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Religious Diplomacy: Jewish Perspectives

This article will seek to present the outlines of a Jewishly based approach to the challenge of advancing religious diplomacy. The paper will first set out the contours of the need for "religious diplomacy" with reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and provide a theoretical framework for navigating that conflict based on the work of two important Jewish thinkers relevant to international relations and peacebuilding who were influenced by the Jewish experience, namely Hans J. Morgenthau and Martin Buber. Finally it will provide some empirical data pointing to the possibility of religion serving as a common ground for Jewish-Arab understanding in the Middle East with special emphasis on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Both the substance of religion as it informs national identity and the role of religious leaders in being part of the process will be addressed.

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The Challenge of Diplomacy

Diplomacy lies at the heart of efforts to achieve stability in international relations. According to one researcher the essence of diplomacy is to transform "conflicting interests" to "complementary interests" and "complementary interests" to "identical interests" in international relations[1]. According to realist international relations theory the political realm is inherently conflictual with power, the central currency of international politics. However such an approach, while cognizant of the dangers inherent in international relations does not despair of advancing the task of diplomacy in achieving the balancing of interests between different actors[2].

In the wake of the end of the Cold War the international system has been in flux with the "clash of civilizations" thesis, advanced by Huntington – in which the clash of civilizational units encompassing states with common cultural backgrounds – has been emerging as a central characteristic of the present day international system[3]. As noted by Huntington, civilization is deeply rooted in religious identity. Furthermore the heightened attention to the appearance of religion as a factor in international relations has been reflected by a number of scholars[4]. Religiously based conflict is even more significant in the Middle East

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[1] T. ROBINSON, *National Interests*, in G.N. ROSENAU (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, New York 1969, pp. 182-190.

[2] For a discussion of both realist principles and approaches to responsible diplomacy see: H.J. MORGENTHAU, *Politics Among Nations*, New York 1966⁴, pp. 3-14 and 532-552.

[3] S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of Civilizations*, «in Foreign Affairs», 1993, 72, 3, pp. 22-49.

[4] See for instance: J. FOX - S. SANDLER, *Bringing Religion into International Relations*, New York 2006; D. JOHNSTON - C. SAMPSON (eds.), *Religion the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, New York 1994; and S. THOMAS, *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations*, New York 2005.

as «religious traditions explicitly or implicitly underlie the collective ways of life and values of both Jews and Arabs, even for many who may not follow strict religiously-observant behavior in their personal lives»[5].

Thus the task of advancing diplomacy within the context of the Middle East in general and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular ought to encompass efforts at advancing inter-civilizational dialogue. And the effort to advance inter-civilizational dialogue needs to vitally include efforts at inter-religious dialogue and diplomacy.

Further relevant to this theme of inter-civilizational dialogue and diplomacy is the work of Raymond Cohen who has alerted us to the importance of the inter-cultural dimension in international relations and diplomacy. Affirming the task of diplomacy in transforming "conflicting" and "complementary" interests between actors (as noted above) he has pointed to the importance of appreciating different communication styles between states rooted in different cultural backgrounds as an element that can either help advance, or retard efforts at communication which can help identify common ground[6].

The importance of the cultural element in international politics today is further highlighted by the insights of other researchers such as Ross who has described culture as shaping central values which «people consider valuable and worth fighting over»[7].

In developing the contours of religious diplomacy this paper will suggest that the effort encompasses: the attempt to find diplomatic solutions and understanding between actors motivated by religiously based identity; the effort to involve and enlist religious representatives in the task of diplomacy with commonalities between religions an important tool in this endeavor.

The Cultural Basis of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

The reporting and analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular and the Arab-Israeli conflict in general usually focuses strictly on the immediate political dimensions of conflict or conflict management. Rarely are the deeper cultural underpinnings of the conflict addressed. However understanding the foundations of the deeper narratives which motivate the behavior of the parties to the conflict is essential to appreciating the dynamics of both conflict and potential avenues for conflict management/resolution.

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[5] B. MOLLOV - C. LAVIE, *Culture, Dialogue and Perception Change in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, in «The International Journal of Conflict Management», 2001, 12, 1, p. 71.

[6] R. COHEN, *Negotiating Across Cultures: International Communications in an Interdependent World*, Washington, D.C. 1991.

[7] M.H. ROSS, *The Culture of Conflict: Interpretation and Interests in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven 1993, p. 13.

