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Abstract

This book review analyzes Galia Golan's recent book *Israeli Peacemaking Since 1967: Factors Behind the Breakthroughs and Failures*. Using seven (7) conflicts following the 1967 Seven-day War, Golan identifies the actors and processes that were factors that led to progress or failure in the peacemaking relations between Israel, neighboring Arab nations, and international parties. Leadership, security, and interstate negotiation were the three (3) primary factors that were identified as having the greatest impact on Israeli peacemaking process, both positive and negative. The interplay between primary leaders and leaders of opposing factions (spoilers) is traced through the course of the initiation of conflicts and the peace process to illustrate the importance of regime change and public opinion pressure on Israel and parties negotiating with Israel. The legitimate security concerns of Israel were also analyzed and were criticized in light of changes in the relations between different neighboring parties. Golan also covers the complex impact of the variety of actors and interests that have comprised the interstate negotiations that have supported and sabotaged the peacemaking process in the Middle East. Written from the perspective of an Israeli academic and a private citizen, Golan makes compelling arguments that illustrate the conditions under which the peace process has resulted in breakthroughs and the conditions that have resulted in failure.

Keywords: *peacemaking, Israel, interstate negotiation, Middle East peace*

Author Bio(s)

Michael Garver is a doctoral student at Nova Southeastern University in the Department of Conflict Resolution. Michael has been involved in peace activism for more than thirty (30) years, and has been involved in negotiation, mediation, arbitration, peace education, and conflict resolution in labor organizations, business consulting, prison-based education, and community building. Throughout his academic career, he has researched solutions to conflict in the Middle East in an effort to support peaceful resolution of conflict and successful implementation of sustainable relationships between the various parties in the region.

Book Review
Israeli Peacemaking Since 1967: Factors Behind the Breakthroughs and Failures,
by Galia Golan

Michael Garver

Galia Golan is the Head of the Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution program at IDC Herzliya (near Tel Aviv, Israel) and has extensive expertise in conflict in the Middle East. The State of Israel has been at war since its foundation in 1948. The title of this book seemed to be an oxymoron at first. However, my initial skepticism quickly evaporated as the intent and the evidence behind the author's motivation were revealed and substantiated.

Golan's perspective involves analyzing the historical interplay of the successful and unsuccessful efforts of Israel to establish peaceful relationships with neighboring Arab nations, and it also reflects the deeply personal perspective of an Israeli citizen trying to make sense of the protracted conflict with multiple regional neighbors.

The thesis of *Israeli Peacemaking Since 1967: Factors Behind the Breakthroughs and Failures* is that, following the Six-Day War in 1967, there have been opportunities for peaceful resolution of the conflicts between Israel and its neighbors. Golan is seeking to answer the question, "If peace had been offered, or perhaps been possible, at various times since 1967, why were we still struggling with the conflict?" (Golan, 2015, p. ix). There is tremendous public and political pressure within Israel to resolve the conflicts, and Golan conveys, "It is my hope that identifying...those factors that affected past efforts at peacemaking can inform and improve future efforts" (p. x).

In order to lay the foundation for identifying these key factors, Golan establishes the characteristics that make this conflict so complicated. She refers to the extensive research done to identify what contributes to intractable conflicts, observing, "Of importance to this study is how these and other attributes of intractability served to block or prevent a breakthrough, or led to a failure, or conversely, which of them underwent a change (and why), enabling a breakthrough" (pp. 1-5).

Golan develops her thesis using analysis of seven (7) attempted peacemaking processes that Israel has engaged in since 1967. This format allows for a thorough discussion of the relationships between Israel, various Arab neighbors, and third-party agents. Each chapter explores events that led to breakthroughs and/or failures in peaceful relationships between the

different parties. By identifying and prioritizing the factors that have supported efforts to establish agreement (peace), and balancing the factors that have undermined these efforts (including “spoilers”), Golan has highlighted many components in the peacemaking process from an Israeli perspective, as well as from the perspective of those who have participated in dialogue (or avoided dialogue) with Israel.

The primary factor identified throughout the book is the role of leadership (p. 201). The balance of power and influence shifted as the United States and the Soviets marshaled support for Israel and Arab states during the Cold War (p. 10-11). The stability and character of the leaders of the superpowers, Israel, and the Arab nations contributed in the greatest degree to the breakthroughs and failures during the negotiations related to agreements between the parties in conflict. This factor of the role of the leaders was also important to what Golan frequently refers to as the “spoilers,” the leaders of factions or parties that sought to modify or defeat the process of peace (p. 203). Sub-factors included personality, political confidence, political support, political will, and character (p. 207, 211).

