Greenprints for Peace Building between Palestinians and Israelis

by Yaron Prywes[1]

The disciples of the wise increase peace in the world – Talmud, Berkot (64a)

The believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two

brothers – Qur'an (49:10)

Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God – Mathew (5:9)

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict often takes center stage in world politics. This is

remarkable attention given to less than 0.2% of the world's 6.6 billion people - including

5.4 million Israeli Jews and 5.1 million Palestinians in a landmass the size of New

Jersey.[2] As a Jew born in Israel and raised in America, I have always found the topic

highly relevant and interesting. But why do so many others? I believe this conflict

pervades the world arena because many of the dichotomous tensions that exist between

and within Palestinians and Israelis have widespread relevance: west vs. east, theocracy

vs. democracy, rich vs. poor, religious vs. secular, modern vs. traditional, terrorism vs.

militarism, security vs. freedom, non-nuclear vs. nuclear, and whites vs. people of color.

Furthermore, events from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ripple outward to the greater

Middle East, Europe, Asia, Africa, the United States, and beyond, while the conflict is

conversely deeply affected by global events. Productively addressing this conflict can

[2] Estimate includes Palestinians with and without Israeli citizenship in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.
An additional 5 million Palestinians live outside this boundary, primarily in Jordan and other Arab states.
Sources: Population Reference Bureau, 2006; Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2006; Palestinian Central
Bureau of Statistics, 2006; CIA World Fact Book, 2006.

have a global, positive impact. But peace builders work against time and history, since the longer these dichotomies are allowed to overpower shared goals, the more difficult it becomes to achieve peace. Efforts must be active, inspired, and thoughtful.

This chapter provides peace builders with several simple but powerful theories which I collectively call "Greenprints." Functioning like blueprints for peace, they guide those who resist oversimplification but understandably become overwhelmed with the complexity of this conflict. Greenprints – named after the proverbial olive branch leaves connoting peace and the color of new growth and regeneration – provide peace builders with what political roadmaps have thus far failed to offer: fresh, useful, and creative ways of thinking. The greenprints can be utilized individually, but are more powerful when used together.

Greenprint #1: A model of Nature and Nurture to understand peace building

Kurt Lewin, a Jewish German-American researcher often credited as "the father of modern social psychology," explained that each person is shaped by an interaction between nature (inborn tendencies) and nurture (how life experiences mold individuals). Lewin (1933) captured this concept with his well-known equation, shown in Figure 1, which describes one's behavior (**B**) as a function of the person (**P**) and the environment (**E**).

> *Figure 1.* **Lewin's Formula**
>
> $$B = f(P \times E)$$

Lewin's formula can help individuals understand – and overcome – interpersonal conflict. For example, as a college student I took part in a Middle East Peace and Conflict
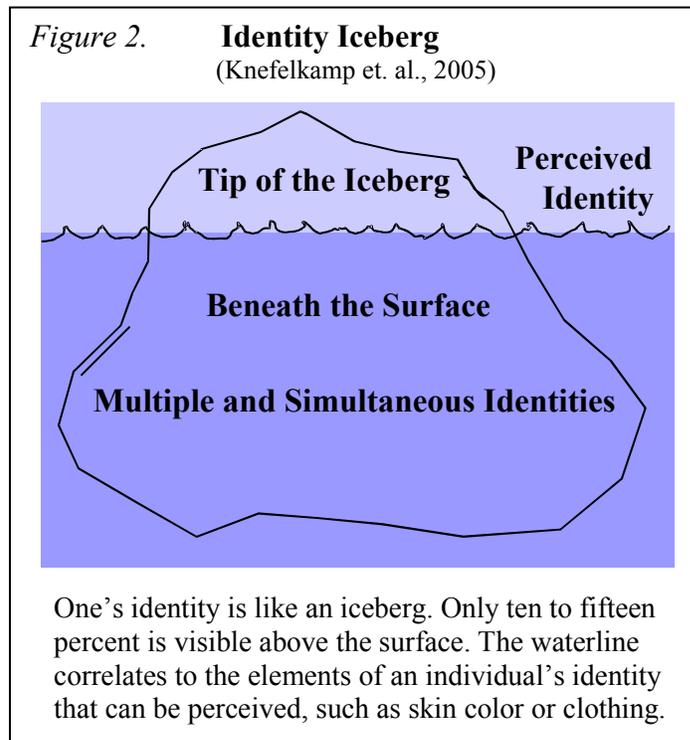
training program, which enabled us to live with a Palestinian family in the West Bank, a Jordanian family in Amman, and an Israeli family in West Jerusalem. We also studied current political and social affairs and attended lectures by academics, political activists and government officials. I'll never forget when my home-stay host Samer and I got into an argument about the existence of the Holocaust. What helped me stay engaged in dialogue with him despite my experiencing strong negative feelings about his denial/minimization of historical truths was the realization that in addition to our personality differences we are also both products of our environments. Our positions and feelings relate to several influences: the groups we identify with – I am a Jewish Israeli American and grandson of an Auschwitz survivor and he is a Lebanese Jordanian Muslim growing up in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon; the history of conflict between our two peoples; and our respective educational systems. Lewin's formula can help free people from "taking things personally" and provide necessary emotional distance from a potentially inflammatory and unproductive interaction.

