

### *The Third Paper: An Example*

I thought it might be useful if I talked a little bit about how you could go about doing the third paper for the course. I'll do that by showing you how you could write a paper on a particular episode relating to one of the key issues we've been concerned with this quarter: the Arab-Israeli conflict. You of course don't have to write a paper on this topic (although you can if you want). What I said about the third paper in the syllabus still goes. But I thought it might be helpful if I gave you an example of how this sort of exercise could be done.

The episode that such a paper would deal with took place at the end of the Clinton period. Beginning in the middle of the year 2000, the U.S. government made a certain effort to bring the Israelis and Palestinians together and get them to agree to a peace settlement. Indeed, the two sides met together without U.S. involvement at Taba in January 2001 to see if something could be worked out before the relatively dovish Barak government left office. But no agreement was reached and matters rapidly deteriorated.

The question of what happened during that six-month period is important, because general judgments about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict turn, to a significant extent, on claims about who was to blame for the failure of those peace efforts. Note, for example, the role such claims played in the Chomsky-Dershowitz debate ([transcript](#)).

Claims of that sort can serve as the focal point for the third paper for this course. What are we to make of those claims? Who, if anyone, should be blamed for the failure of the talks?

This is a certain literature on the question, and the first step in a paper of this sort is to identify the key writings and read them closely, with the goal of trying to see what the basic issues are and how they turn on specific claims of a factual nature, claims that can be then examined by looking at whatever hard evidence is available. In other words, you'd want to try to sort out conflicting arguments, and try to boil things down to particular, concrete questions that might be answerable by looking at the evidence.

How would you identify those writings? Well, for one thing you might note that when this issue comes up in the Chomsky-Dershowitz debate, there's a lot of talk about Dennis Ross and a book of his that had recently come out. That book, *The Missing Peace*, was put on two-hour reserve in Powell (DS119.76 .R68 2005), and it's certainly one of the things you might want to look at. But you might also want to read the reviews of that book and then check out other things the people who have written those reviews have themselves written on the subject. After all, those people were probably asked to write reviews because they were regarded as experts in this area. (To do those things you might want to use the techniques outlined in the [online guide](#) I referred to in the syllabus.) Those additional writings cite yet further materials bearing on the issue, and so on. In that way, you can identify a lot of the important material bearing on the subject at hand.

I put a number of things that turned up in such a search on the “list of links” page in the course website:

[Robert Malley, “Israel and the Arafat Question” \(review of Dennis Ross, \*The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace\*\), \*New York Review of Books\* 51, no. 15 \(October 7, 2004\)](#)

[Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors,” \*New York Review of Books\* 48, no. 13 \(August 9, 2001\)](#)

[Dennis Ross, Gidi Grinstein, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “Camp David: An Exchange,” \*New York Review of Books\* 48, no. 14 \(September 20, 2001\)](#)

[Benny Morris, “Camp David and After: An Interview with Ehud Barak,” \*New York Review of Books\* 49, no. 10 \(June 13, 2002\)](#)

[Jeremy Pressman, “Lost Opportunities” \(review of Ross, \*The Missing Peace\*\), \*Boston Review\* \(Dec. 2004-Jan. 2005\)](#)

[Jeremy Pressman, “Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?” \*International Security\* 28, no. 2 \(Fall 2003\)](#)

[Ron Pundak, “From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?” \*Survival\* 43, no. 3 \(Autumn 2001\).](#)

This article was the basis for the following comment Chomsky made in his debate with Dershowitz:

“Maps of the U.S.-Israel proposals at Camp David show a salient, east of Jerusalem, bisecting the West Bank, and a northern salient virtually dividing the northern from the central canton. I have the maps if you want them. The current map considerably extends these salients and the isolation of East Jerusalem. My maps are from the leading Israeli scholars, Ron Pundak, the Director of the Shimon Peres Center. The crucial issue at Camp David was territorial, not the refugee issue, for which Arafat agreed to a pragmatic solution, as Pundak, the leading scholar, reveals.”