It will be suggested here that the modern Zionist movement and the modern Arab nationalist movements were fundamentally motivated by the effort to revive an earlier "heroic era" of their histories against the immedi-

ate background of repression and grievance. In the Jewish case this was the two thousand year history of anti-Semitism and exile; in the Arab case the decline of Arab identity and civilization and subjugation to foreign rule and domination. These earlier "heroic eras" – the period of the Bible in the Land of Israel in the case of the Jews, and the Arab-Islamic empire during the period of the 7th to 10th centuries in the case of the Arabs – were largely rooted at core in religiously based values as the Hebrew Bible was a religious document and the dynamism of the Arab-Islamic empire heavily influenced by the appearance of the Prophet Muhammed and the Koran[8].

Although the dominant strain of the modern Zionist movement sought to "secularize" Jewish peoplehood – the collective move back to "Zion" was based on ancient longings that were ultimately religiously based. The project to revive the Hebrew language as a modern spoken language was significant as it was the language of the Bible[9]. In parallel the Arab nationalist movement although originally catalyzed by Christian Arab intellectuals in the area of Damascus (in the mid-19th century) sought to revive the Arab-Islamic period of glory[10].

Combined with powerful political dynamics in the early part of the twentieth century the two national movements based on opposing narratives clashed in Palestine. The Arab-Jewish conflict in Mandatory Palestine set the context for the later Israeli-Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict.

Indeed in a remarkably acute analysis the Peel Commission of 1937 appointed by the British Government responsible for the Mandate offered the following analysis of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine, in the wake of anti-Jewish violence during that period. At the core of its analysis was that of the clashing narratives (which led to the operative proposal of partition), presented as follows:

> An irrepressible conflict has arisen between two national communities within the narrow bounds of one small country. About 1,000,000 Arabs are in strife, open or latent, with some 400,000 Jews… The war and its sequel have inspired all Arabs with the hope of reviving in a free and united Arab world the traditions of the Arab golden age. The Jews similarly are inspired by their historic past. They mean to show what the Jewish nation can achieve when restored to the land of its birth. National assimilation between Arabs and Jews is thus ruled out. In the Arab picture the Jews could only occupy the place they occupied in Arab Egypt or Arab Spain. The Arabs

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[8] A.D. GARFINKLE, *Genesis*, in D. RUBINSTEIN (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Perspectives*, New York 1991, pp. 1-33.
[9] For an overview of Zionist thought see: A. HERTZBERG, *The Zionist Idea: An Historical Analysis and Reader*, Philadelphia 1997.
[10] See G. ANTONIUS, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab Nationalist Movement*, New York 1946.

would be as much outside the Jewish picture as the Canaanites in the old land of Israel[11].

The clash of narratives was and still remains fundamental to understanding the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict. During the time of the British Mandate entrusted by the League of Nations with the task of facilitating the implementation of the Balfour Declaration which endorsed the idea of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, the issues at stake between Jews and Arabs revolved around Jewish immigration, land purchases and settlement. Understanding further political developments such as the UN Partition Plan of 1947, Israel's Declaration of Independence and its war of independence against Arab invasions, the Six-Day and its aftermath up through the Oslo peace process and its breakdown can ultimately be referred back to the foundation of clashing narratives. True reconciliation between Arab and Jew in the Middle East must ultimately involve a reconciliation of narratives. In this task inter-religious dialogue and conflict management strategies related to religious dimensions have a critical task to play. Thus religious diplomacy must be a vital part of larger diplomatic endeavors.

Combining Hard Power and Soft Power based on Jewish Perspectives

Religious diplomacy to be effective must also operate within the context of the more general process of diplomacy. The willingness of actors in conflict to come to negotiated settlements is often predicated on the existence of a "hurting stalemate"[12]. The motivation to move from "conflicting interests" to "complementary" ones is thus often a function of the high cost of continued conflict. This was illustrated by the movement by Egypt and Israel towards negotiated settlements following the Yom Kippur War.

Thus "hard power" is a vital tool in both protecting national security and promoting the types of balances of power that can serve as the context for movement towards negotiated settlements. The need for hard power in the case of an actor such as Israel is all the more necessary given the past and continued threats to its existence. "Soft power" as advanced by Nye[13] is gaining more currency in international affairs, and it will be suggested here that dialogue can serve as a tool for peace-building which can also contribute greatly to the task of peace-building once a stable balance of power between actors is achieved.

The section will offer a framework in which hard power and soft power approaches can be combined from a Jewish perspective. Recent research

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[11] W. LAQUER - B.RUBIN (eds.), *The Israel-Arab Reader*, New York 2001, pp. 42-43.
[12] See for instance: I.W. ZARTMAN, *Ripe for Resolution*, New York 1989.
[13] J.S. NYE, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2004.

has shown how both hard power and soft power rooted in the modern Jewish experience through the thought and work of two prominent Jewishly influenced thinkers – Hans J. Morgenthau and Martin Buber can be combined[14]. Both have their roots in the rich German-Jewish heritage and experience. Outlines of their approaches will now be presented.

