research design that permits a better assessment of causation.

Second, although we suggested how configurations of diverging preferences can arise, the impact of rivalry dynamics and events on domestic preferences deserves much closer attention by researchers of enduring rivalries. Exploring this connection will enable us to move beyond the two-level game metaphor to a two-level theory of foreign policy.

Third, more research is needed on the domestic context of rivalries. In particular, the three parameters we employed are currently too schematic to capture the diversity of the two-way dialogue between elites and their publics. This is especially important in democracies, where elite and popular attitudes interact through public debate, coalition-building processes, and elections. One way to advance within the framework established here is to identify the variables that influence parameter

values and produce domestic configurations in which peace initiatives become likely.

NOTES

1. Handel (1981) makes an important distinction between bilateral surprise, in which two sides coordinate a mutual change in their policies (e.g., the American–Chinese rapprochement of 1971) and unilateral surprise, where the initiative is taken by one state or a single leader (e.g., the Sadat peace initiative of 1977).
2. This conception precludes more restricted meanings that may be associated with the term 'peace initiatives', such as the making of a new proposal within ongoing negotiations.
3. This point has been substantiated in several empirical studies, including those that deal with the effect of popular support on American presidents' use of military force (e.g., Gaubatz, 1991; James & Oneal, 1991; Ostrom & Job, 1986) or with the effect of public opinion on US military spending (e.g., Hartely & Russett, 1992; Nincic, 1990; Ostrom & Marra, 1986). More generally, Bueno de Mesquita & Lalman (1992), who studied dispute behavior in Europe over the past two centuries, find strong support for the domestic/constrained interpretation of international affairs.
4. This brief summary of the two models is derived from Maoz & Russett (1993; for an elaboration, see Russett, 1993). Their study finds support for both models, but the normative model fares better.
5. If normative considerations create a domestic divergence of preferences – for example, public opposition to its government's decision to fight another democracy – then public opinion becomes a constraint on the leadership. In other words, the structural model has to be invoked in order to explain why war did not occur.
6. Golan (1994), who discusses the effect of the intifada (Palestinian uprising) on the Israeli public, argues that it led to 'fed-up-ness' – a feeling of having had enough – that is distinct from war-weariness or exhaustion. Because such an attitude does not derive from a greater understanding of the opponent and its concerns, it may not translate into support for a peace initiative and a bilateral settlement.
7. The three perspectives (and others) are reviewed by Hagan (1994) in some detail. We settle here for a very brief and partial discussion, looking only at the basic arguments they advance and at their relevance for defining domestic contexts for peace initiatives.
8. Clearly, in many cases the leadership does not have homogeneous preferences and public opinion is not dichotomous. However, these complexities can be ignored here because we are interested in the more fundamental split between the government and its opponents in public opinion.
9. This dynamic is sometimes overlooked in more general debates that deal with the effect of public opinion on foreign policy. Thus, Holsti's (1992) review of the literature addresses the direction-of-causality issue, i.e., whether the public affects policy-makers or is affected by them – but does not explicitly consider the possibility that the latter may entail the former.
10. However, one should not underestimate the extent to which hardliners can take bold steps to peace or be regarded as preferred targets for peace initiatives. Handel (1981, p. 301) cites Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky who said, on the occasion of the 1977 electoral victory of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, that 'regimes which were not suspected of making concessions could better impose such concessions on public opinion'. Such was also the understanding of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who 'preferred to deal with a strong government and a strong man' (ibid., p. 304).
11. However, it is important to note that in democracies, large shifts in public opinion eventually express themselves at the polls. Thus, if preference convergence gives way to divergence, it is more likely to be a result of change (in favor of accommodation) at the leadership level.
12. See Mor (1996) for quantitative estimates of these parameter values.
13. Gaubatz (1991) has shown that the electoral cycle has an effect on the war entry of democratic states – more wars are entered into during the early stages of the cycle than during its later stages. To the extent that this relationship is a causal one, it has implications for the *timing* of peace initiatives in the first scenario: if an accommodationist government facing majority opposition decides nevertheless to launch an initiative, it is likely to do so when its sensitivity to public opinion is at its lowest, namely after elections rather than just before them.
14. Such was the effect of Sadat's 1977 visit to Jerusalem: although a year earlier Israeli public opinion opposed complete withdrawal from the Sinai, it reversed itself after Sadat's initiative (Makovsky, 1996, p. 135).
15. Lustick (1994) makes a similar point with respect to Charles de Gaulle's determined stand against the *pieds noirs* over the Algerian question in 1960–61.
16. Consistent with the theoretical perspective of this article, the following analysis of the Oslo negotiations focuses on select aspects of what was in reality a complex and multidimensional process. For more comprehensive accounts, see Corbin (1994) and Makovsky (1996).
17. Strictly speaking, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict does not fall within the purview of the enduring rivalry literature because it is not an inter*state* conflict. However, the PLO has long been recognized by the Palestinians as their sole representative and has monopolized policy-making on their behalf. (Indeed, the belated recognition of this fact was one of the major reasons for Rabin's embrace of the Oslo negotiations.) Hence, for all practical purposes, the process of conflict resolution that Oslo embodies can be regarded as involving two governments.
18. These figures are based on representative samples of the adult Jewish population, excluding Kibbutzim and residents of the occupied territories. The surveys were conducted on the following dates: (1) December 1987 to January 1988; (2) October 1988; (3) March–October 1990; (4) March 1991; (5) June 1992; and (6) January 1993. There are no data for 1989.
19. One potential problem, though, is the inability to clearly separate the impact of public opinion from other in-