To see the passage in question, do a Ctrl F search in the text of the Pundak article for the phrase “right of return.” For some more information on the what the territorial proposals actually were, see the maps available online at <http://www.mideastweb.org/lastmaps.htm>. The information presented on this website is not necessarily to be taken as sacrosanct.

[Jerome Slater, “The Missing Pieces in The Missing Peace,” \*Tikkun Magazine\* 20, no. 3 \(2005\). Note especially the “note on sources” at the end of this article.](#)

[Jerome Slater, “What Went Wrong? The Collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process,” \*Political Science Quarterly\* 116, no. 2 \(2001\)](#)

A number of books are referred to in these articles. See especially (noting references to some of these works in the various arguments you've encountered):

Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace* (2006) (DS119.7 .B3826 2006)

Gilead Sher, *The Israeli-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999-2001* (2005). (This is a translation of the Hebrew book Pressman refers to in n. 55 of his IS article.)

Yossi Beilin, *The Path to Geneva* (2004) (Powell DS119.76 .B448 2004)

Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dreams* (2003) (DS119.76 .E5913 2003, on two-hour reserve at Powell)

Ahron Bregman, *Elusive Peace* (DS 119.76 B734 2005)—this book accompanies the BBC series we saw part of in class.

Finally, here are a couple of other things you might want to look at if you were writing a paper on this topic:

[Benny Morris, "The Rejection" \(review of Kimmerling and Migdal, \*The Palestinian People: A History\*\)](#)—the last six paragraphs in this piece give Morris's take on the 2000-2001 episode). Do Chomsky and Dershowitz respect Morris's judgment as an historian? Should Chomsky's general view of Morris, for example, be taken into account when you're trying to figure out what to make of this passage?

[The Taba Negotiations \(documents\)](#), from the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2002)

After you've read some of those books and articles, you're ready to move on to the next phase—the *thinking* phase. What exactly do the people who blame Arafat for the failure of the talks point to? At what point did the U.S. government come closest to proposing peace terms that the Palestinians might accept, and how did Arafat react? What does Ross say about this? Do the people who take a different view disagree with him about what Arafat did at that point? If they don't, why then do they disagree with Ross's larger interpretation? What do they say people like Ross ignore? What do they say about the Israeli reaction to the American plan, and how does their claim on this point differ from that of Ross? Your goal here, in other words, is to take the big issue—responsibility for the failure of these peace efforts—and see how it turns on narrower, more concrete, and therefore more testable claims.

Next, you'd want to examine those claims in the light of the empirical evidence. What sources do these various authors cite? You then look up the sources they refer to. What

do they show? Can you really trust what those authors say? How can you assess their reliability? Is the evidence presented good enough to allow you to answer the questions you've posed? Or do you come away with the feeling that you just don't really know what happened at that key point?

After thinking the issue through and reaching your basic conclusions, you'd have to write up your findings. You'd begin by talking very briefly about what happened at the end of the Clinton period, covering just the facts everyone agrees on. You'd next show that different people interpret those events differently. You'd then show (again very briefly, perhaps alluding just to the Chomsky-Dershowitz debate) the role those various interpretations play in supporting larger claims about the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Next, you'd raise the question of how in fact that particular episode is to be interpreted, and point out that basic arguments about what happened in 2000-2001 turn on certain very specific, concrete claims about who did what at particular points in that period. You'd then move on to examine those claims, one by one, in the light of the evidence.

After you do that, you'd write your conclusion: what exactly have you demonstrated, and why does it matter?

Note that this is just a template, a sketch, for how a paper of this sort can be written. Again, let me stress the point that you don't have to write a paper on this topic, although you can write on it if you want. But I thought that no matter what you ended up writing on, it might be useful if you had some sense for how a paper of this sort could be written.