Hans J. Morgenthau (1904-1980) was probably the most important theoretician of the modern discipline of international relations. His classic work *Politics Among Nations* subtitled the *Struggle for Power and Peace*[15] provided a systematic analysis of the dynamics of international politics founded on the premises of political realism. In his work he emphasized the conflictual nature of politics and the need for power to ensure both national survival and advance stable balances of power. Morgenthau's work and public activities had a great impact on thinking about international politics and diplomacy in the twentieth century.

Martin Buber (1878-1965) through his classic work *I and Thou*[16] was a champion of dialogue. His philosophy advanced the possibility of men achieving full revelation of their common humanity with one another (based on the presence of the divine in all humans) and the transformation of conflicts through the "I-Thou" encounter. While Buber did not ignore the utilitarian nature of most human encounters (characterized by "I-It" relationships) his approach to dialogue reflected essentially idealist premises acknowledging the good in men. His philosophy attracted the attention of international statesmen such as Dag Hammarskjöld who felt that Buber's work had important relevance for promoting international understanding.

While these two seminal thinkers, Morgenthau and Buber had very different outlooks and approaches to international politics much of their outlooks were formed as a result of their common anchor in the German-Jewish heritage which has been discussed elsewhere[17]. This experience which has been explored by various researchers[18] can be advanced as a Jewish contribution to conflict management in terms of premises, outlook and tools. Its different periods gave rise to two vital thinkers who expressed realist and idealist outlooks respectively based on the characteristics of the formative periods of the two Jewish thinkers in Germany. An outline of the two formative background of the two thinkers will now be presented.

Morgenthau was born in Coburg, Germany in southern Bavaria in the early part of the twentieth century and lived the transition from idealism to realism with the rise of Hitler occurring during his formative period of life. German-

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[14] See: B. MOLLOV - E. MEIR - C. LAVIE, *An Integrated Strategy for Peacebuilding: Judaic Approaches*, in «Die Friedens-Warte», 82, 2-3, 2007, pp. 137-158.

[15] H.J. MORGENTHAU, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York 1967⁴.

[16] M. BUBER, *I and Thou: with Prologue and Translation by Walter Kaufman*, New York 1970.

[17] B. MOLLOV - E. MEIR - C. LAVIE, *An Integrated Strategy for Peacebuilding*, cit.

[18] See for instance: S.E. ASCHEIM, *German Jews Beyond Building and Liberalism: The Jewish Racial Revival in the Weimar Republic*, Ramat Gan 1995; G. MOSSE, *German Jews beyond Judaism*, Bloomington 1985; P.R. MENDES-FLOHR, *German Jew: A Dual Identity*, New Haven 1999; and B. MOLLOV (ed.), *The Legacy of the German-Jewish Religious and cultural Heritage: A Basis for German-Israeli Dialogue?*, Jerusalem 2006.

Jewry particularly during the 19th century benefited from and greatly believed in the promise of the German-Jewish enlightenment with its concomitant beliefs in progress and humanistic ideals. However 20th century Germany, following the rise of Nazism, crushed the great progress that German-Jewry had made and shattered the belief in enlightenment ideals following the onslaught of Nazism and the Holocaust. Morgenthau himself reflected on this theme[19]. Other circumstantial research has appeared concerning the philosophical transitions in outlook which affected German Jewry in engendering a movement from idealism to realism[20].

Morgenthau was a direct object of anti-Semitism in Germany. He was the only son of the sole Jewish family in Coburg and described particularly harrowing anti-Semitic experiences in growing up. His witnessing of an early Hitler rally in 1922 and other anti-Semitic experiences, caused within him a complete rupture with his earlier idealistic impulses in his exposure to the great evil in men[21]. His confrontation with the tragic dimensions of human existence and the inability to believe in progress as a dependable element due to man's power seeking was heavily influenced by the Jewish experience which has been explored in depth elsewhere[22]. This worldview lay at the foundation of his classic works[23] in international relations theory written following his arrival in the US in 1937, after leaving Nazi Germany in 1935. In the US he spent the bulk of his career at the University of Chicago, with the last phase of his life in New York.

Furthermore Morgenthau, also partly as a result of certain Jewish values was motivated to be a "scholar-activist" in a variety of public causes including vigorous and public opposition to America's involvement in the War in Vietnam, due to, in his evaluation the irresponsible use of power and in fact later on the betrayal of America's moral legacy. However, germane to this article is that Morgenthau was also deeply involved in Jewish causes particularly that of Soviet Jewry and Israeli security[24].