fluences on the formation of leaders' policy preferences. In situations where the latter diverge from majority opinion, this problem does not arise (at least with respect to the objectives of the current discussion). It does arise, however, when there is preference convergence. In this case, one should search for evidence to the effect that: (1) the leader's preferences are consistent over time, despite changes in majority opinion, and/or (2) other influences that are unrelated to public opinion can be associated with the leader's preferences.

20. Peres recently disclosed that in 1984–86, when he was prime minister in the National Unity government, he held several secret talks in Paris with PLO representatives (*Haaretz*, 25 May 1995). Keren (1994) and Shlaim (1994) provide different perspectives on what motivated Peres's search for peace partners.
21. The Algiers PNC resolutions, besides declaring the establishment of a Palestinian state, seemed to suggest – too vaguely for Israel – PLO acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338, renunciation of terror, and recognition of Israel. The USA then requested clarifications, which were issued by Chairman Arafat in December 1988.
22. After he had lost the elections of June 1992, Shamir admitted that he 'would have conducted autonomy negotiations [the Washington talks] for 10 years, and in the meanwhile we would have reached a half million people in Judea and Samaria' (*Jerusalem Post*, 28 June 1992). Note that this is an admission of deception with respect to talks that did not even include the PLO.
23. Makovsky (1996, p. 86) notes that 'had roughly 40,000 more people in a country of 5 million voted for Likud or parties to its right . . . [Rabin] would have been forced into anther paralyzing national unity government.'
24. The Madrid talks (which excluded the PLO) were initiated in October 1991, in the aftermath of the Gulf War and following much preparatory work by then US Secretary of State James Baker. The government of Prime Minister Shamir, in power at that time, adhered to Israel's traditional policy of non-recognition of the PLO.
25. There were additional reasons for Rabin's decision to pursue the Oslo channel. For a comprehensive analysis, see Shlaim (1994) and especially Makovsky (1996).
26. Rabin's statements at that time were not all that categorical. In fact, he appeared to convey a mixed message, signaling both adherence to established policy (as noted above) and a growing tolerance for infringements.
27. This is the testimony of Israeli historian Ron Pundak who, together with colleague Yair Hirschfeld, initiated the contacts with the PLO in Oslo and participated in the talks alongside official representatives of the government, who joined in May. For an interview with Pundak, see Nisiyahu et al. (1994, pp. 33–52).
28. Zartman (1989, p. 8) writes that 'prenegotiation allows the parties to assess and come to terms with the costs of concessions and agreement, and also with the costs of failure, before firm commitments are made'. Another of its functions is 'to convince the other party that concessions will be requited, not banked and run away with' (p. 9).
29. In fact, this case shows that the relationship between secrecy and surprise is bi-directional: just as secrecy generates surprise, so can 'surprise' maintain secrecy. Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin has argued (1993, p. *x*) that one reason for the ability to maintain strict secrecy was that the Oslo negotiations ran contrary to everything that was considered politically acceptable for an Israeli government: even when a correct detail was leaked to the press and published, it was not followed up because 'it did not conform to the common conception [of not negotiating with the PLO], and in such situations there is a psychological tendency to reject the news and accept the conception'.