Applying Lewin's formula to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – as any other large-scale dispute – requires addressing all three of Lewin's variables: understanding each side's unique personal factors (P), the impact of their environment (E), and their peace-building behavior (B).

Greenprint #2: A model of identity to understand the Person (P) in peace building

To further understand the person (P) in Lewin's formula, it is useful to consider another model which further elucidates identity – a crucial aspect in defining an individual and culture. Deconstructing the concept of identity can help participants in a conflict better understand why cross-cultural exchanges can be so profound and

emotional. The Identity Iceberg, as shown in Figure 2, helps organize numerous elements comprising one's identity (Knefelkamp, Graham, Ingram, Nielson, Prywes & Uyekobu, 2005). Like an iceberg, many elements of one's identity are not readily perceived because they are hidden below the surface and can only be discovered through exploration.

Figure 2. **Identity Iceberg**
(Knefelkamp et. al., 2005)

Tip of the Iceberg — **Perceived Identity**

Beneath the Surface

Multiple and Simultaneous Identities

One's identity is like an iceberg. Only ten to fifteen percent is visible above the surface. The waterline correlates to the elements of an individual's identity that can be perceived, such as skin color or clothing.

For Israelis and Palestinians, primary elements comprising their identity include religious tradition, nationality (sometimes two), ethnicity, language, political affiliation, and gender. A comprehensive list is virtually limitless, including varying levels of attachment to a neighborhood, profession, generation, military unit, sports team, group of friends, and university. Identities are also not static; they change according to the environment and also develop throughout a person's lifetime as one grows from child to adolescent, adult, and senior (Maalouf, 2000). For example, the meaning of being a

woman is very different if living in the cosmopolitan city of Tel-Aviv or in the ultra-orthodox community Mea Shearim.
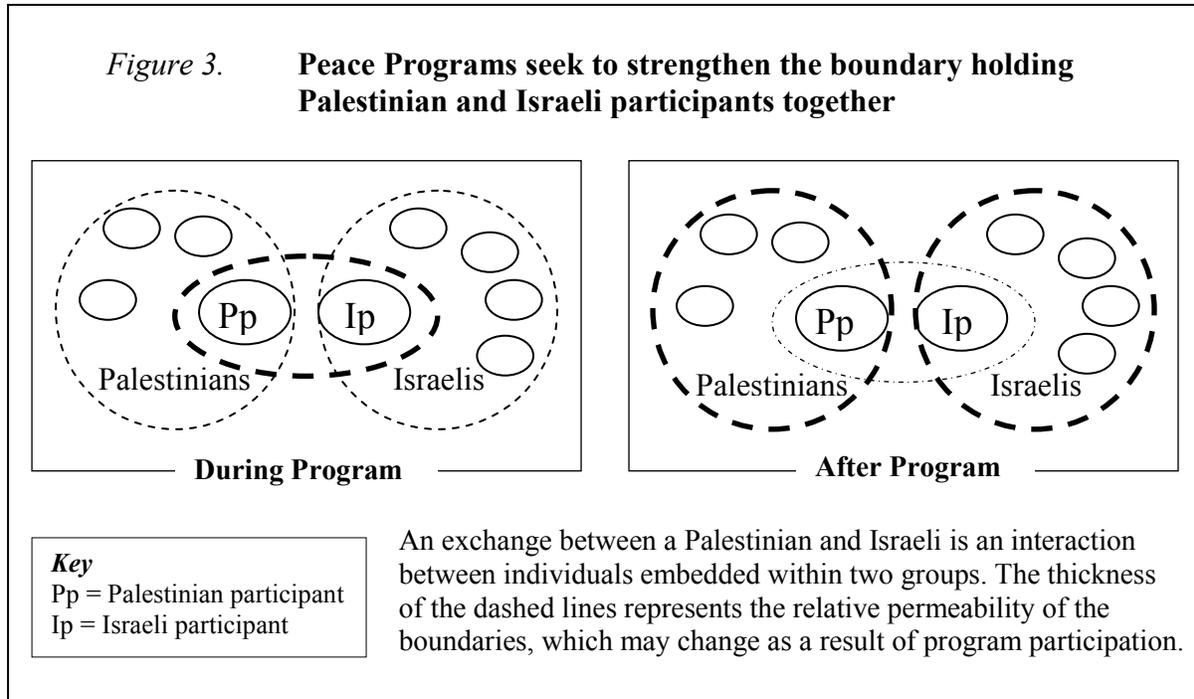
The development of one's identity is thus a dynamic interplay between intrapsychic (how I see myself) and psychosocial forces (how others see me) (Knefelkamp, 2006a; Knefelkamp et. al., 2005). Deeper clarity about who you are can be achieved through interaction with someone who is different in some fundamental way, or when someone sees you differently from how you see yourself. Successful Israeli-Palestinian peace-building programs help participants generate self-awareness about multiple and simultaneous similarities and differences, while maintaining a sense of unity within the group by identifying a shared goal or other common ground.