In his theoretical works Morgenthau emphasized the centrality of power in international relations with "hard" (military) power being the bedrock foundation for national security (although not the sole basis of national power). Morgenthau saw Israel's struggle for survival as particularly intense and clearly saw the need for hard power in protecting its existence. In particular, Morgenthau was deeply concerned about Israel becoming a new Czechoslovakia in which its vital interests could be compromised as part of vain attempts at appeasement[25]. He argued that imperialistic power dynamics must be countered by superior power[26].

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[19] H.J. MORGENTHAU, *The Tragedy of German-Jewish Liberalism*, in «Politics in the Twentieth Century», 1, New York 1962, pp. 247-256.

[20] See for instance: R. BENDIX, *From Berlin to Berkeley: German-Jewish Identities*, New Brunswick 1986.

[21] According to researcher Chris Frei, Morgenthau's handwriting had even changed, see B. MOLLOV, *Power and Transcendence: Hans J. Morgenthau and the Jewish Experience*, Lahman 2002, p. 88.

[22] *Ibidem*.

[23] See H.J. MORGENTHAU, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics*, Chicago 1946.

[24] B. MOLLOV, *Power and Transcendence*, cit.

[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] H.J. MORGENTHAU, *Politics among Nations*, cit., pp. 52-53.

Interestingly as well, Morgenthau saw the struggle for Soviet Jewry as connected to an ideological/philosophical struggle in which the message of Jewish existence and its moral essence rooted in the Biblical Prophetic legacy is seen as a particular ideological threat by Soviet and other totalitarian regimes[27]. Though a proponent of a realpolitik approach to international politics his thinking was not without transcendent liberal elements, aimed at recognizing a higher good in statecraft.

If Morgenthau was the apostle of power-oriented thinking about international relations and the need for humanity in general and the Jewish people/Israel in particular to protect themselves from hard power threats, Martin Buber represented the message of the Jewish people/Israel as being an agent of dialogue, social change and belief in reconciliation between peoples. Born over a half generation prior to Morgenthau he was a product of the 19th century German-Jewish enlightenment. He grew up with exposure to the cultural and spiritual riches of the Jewish heritage and became a leading interpreter to the Western world of the Jewish Hasidic movement[28]. Given the relatively positive dynamics between Germans and Jews of his period he believed in the possibilities of German-Jewish cooperation and capabilities for social transformation[29]. His classic book *I and Thou* was described by one scholar as a great statement of Jewish faith[30].

An activist like Morgenthau, Buber also fled Nazi Germany, for pre-State of Israel Palestine, in 1938 becoming a luminary at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His belief in dialogue and social transformation was expressed by his vigorous efforts at Arab-Jewish reconciliation and involvement with "Brit Shalom" directed to Arab-Jewish reconciliation[31]. Furthermore statesmen such as Dag Hammarskjöld believed that Buber's work had definite relevance for efforts to moderate international conflicts such as the Cold War in facilitating understanding rooted in common humanity between the leaders of the rival blocs[32].

The ability to project hard power in countering an imperialistic strategy in which national survival is threatened, while advancing the tools of meaningful dialogue can provide a highly potent combination of tools

Approaches reflecting idealism and realism rooted in a common German-Jewish heritage can be developed and applied to the context of today's challenges which diplomacy in general and religious diplomacy in particular must address

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[27] B. MOLLOV, *Jewry's Prophetic Challenge to Soviet and Other Totalitarian Regimes According to Hans J. Morgenthau*, in «Journal of Church and State», 39, 3, 1997, pp. 561-575.

[28] M. BUBER, *Hasidism*, New York 1948.

[29] See for instance: E. MEIR, *Reinterpreting Judaism in the German Context: On German-Jewish Thinkers as Jews and Germans*, in B. MOLLOV (ed.), *The Legacy of the German-Jewish Religious and Cultural Heritage*, cit., pp. 25-35.

[30] M. BUBER, *I and Thou*, cit., p. 35.

[31] See P.R. MENDES-FLOHR (ed.), *A land of two peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, New York 1983; and A. SIEGEMUND, *German Zionists of Verständigung and their ideas for conflict resolution in Palestine*, in B. MOLLOV (ed.), *The legacy of the German-Jewish religious and cultural heritage,* cit., pp. 25-35.

[32] M. BUBER, *Pointing the Way*, New York 1974, pp. 220-229.

for Israel in particular and Western civilization in general to protect national security and reach *modus vivendi* with other civilizations. Approaches reflecting idealism and realism rooted in a common German-Jewish heritage can be developed and applied to the context of today's challenges which diplomacy in general and religious diplomacy in particular must address.

