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Title: The political psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers. When Hard-Liners opt for Peace. Yael S. Aronoff (2014). New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014. Online ISBN 978-1-13981484-3. Book DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139814843>

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‘The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers’ starts with the assumption that everything is known and written about why states go to war, but that there is almost no attention to why they make peace. In this book Aronoff analyses the differences leaders make in determining war and peace. To do so, he examines six Israeli prime ministers and their attitudes toward their eternal enemy, the PLO. The author argues that leaders do not have to be replaced to end an intractable conflict and shows that some leaders do change, and why and how such changes occur. According to Aronoff, the following conditions make it more likely that a leader’s image changes: 1) a weak link to an ideology that is inconsistent with change or the absence of such an ideology; 2) a present or future time orientation; 3) a perception that the world is permanently hostile; 4) emotional intelligence, which increases the possibility of being exposed to different opinions; and 5) risk propensity which can increase the probability of making concessions to an enemy. In this book, Aronoff describes each Israeli prime minister in terms of their ideologies, time horizons, and cognitive flexibility. The analysis applied in this book is relevant because it can guide policy makers to use the best methods for persuading leaders to end enduring conflicts and to prevent other conflicts from erupting. It also has implications for U.S. foreign policy. The United States actually continues to play an important role in mediating the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Introducing the conceptual framework

Aronoff argues that the perceptions of individual leaders make a significant difference in determining if and when a peace agreement will end a conflict. She points out that the field of foreign policy analysis knows surprisingly little about why, how and when leaders initiate dramatic change in foreign policy. That is why Aronoff in this book engages in a theory-building exercise analyzing which types of leaders are more likely to change into peacemakers. As noted earlier in this report, he moves among five separate but related ways to describe individual cognition and attitude: ideology, individual time orientations, cognitive openness, emotional intelligence, and risk propensity. Aronoff uses a qualitative

content analysis in this book for his research that exists of interviews, archival research, memoirs, biographies, and secondary academic literature. He examines how the same events were perceived differently by each leader, how these perceptions shaped enemy images, and whether attitudes and policies were revised as a consequence of these events. Possible changes in policy preferences are measured along this categories: willingness to make territorial concessions and the depth of those concessions; advocating a Jordanian solution for the Palestinian people; advocating functional autonomy for the Palestinian people; advocating autonomy for the Palestinians under the leadership of non PLO leaders; and negotiating with the PLO over the future of the territories, advocating a Palestinian state and a willingness to divide and share Jerusalem in a peace agreement.

In the chapter, Yitzhak Shamir: Once a Hawk, Always a Hawk the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is described by Aronoff as a man who maintained a hostile image of the Palestinians until his death in July 2012. Shamir did everything he could 'to protect Israel's vital national interests'. That is why he always was averse to compromise. According to Aronoff, Shamir's ideology and personality reinforced each other. This made it difficult for the prime minister to change his perceptions of the PLO and his policy preferences which, as a consequence, he never did. His strong commitment to his ideology, his cognitive rigidity, his suspicion, and his past time orientation were the main factors in not changing his attitudes towards the Palestinians and his opposition to negotiations. Nevertheless, as a response to American pressure he did negotiate in Madrid with Palestinians. Aronoff calls this a tactical change which paved the way for broader public support for negotiating with Palestinians.

In the chapter on Benjamin Netanyahu: Battling the World, Netanyahu is described as a skeptical of the Oslo accords, but he ratified them anyway and went on to sign the Wye Agreement. Aronoff also focuses on the importance of the relationship between Netanyahu and American president Obama. This relationship is very important because of the monolithic view of Netanyahu towards the Palestinians. Netanyahu has remained a hard-liner who believes that the probability of peace is low or even nonexistent. U.S. pressure leads him to more significant peace concessions.

The chapter Ariel Sharon: From Warfare to Withdrawal depicts Ariel Sharon as a hard-liner who underwent a significant political transformation. Aronoff pays special attention to his unlikely rise to power in 2001, how he left the Likud party and created a new political party Kadima, and of course Israel's unilateral withdrawal of troops from Gaza. For Aronoff this proves that hard-liners in enduring rivalries do not necessarily need to be replaced before concessions can be made. According to Aronoff, Sharon was not cognitively rigid and was therefore also open to contrasting views of advisors. Sharon was a hard-liner that became a latter-day peacemaker.

Yitzhak Rabin is one of the most dramatic and well-known examples of a hard-liner changing his stance towards a longstanding enemy. In 1988, as defense minister he tried to stop the Intifada by using force. Five years later he negotiated for peace with Arafat, his mortal enemy, after signing the Oslo Accords. In his chapter Yitzhak Rabin: From Hawk to Nobel Prize Peacemaker, Aronoff states that not only changes in the PLO and regional and international contexts were responsible for the Oslo Accords, individual leaders can make a significant difference as well, even if this individual has had a past in the military.

Barak's premiership only lasted 18 months. He was elected in after the first Netanyahu government and started his term in a peaceful period. He had a close relationship with President Clinton. Barak was determined to make peace with the Palestinians and Syrians and therefore made more far-reaching concessions, even conceding much of East Jerusalem, than any previous prime minister. However, his coalition did not support his concessions and argued that a more uncompromising leader was needed. Aronoff concludes in his chapter Ehud Barak: All or Nothing that Barak's ideology and personality made him amenable to change and so did his emotional intelligence and political ambition.

Shimon Peres is the final leader described in the book. In his chapter Shimon Peres: From Dimona to Oslo, Aronoff indicates Peres as the clearest example of a transformation from hawk to peace dove. He even received a Nobel peace prize for signing the Oslo Accords with Yasser Arafat in 1993. Peres has a background in projects related to the military of Israel. This background framed his image of the Middle East and Israel's enemies. His image though changed in the 80s. Eventually he was amenable to possible alternatives to Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem. He not only changed his image of the PLO at the quickest rate, but also changed his whole concept of security.

Overall, this work is a well readable book, even for those who do not have much experience in or feeling with political psychology. Aronoff put a lot of effort in the research for this book and that makes it very credible, informative and relevant. This book is a very important addition to the growing literature that studies the link between personality and politics in international relations in general. The focus on Israeli prime ministers and the Middle East gives the reader a very good understanding of the intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Thanks to Aronoff's research, the psychological aspect of world leaders becomes a more understood and relevant factor in international relations.

Aronoff uses a qualitative content analysis which in this case is more appropriate than a quantitative content analysis because counting a word once may be as important as counting that same word 25 times; it all depends on its salience to the political leader. Since Israel is a transparent society, qualitative content analysis definitely is the most appropriate one. In some areas, however, this book lacks impartiality. Aronoff argues frequently that the Israeli prime ministers' image changed and that this resulted in initiating peace negotiations. The efforts by the PLO and international leaders in this respect are hardly considered. Nevertheless Aronoff still succeeded in writing an overall well-balanced view on the psychological aspects that do matter in international relations and the Middle East in particular.