

Bar-Siman-Tov, Yaacov. *Israel and the Peace Process 1977-1982: In Search of Legitimacy for Peace*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 1994.

In this study, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov seeks to elucidate the relationship between a political leadership's transition from war to peace and its need to retain legitimacy for its policies. In doing so, he makes an extremely valuable addition to the literature on conflict resolution in general and to the smaller body of work on Israeli decision-making at the highest levels. Although this book treads well-worn ground in its case study, the Israeli-Egyptian negotiations surrounding the 1979 peace treaty, its methodology can be usefully applied to the ongoing Middle East peace process. Readers of this work will gain a better understanding of the necessity of generating legitimacy for the drastic policy and conceptual changes involved in ending a long-standing state of conflict and of the methods that can be used in doing so.

The author sets out to build on the work of scholars, such as Niklas Luhmann, who have demonstrated the extent to which decision makers need to gain legitimacy for their policies as well as for the regime of which they are part. He argues that conflict termination can be a very controversial policy arousing serious domestic opposition. Leaders who choose this policy must therefore win legitimacy for the new policy direction if they are to sustain their chosen programs. By using the literature on legitimacy, Bar-Siman-Tov outlines the methods that can be used to build this support and distinguishes between the phases of conflict resolution when different methods will be appropriate.

The bulk of this book, ten of the twelve chapters, is taken up with a detailed examination of decision-making in relation to the peace talks with Egypt by the Begin government from the time it came to power in 1977, until the final withdrawal from the Sinai in 1982. Relying primarily on memoirs, press sources and secondary accounts, the author provides a thorough and insightful narrative which is valuable in itself as a political history of the episode. In the early chapters there is a tendency to emphasize narrative over theory, and it is not until later in the book that Bar-Siman-Tov remembers to tie his narrative into his theory. When he does, though, he uses the material well and makes a convincing case for the applicability of his model.

The main criticism that can be made of this work is stylistic. While much of the work is well written and hangs together, the first chapter is an unnecessarily "jargon-rich environment." Political science jargon has a place in theory and model-building, but the initial chapter may put off prospective readers by its overuse of such terminology and often poor writing. Thankfully, the rest of the book achieves a better balance.

In his concluding remarks, Bar-Siman-Tov makes an initial effort to apply his approach to the current Arab-Israeli peace negotiations but in an unsatisfactory manner. These concluding remarks, in which he is pessimistic about the prospects for Israeli leaders cultivating legitimacy for concessions with Syria and the Palestinians, appear to have been jotted down rather hastily. Hopefully the author will now take his time and apply his approach more rigorously to the current efforts being made to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Judging by this book, his findings would be well worth reading.

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