Religion and Culture as a Basis for Dialogue: Empirical Perspectives

To this point we have provided an outline of the developing importance of religion in international relations, the cultural basis of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the contours of a diplomatic strategy employing the work of two thinkers influenced by the modern Jewish experience. It is a premise of this author that as the Arab-Israeli conflict is heavily influenced by the religious/cultural background of the Jewish and Arab/Muslim actors, so conflict management activities as part of diplomatic approaches must also employ religious/cultural elements. But how can this be achieved?

It is generally assumed that the injection of religion into severe ethno-national conflicts can only serve to escalate such deep seated conflicts. However, we have suggested earlier in this paper that the Arab-Israeli conflict is deeply rooted in religious and cultural identity and therefore religion is already part of the conflict and therefore must be addressed as part of conflict management efforts. A description of field work focusing on Israeli-Palestinian inter-religious dialogue co-initiated by this author has appeared elsewhere with highlights reviewed below. As this article focuses on the theme of "religious diplomacy", and track II diplomacy is becoming an increasingly recognized element of the overall diplomatic effort, relevant people to people efforts such as those described below can be considered germane to this analysis. Furthermore the dynamics evident in micro dialogue can serve as an important microcosm of dynamics found in the macro conflict and efforts to bridge the conflict.

In 1994 this author was able to co-initiate with a group of Palestinian students and their faculty advisor from the Hebron area, a series of dialogues between those students and Israeli students from Bar-Ilan University an Israeli religious Jewish university. These meetings and activities continued in various forms (including via internet) till virtually the start of acute Israeli-Palestinian violence in the fall of 2000, and focused on commonalities between Islam and Judaism. The eventuality led to a variety of spin-off cooperative efforts, facilitated by the leading partners of the dialogue themselves. Participants reported on a warm atmosphere in these face-to-face meetings and attributed that achievement to the discovery of commonalities in the other's religious culture[33].

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[33] B. MOLLOV - M. BARHOUM, *Building cultural/religious bridges between Jewish and Arab university students*, http://meria.biu.ac.il (accessed 1999).

Specifically it should be noted that approximately 90 students on each side had at some point been directly involved in the process. The activity led to the participation and graduation of a Palestinian student from the Beit Ommar village, in proximity to northern Hebron, in Bar-Ilan University's International Program in Business Administration. Similarly it facilitated the participation and graduation of another Palestinian student in the Peace Studies Program at Notre Dame University.

Family visitations and strong friendships developed during the process between the principle organizers, and they responded to each other during illness and joy and expressed condemnation and condolences to each other in the wake of violent events on either side, even during the period of acute Israeli-Palestinian hostilities.

Anecdotally it should be mentioned that at the first meeting held between this author and the Palestinian students which preceded the regular student meetings, the very basis and legitimacy of the State of Israel

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and the collective return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel was questioned by the Palestinian students. This key issue would re-emerge at various points in the dialogue. The positive relationships that developed among the students as they discovered similarities in structure and practices between Islam and Judaism can be considered a crucial first step for conflict management processes. However the deeper issues concerning the attachment to the same land were confronted at various times in the dialogue.

As the Bar-Ilan – "Hebron" dialogue began as an ad hoc effort under difficult circumstances, no hard quantitative data was collected to measure perception changes among the participants, although a more thorough description of the process and interactions has appeared elsewhere[34].

However, working together with Israeli social psychologist Dr. Chaim Lavie, extensive analysis of various Israeli Jewish subjects at Bar-Ilan University and in a number of Palestinian universities was undertaken during the late 1990's concerning their perceptions of the opposite group, through questionnaire based data. These results (which have appeared elsewhere) have yielded data confirming that religious subjects were far more likely to exhibit more negative perceptions of Palestinian Arabs or Israeli Jews than secular or less religious Israelis or Palestinians[35]. This provides affirming evidence to the suggestion that religion can indeed be an exacerbating influence in the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab-Israeli conflict.

However, an Israeli-Palestinian inter-religious dialogue held in Khan Yunis, Gaza in early 1999 which focused on the subject of prayer rituals in Judaism and

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[34] B. MOLLOV, *The role of religion in conflict resolution: An Israeli-Palestinian student dialogue*, Jerusalem 1999.
[35] B. MOLLOV - C. LAVIE, *Culture, dialogue and perception change in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*, cit.

Islam afforded the opportunity to further explore the impact of inter-religious dialogue. In this Friday-Saturday (Sabbath) seminar involving both Israeli/Jewish and Palestinian Muslim/Arab students and academics, Jewish and Moslem prayer rituals were discussed, the services of both religions were conducted, and the religious dietary requirements of the Jewish guests were respected. Perception questionnaires in Hebrew and Arabic were distributed before and after the activity. Results which have appeared elsewhere revealed that Palestinian religious Arab Muslims who held the most negative perceptions of Israeli Jews among the Palestinian participants as a whole changed to a more positive measurable perception than their counterparts, yielding an empirical basis for the efficacy of the Israeli-Palestinian inter-religious dialogue[36].