REFERENCES

Agid-Ben Yehuda, Hemda & Yehudit Auerbach, 1991. 'Attitudes to an Existence Conflict: Allon and Peres on the Palestinian Issue, 1967–1987', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 3, September, pp. 519–546.

Arian, Asher, 1994. 'Israeli Security and the Peace Process: Public Opinion in 1994', Memorandum no. 43, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University.

Arian, Asher, 1995. *Security Threatened: Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Auerbach, Yehudit, 1986. 'Turning-Point Decision: A Cognitive-Dissonance Analysis of Conflict Reduction in Israel–West German Relations', *Political Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 533–550.

Beilin, Yossi, 1993. *Yisrael – 40 plus*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot Books.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce & David Lalman, 1992. *War and Reason*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce & Randolph M. Siverson, 1995. 'War and the Survival of Political Leaders', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 89, no. 4, December, pp. 841–855.

Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce; Randolph M. Siverson & Gary Woller, 1992. 'War and the Fate of Regimes: A Comparative Analysis', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 3, September, pp. 638–646.

Cioffi-Revilla, Claudio & Henrik Sommer, 1994. 'Struggles for Power: A Punctuated Equilibrium Model of Interstate Rivalries'. Paper presented at the Conference on Enduring Rivalries and the Annual North American Conference of the Peace Science Society, Urbana–Champaign.

Corbin, Jane, 1993. 'Panorama: The Norway Channel'. London: *BBC Television*. Broadcast on September 13.

Corbin, Jane, 1994. *Gaza First: The Secret Norway Channel to Peace Between Israel and the PLO*. London: Bloomsbury.

Dixon, William J., 1993. 'Democracy and the Management of International Conflict', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 37, no. 1, March, pp. 42–68.

Dixon, William J., 1994. 'Democracy and the Peaceful Settlement of International Conflict', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 1, March, pp. 14–32.

Fearon, James D., 1994. 'Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 3, September, pp. 577–592.

Finlay, David J.; Ole R. Holsti & Richard R. Fagen, 1967. *Enemies in Politics*. Chicago, IL: Rand-McNally.

Gaubatz, Kurt T., 1991. 'Election Cycles and War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, June, pp. 212–244.

Goertz, Gary & Paul F. Diehl, 1993. 'Enduring Rivalries: Theoretical Constructs and Empirical Patterns,' *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2. June, pp. 147–171.

Goertz, Gary, & Paul F. Diehl, 1995. 'The Initiation and Termination of Enduring Rivalries: The Impact of Political Shocks', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 39, no. 1, February, pp. 30–52.

Golan, Galia, 1994. 'A Palestinian State from an Israeli Point of View', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 56–69.

Goldberg, Giora; Gad Barzilai & Efraim Inbar, 1991. *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion*. Policy Studies 43, Leonard Davis Institute, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Hagan, Joe D., 1994. 'Domestic Political Systems and War Proneness', *Mershon International Studies Review*, vol. 38, no. 2, October, pp. 183–207.

Handel, Michael I., 1981. *The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat*. Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University.

Hartely, Thomas & Bruce Russett, 1992. 'Public Opinion and the Common Defense: Who Governs Military Spending in the United States?', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 4, December, pp. 905–915.

Heradstveit, Daniel, 1979. *The Arab–Israeli Conflict*. Oslo: Norwegian University Press.

Hermann, Charles F., 1990. 'Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 1, March, pp. 3–21.

Holsti, Kalevi J., 1982. *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Holsti, Ole R., 1992. 'Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond–Lippmann Consensus', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 36, no. 4, December, pp. 439–466.

Inbar, Efraim, 1991. *War and Peace in Israeli Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

James, Patrick & John R. Oneal, 1991. 'The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, June, pp. 307–332.

Jervis, Robert, 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kennedy, Paul, 1989. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. New York: Vintage Books.

Keren, Michael, 1994. 'Israeli Professionals and the Peace Process', *Israel Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 1, Autumn, pp. 149–163.

Kriesberg, Louis, 1973. *The Sociology of Social Conflicts*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Lamborn, Alan C., 1991. *The Price of Power: Risk and Foreign Policy in Britain, France, and Germany*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

Leng, Russell J., 1993. 'Reciprocating Influence Strategies in Interstate Crisis Bargaining', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 37, no. 1, March, pp. 3–41.

Levy, Jack S., 1988. 'Domestic Politics and War', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 18, no. 4, Spring, pp. 653–673.