One aspect of leadership that is thoroughly examined is that of regime change, and how the various levels of leadership contributed to the success or failure of negotiations (p. 209). For example, Jimmy Carter became President of the United States (in 1977) and quickly returned to the peace process based on the Geneva Conference to resolve the conflict between Israel and Egypt (p. 41). Anwar Sadat was trusting and open to peace talks, had political confidence and support, was eager to negotiate, and was willing to travel to Jerusalem in order to resolve the conflict (p. 44). The influence of these two leaders actively working for a peace agreement was a major component in the subsequent resolution of the conflict between Israel and Egypt.

In contrast, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir expressed an attitude of distrust during the London Agreement negotiations with Jordan, due to President Reagan’s lack of support for Israel (pp. 102-104). This—coupled with discord within Israel and a vague series of negotiations between international leaders—made the initial peace process between Israel and Jordan impossible. As leaders changed, and their advisors changed, the prospects for the peace process reflected the positions and interests of key players in the various parties. After Shamir was defeated by Yitzhak Rabin, and Bill Clinton was the U.S. President, there was a breakthrough in the peace talks between Israel and Jordan.

A second factor that Golan identifies is the Israeli effort to maintain security and establish identity in the Middle East, which was expressed by general mistrust (pp. 202-204). This was reflected in, and influenced by, public opinion for and against different points in the process of peace negotiation (p. 217). The challenges of public opinion at key stages revealed one of the sources of pressure on leadership that has contributed to the success or failure of attempts to negotiate agreements between the various parties (p. 205).

The pressure of Israeli public opinion, combined with fluctuations in international support, exerted significant influence on Israeli leaders and political parties to support or withdraw support at many points during peace negotiations (pp. 210-211). Even though the issue of national security and State recognition were not credible concerns, these positions have been a constant set of reference points used by the leadership of Israel. Subsequently, the people have shown signs of being “fed up” with the constant state of conflict (p. 122).

A third major factor identified in this work is interstate negotiation (p. 207). This aspect of the process of pursuing peace has contributed to the complexity and therefore the intractability of the conflict, despite numerous efforts to secure peace. The dynamics of interstate negotiations also revealed some fundamental signals that can be warning signs during negotiation and mediation.

For example, when Israel was negotiating with Egypt (1967-1968), the focus was primarily on the two parties, with support from the United States and the Soviet Union. The relative simplicity of the process, based on the number of stakeholders, allowed the negotiations to move forward to a peace agreement. In contrast, when Israel first began negotiating with Jordan in 1967, King Hussein was holding secret talks with Israel, but the presence of Palestinian refugees and the control of West Bank and the Jordan River were obstacles to reaching agreement (p. 15). Over the course of the negotiations, additional interstate interests began to increase the complexity of the conflict as it spread to Lebanon, Syria, and the PLO, all of which complicated the negotiations between several Israeli administrations and King Hussein (pp. 94-95). When faced with this level of complexity, the underlying mistrust on the part of Israeli leaders sabotaged even the most legitimate efforts on the part of Arab and third-party stakeholders. Golan emphasizes the lack of trust with which the Israelis view nearly every other country (including the United States), and she exposes the weakness of the Israeli national security concerns that have been a fundamental Israeli hindrance to the peace process (p. 203).

This book is a courageous project that highlights the extremely complex process of the Israeli struggle for existence and recognition as well as the needs and rights of the various Arab nations that comprise the Middle East. The comprehensive analysis of the breakthroughs and failures of decades of war and negotiation illustrate that leaders, political structures, and citizen groups have influenced and attempted to assert their right to be represented. Golan reveals the details of the developments in Israeli peacemaking efforts that succeeded and failed in a quest to understand and support progress that will result in peace in the future.

I highly recommend this book to not only those who have an interest in Israel or the Middle East, but to anyone who is interested in a better understanding of the complex process of resolving protracted conflict in any setting. The key factors that Golan has identified and detailed are applicable to interpersonal conflict between communities, regions, and nations. Understanding these factors and how they relate to conflict can be utilized to reduce and possibly avoid the level of violent conflict that has made up so much of the history of Israel and the surrounding region.

Reference

Golan, G. (2015). *Israeli peacemaking since 1967: Factors behind the breakthroughs and failures*. New York: Routledge.