Other field work has been undertaken and reported on which is relevant to this analysis. As Israeli Arabs tend to identify with the larger Palestinian narrative (even though they are citizens of Israel) insights gained from dialogue and interactions between Jewish and Arab citizens of the State of Israel are also very useful for appreciating the possible contribution of inter-religious dialogue efforts between these two groups. Joint Jewish-Arab courses and a study mission to Holocaust sites in Poland held in 2004-2005, which included inter-religious elements, involved both students from the main Bar-Ilan University campus and satellite regional colleges. Evaluation of these activities also yielded both qualitative (anecdotal) and quantitative data pointing to the favorable impact which common inter-religious elements can have on mutual perceptions, which have been presented elsewhere[37]. Also inter-religious dialogue activities based on common religious elements between groups of Jewish and Arab women within the State of Israel were found to also advance positive interactions between the two groups and have also been described elsewhere[38].

Why indeed can the inter-religious encounter serve to promote more positive perceptions and interactions between Jews and Arabs despite the escalatory potential of injecting religion into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Research in social psychology offers insight into the conditions in which perceptions, interactions and relationships between groups in conflict can change favorably.

For instance Yehuda Amir has written about the conditions for positive contact including "equal status contacts"; "intimate" as opposed to merely "casual encounters"; "cooperative" as opposed to "competitive" relationships; and "institutional" supports for such efforts[39]. Furthermore, Rokeach[40] and others have emphasized the importance which the discovery of commonalities in another

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[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] B. MOLLOV - C. LAVIE, *The impact of Jewish-Arab encounters and the discourse of the Holocaust on mutual perceptions*, Paper presented at Annual Meeting of International Association for Conflict Management, June 2006.

[38] B. MOLLOV - C. LAVIE, *Arab and Jewish women's interreligious dialogue evaluated*, in Y. IRAM (ed.), *Educating towards a culture of peace*, Greenwich 2006, pp.247-258.

[39] Y. AMIR, *Contact hypothesis in ethnic relations*, in «Psychological Bulletin», 71, 1969, pp. 319-342.

[40] M. ROKEACH (ed.), *The open and closed mind*, New York 1960.

group can have on mutual perceptions[41]. In addition Pettigrew, has amplified on Amir's work and cited the importance of "friendship potential"[42] emerging out of intergroup encounters which is connected to former US diplomat Harold Saunders' approach to sustained dialogue and relationship building[43]. These are all essential tools in developing dialogue in the overall task of diplomacy in general and religious diplomacy in particular.

As noted earlier in this article, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a function of clashing narratives. How can inter-religious dialogue help to facilitate a reconciliation of narratives upon which peace must ultimately be based? The inter-religious dialogue involves a number of levels. First the identification of common elements in Islam and Judaism can offer a basis of common ground to help moderate perceptions between Jews and Arabs and "humanize" each other, supported by social psychological theory cited above. It should also be emphasized here that inter-religious dialogue on this level is not meant to deal with confrontational issues upon which there is no agreement such as "who the favored son of Abraham was – Issac or Ishmael" but rather commonalities in areas such as prayer, charity, and new bio-ethical challenges.

However from this point of departure, which can facilitate more positive communication and interaction between Arab and Jew the basic issue

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of each side's attachment to the same land (Land of Israel for Jews, Palestine for Arabs) can be discussed and addressed. Admittedly there can be a phase of conflict escalation as both sides clearly recognize that they claim the same land. This is exacerbated by the fact that during the "heroic period" of the Hebrew Bible for the Jews, Islam did not yet exist, and during the Arab-Islamic empire the Jews were no longer an active political force in the region. These "heroic periods" have influenced the collective memory of both sides. This clash of narratives has been at the root of a century old conflict with several major wars and ongoing violence with peace efforts interspersed.

Employing the tools of hard power advanced by Morgenthau and the approach of dialogue purported by Buber, both rooted in the Jewish experience can serve both to anchor Israeli security and advance diplomatic efforts at peacebuilding. Indeed when both sides realize that they can either continue fighting to the death or reach the point of a constructive stalemate, further reflection must take place among Arabs and Jews. Can they make room for the other in their respective narratives? This can lead to the basis of advancing conflicting interests to complementary ones which is at the core of the diplomatic endeavor.