Levy, Jack S., 1989. 'The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique', pp. 259–288 in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman.

Levy, Jack S., 1995. 'Economic Competition, Domestic Politics, and Systemic Change: The Rise and Decline of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 1609–1688'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

Lustick, Ian S., 1994. 'Necessary Risks: Lessons for the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process from Ireland and Algeria', *Middle East Policy*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 41–59.

Makovsky, David, 1996. *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Maoz, Zeev, 1989. 'Joining the Club of Nations: Political Development and International Conflict, 1816–1976', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 2, June, pp. 199–231.

Maoz, Zeev & Dan D. Felsenthal, 1987. 'Self–Binding Commitments, the Inducement of Trust, Social Choice, and the Theory of International Cooperation', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, June, pp. 177–200.

Maoz, Zeev & Bruce M. Russett, 1993. 'Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 87, no. 3, September, pp. 624–638.

McGinnis, Michael D. & John T. Williams, 1993. 'Principals, Agents, and Two-Level Games: A Framework for the Comparative Analysis of Rivalry Systems'. Paper presented at the Workshop on Processes of Enduring Rivalries, Indiana University.

Mor, Ben D., 1996. 'Peace Initiatives and Public Opinion: A Decision-Theoretic Model', mimeo, University of Haifa.

Mor, Ben D. & Zeev Maoz, 1996. 'Learning and the Evolution of Enduring Rivalries: A Strategic Approach', mimeo, University of Haifa and Tel Aviv University.

Morgan, T. Clifton & Sally H. Campbell, 1991. 'Domestic Structures, Decision Constraints, and War: So Why Kant Democracies Fight?', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 35, no. 2, June, pp. 187–211.

Nincic, Miroslav, 1990. 'U.S. Soviet Policy and the Electoral Connection', *World Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, April, pp. 370–396.

Nisiyahu, Mordechai; Meir Stiglitz & Ziv Tamir, 1994. *Zman Shalom* [Time of peace]. Tel Aviv: Nisiyahu-Tamir.

Ostrom, Charles W., Jr. & Brian L. Job, 1986. 'The President and the Political Use of Force', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 2, June, pp. 541–566.

Ostrom, Charles W. & Robin F. Marra, 1986. 'U.S. Defense Spending and the Soviet Estimate', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 80, no. 3, September, pp. 819–842.

Peres, Shimon, with Arye Naor, 1993. *The New Middle East*. New York: Henry Holt.

Putnam, Robert D., 1988. 'Diplomacy and Domestic

Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games', *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 3, Summer, pp. 427–460.
Raymond, Gregory A., 1994. 'Democracies, Disputes, and Third-Party Intermediaries', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 38, no. 1, March.
Risse-Kappen, Thomas, 1991. 'Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies', *World Politics*, vol. 43, no. 4, July, pp. 479–512.
Rock, Stephen R., 1989. *Why Peace Breaks Out: Great Power Rapprochement in Historical Perspective*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
Rosecrance, Richard & Arthur A. Stein, eds, 1993. *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Russett, Bruce, 1989. 'Democracy, Public Opinion, and Nuclear Weapons', pp. 174–208 in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husbands, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern & Charles Tilly, eds, *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War, Volume I*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Russett, Bruce, 1993. *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Russett, Bruce & Thomas W. Graham, 1989. 'Public Opinion and National Security Policy: Relationships and Impacts', pp. 239–257 in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
Schweller, Randall L., 1992. 'Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?', *World Politics*, vol. 44, no. 2, January, pp. 235–269.
Shlaim, Avi, 1994. 'The Oslo Accord', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 24–40.
Stein, Janice G., ed., 1989a. *Getting to The Table: The Process of International Prenegotiation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Stein, Janice G., 1989b. 'Prenegotiations in the Arab–Israeli Conflict: The Paradoxes of Success and Failure', pp. 174–205 in Stein (1989a).
Thompson, William R., 1995. 'Principal Rivalries', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 39, no. 2, June, pp. 195–223.
Vasquez, John A., 1993. *The War Puzzle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Zartman, I. William, 1977. 'Negotiation as a Joint Decision-Making Process', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 21, no. 4, December, pp. 619–638.
Zartman, I. William, 1989. 'Prenegotiations: Phases and Functions', pp. 1–17 in Stein (1989a).

BEN D. MOR, b. 1956, PhD in International Relations (New York University, 1990); Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Haifa, Israel; current main interests: enduring rivalries and their resolution.