This connects very strongly to the need for both Jews and Arabs to develop

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[41] See: D. BYRNE, *Attitude and attraction*, in L. BERKOWITZ (ed.), *Advances in experimental and social psychology*, 4, New York 1969, pp. 36-89; M. HEWSTONE, *The ultimate attribution error? A review of literature on intergroup casual attribution*, in «European Journal of Social Psychology», 20, 1990, pp. 311-335; T.M. NEWCOMB, *The acquaintance process*, New York 1961.

[42] T.F. PETTIGREW, *Intergroup contact theory*, in «Annual Review of Psychology», 49, 1998, pp. 65-83.

[43] H. SAUNDERS, *A public peace process*, New York 1999.

more inclusive approaches in their religious outlooks. All religions have both elements of exclusivity and inclusiveness, militancy and conciliation depending on context and choice of accent on different and often conflicting religious texts in their respective traditions[44]. The basis of a Jewish approach to greater inclusiveness has been discussed elsewhere[45] based on the work of a number of important Jewish scholars[46].

Finally as part of this process in which inter-religious dialogue holds a central role in religious diplomacy, there is ideally a third phase. That phase refers to a transcendent point of contact between Israelis and Palestinians in which both are able to make room for the other in their respective narratives and find a similar animating theme in the idea of the "Holy Land". This is both a specific enough, but also general enough idea under which Israelis do not give up their state, or Palestinians their aspiration for a state but can provide the basis of a common ideal for the building of the same land as a basis for cooperation. Such an approach has already been presented elsewhere by this author including the venue of an important Muslim country[47].

Involvement of Religious Leaders

Up to this point we have dealt with a framework for religious diplomacy based on the conflict between actors in an identity based conflict with roots in religion and culture of which the Arab-Israeli is a prime example. Although political leaders must deal with these core issues informed by their religious and cultural values, the contribution of both local and religious leaders primarily Jewish and Muslim can be very significant in moderating attitudes and also strengthening the people to people aspect of Track II diplomacy. The specific involvement of religious leaders in the process of religious diplomacy can serve to build bridges between leaders with a similar language of faith and can also serve to provide legitimacy for peace building processes among populations that are highly dedicated to their national narratives and often as well the most hesitant or resistant to peace building processes.

Some pioneer work on the ground in Israel encouraged by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and other interested bodies ought to be noted as examples of rabbinical figures not previously involved in ongoing dialogue with other religions which are now becoming much more active participants in such process-

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[44] See S. APPLEBY, *The ambivalence of the sacred: Religion, violence, and reconciliation*, Lanham 2000; M. GOPIN, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The future of world religions, violence and peacemaking*, New York 2000.

[45] B. MOLLOV - E. MEIR - C. LAVIE, *An integrated strategy for peace-building*, cit.

[46] D. HARTMAN, *A living covenant: A living spirit in traditional Judaism*, New Haven 1985; R.E. HASSNER, *War on Sacred Grounds*, Ithaca 2009; N. ZOHAR, *Text, power and responsibility: The crucial role of Midrashic reinterpretation*, in B. MOLLOV (ed.), *Religion and conflict resolution*, Jerusalem 2003.

[47] B. MOLLOV, *Managing conflict: Can religion succeed where politics has failed? An Israeli addresses a global peace forum in Malaysia*, in «Jerusalem Viewpoints», No. 548, 1 November 2006.

es. The involvement of high level religious leaders in dialogue, cooperation and outreach to the leaders of other faiths can serve to bolster the process of reconciliation between peoples and are a natural component of religious diplomacy. This can also lead to greater inclusive attitudes towards other religious communities and peoples.

The high profile visit of former Pope John Paul II to Israel and the Holy Land in 2000, according to officials connected with the process served as an important catalyst for the beginning of ongoing institutionalized dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See[48]. This clearly was the beginning of a process in which previous attitudes of withholding legitimacy to Israel (by the Vatican) and reluctance by the Chief Rabbinate to such contacts given the 2000 year history of hostility by the Church to the Jewish people have been changing.

> The involvement of high level religious leaders in dialogue, cooperation and outreach to the leaders of other faiths can serve to bolster the process of reconciliation between peoples

This breakthrough effort in ongoing dialogue between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Pontiff also led to the involvement of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and other rabbinical figures in dialogue with religious leaders in the Muslim world. High level rabbinical delegations for instance have met with Muslim religious leaders from the periphery of the Islamic world from areas such as India, which is a feasible starting point given its greater distance from the day to day intensity of the Arab-Israeli conflict[49]. Common challenges facing people of faith in a secular world have been a main basis of initial dialogue.

However there has also been progress in establishing and achieving ongoing high level dialogue and cooperation between key Israeli Jewish rabbis, Palestinian Arab Muslim Sheikhs and Imams, and Christian clergy operating under the auspices of their respective highest level religious authorities in the Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land in operation since 2004. Despite the context of dynamic political events on the ground in Israeli-Palestinian relations, the religious figures have been able to achieve their own areas of discourse in which pressing political issues are discussed in a more thoughtful manner. Concrete issues such as cooperation in reviewing educational textbooks in an attempt to influence and encourage attitudes of moderation on both sides have and are being undertaken[50].

Israel as a mosaic of peoples in which as a Jewish state about 20 percent of its population are non-Jewish, is a context in which inter-religious dialogue and cooperation between the leaders of its four main faith communities (Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze) can be significant for maintaining inter-group stability and avoiding or moderating violent conflict. This is particularly important as mixed Jewish-Arab cities and locales have been the site of flash points of conflict

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[48] Interview with Mr. Oded Weiner, Director general, Chief rabbinate of Israel, Jerusalem, December 31, 2009.
[49] *Ibidem.*
[50] *Ibidem.*

between Jews and Arabs in Israel. A council of religious leaders comprised of local and national leaders within Israel was established about two years ago to serve as a framework for cooperation between the leaders of the different communities in Israel with the object to provide a mechanism for inter-religious cooperation particularly during crises[51].

This author as a scholar practitioner recently served as an academic consultant and organizer for a more ambitious effort at facilitating and developing ties between 200 (mostly local) religious leaders focused on discussion of conflict scenarios and modes of cooperation between such leaders during times of conflict and crisis at the most recent meeting in December 2009 of the council mentioned above. This took place under the auspices of the Druze religious community in their holy site in the upper Galilee overlooking the Sea of Galilee at the presence of the highest level religious leaders in Israel including the two Chief Rabbis. Interaction between the religious leaders was very positive and was an expression of the importance of ongoing frameworks of dialogue on both national and international levels which can lead to "relationship building" and conflict transformation as advocated by Harold Saunders and John Paul Lederach[52]. Furthermore anectodal impressions indicated the beginning of processes in which religious leaders, some of whom had never been to an inter-religious meeting, began to exhibit "inclusive" attitudes towards leaders of other religions which is vital in developing a "shared vision" for the Holy Land while distinctive identities are preserved[53].

While much work still needs to be done between elite and local religious leaders in developing ongoing relationships on the international, regional and local levels the examples of developing cooperation outlined in this section can provide the basis for "strategic" cooperation between religious leaders as a vital element of religious diplomacy relating to both substance and process.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to provide the outlines of an approach to "religious diplomacy" based upon theoretical approaches and empirical data, and rooted in Jewish perspectives. As noted at the beginning of this paper diplomacy is essentially the effort to move conflicting interests towards complementary ones, and complementary interests towards identical ones. In an era in which inter-civilizational conflict, rooted in religious identity and culture, has become a major characteristic of the international system, religious diplomacy has an essential task in helping actors particularly in the Middle East, whose identities are rooted in religious culture, to find common ground. Furthermore, religious

[51] *Ibidem.*

[52] H. SAUNDERS, *A public peace process*, New York 1999; J.P. LEDERACH, *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*, Washington, D.C. 1997.

[53] See also D. ROSEN, *Religious leaders unite for a better future*, in «Common Ground News Service», December 23, 2009, (http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=27007&lan=en&sid=0&sp=0).

leaders can also be brought into this process, particularly to strengthen track II diplomacy.

This paper has presented hard and soft approaches to power connected to the work of international relations theorist Hans J. Morgenthau who emphasized the centrality of power in international relations, and the eminent social philosopher Martin Buber who was a proponent of the power of dialogue. Both were products of the rich German-Jewish heritage and experience which included both the hope of enlightenment and the devastation of the Holocaust and the conclusions emanating from them. Combining hard power and soft power, realism and idealism as outgrowths of the Jewish experience represent highly appropriate tools to navigate conflict towards balances of power and promote dialogue in the Middle East conflict.

Furthermore, the finding of common ground between religiously motivated actors – as suggested by Huntington – as a means of moderating intercivilizational conflict[54], with a focus on the similarities of practice and structure in Islam and Judaism, can be a first step in promoting a deeper grappling with the mutual attachment of the two sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is a core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Eventually both sides of the conflict will have to make room for the "other" in their respective narratives, a process which requires a degree of "inclusiveness" in religious thinking that combine both particular and universal aspects of a religious worldview[55]. While the vision of two states in the Land of Israel/Palestine would be maintained, and the identity of Israelis and Palestinians secured, the building of the "Holy Land" would be identified as an animating constructive vision.

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[54] S.P. HUNTINGTON, *The clash of civilizations*, cit., p. 49.
[55] For an important analysis see: J. SACKS, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations*, London 2003.