The lessons for all peace builders is that both *who* is present and *what* is being discussed will impact which identities come to the fore, and successful programs facilitate *how* participants manage those identities. The most effective programs acknowledge differences while maintaining a sense of unity, such as common characteristics or goals, and thus lay the groundwork for a new common identity to emerge, often around shared concepts of friendship, humanity, and peace.

Greenprint #3: A model of boundaries to understand the environment (E) in peace building

An exchange between a Palestinian and Israeli is both an encounter between two individuals and an expression of intergroup relations (Alderfer, 1987). This means that the two individuals represent the groups with which they identify, and carry with them a perspective informed by that group and their environment. Thus, interactions between individuals from different groups are influenced by their respective group's experience

with another group. Even if groups are not physically present, they are metaphorically "behind" individuals. This concept is visualized in Figure 3.

Figure 3.   **Peace Programs seek to strengthen the boundary holding Palestinian and Israeli participants together**

During Program

After Program

Key
Pp = Palestinian participant
Ip = Israeli participant

An exchange between a Palestinian and Israeli is an interaction between individuals embedded within two groups. The thickness of the dashed lines represents the relative permeability of the boundaries, which may change as a result of program participation.

An important aspect to understanding the environment is defining its boundaries. The dashes defining the circles in Figure 3 show the boundaries connecting individuals with their two groups (Israeli and Palestinian), and a newer boundary holding the two interacting individuals together. The relative permeability of group boundaries – shown by the relative thickness or space between the lines in Figure 3 – is another important facet of peace building efforts as they represent the possibility for change and represent how groups regulate transactions with each other (Alderfer, 1987).

Boundaries play a major part in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict literally and figuratively, and physically as well as psychologically. Discussions about checkpoints, settlements, separation fences, terrorism, housing demolitions, models of co-existence,

Jewish democracy, solutions to Jerusalem, refugees, or UN resolutions, are implicitly or explicitly a discussion about appropriate boundaries between or within groups. Power imbalances also impact these boundaries and their relative permeability.

Theoretically speaking, these "system boundaries" can be underbound (too loose), overbound (too rigid), or optimally-bound (just right). Recent violence between Fatah and Hamas can be understood as a power struggle within Palestinians as to the proper boundary the group as a whole should have in relation to (economically and militarily superior) Israel. Generally, Fatah believes the optimal boundary with Israel should be more permeable than Hamas does, as indicated by Hamas' refusal to formally recognize Israel.

The goal of peace-building activities is to improve intergroup relations by addressing the psychological and physical boundaries separating two groups in conflict (Palestinians and Israelis, Fatah and Hamas) and to make overly rigid boundaries more permeable in appropriate ways. The "before" and "after" images in Figure 3 illustrate how boundary permeability may change during and after a peace-building intervention. Since thickness of the dashed lines represents stronger boundaries, the figure shows that even after participating in a well-intentioned peace building program, some participants are unable to sustain connections.

The more group members feel mainly positive about their own group and mainly negative about other groups, the less permeable the group boundaries become. Impermeable boundaries can result in distorted cognitive formations about a group. Language – and the use of words and social categories – reflects the rigidity or permeability of boundaries since they condition members' perceptions of objective and

subjective phenomena, and transmit theories and ideologies to explain members'

experiences, affect issues, and influence their relations with other groups (Alderfer,

1987). For example, referring to Palestinians as "Arabs," consciously or not, can

implicitly negate legitimacy of this group's claim over the land since it can be argued that

if a Palestinian is only an Arab, then he or she has a "home" in any one of the twenty-one

Arab countries in the world (thereby also serving to minimize injustice suffered by

Palestinians). Similarly, referring to Israelis solely as "Jews" can imply a denial of the

country's existence, and negate the legitimacy of whatever entity exists, Jewish biblical

and historic ties to the land, and even United Nations Resolution 181 calling for the

modern creation of the Jewish state.

  Leaders play an important role – physically and psychologically – in boundary

formation. For example, when Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime

Minister Ehud Olmert engaged in official bilateral discussions for the first time in

December 2006, they greeted each other with an embrace and kiss on each cheek.[3] This

singular public act carried many messages and layers of meaning. The leaders showed

their constituency and the world that (1) that they are willing to embrace a representative

of the "other" despite deep animosity between the two people; (2) they did not hold each

other personally responsible for the outbreak of the violent al-Aqsa (second) intifada;

and, (3) they are trying to resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue. I also

believe that their greeting was meant to (1) strengthen their own personal political

standings (Olmert by demonstrating that Israel is trying to alleviate Palestinian suffering

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[3] Mahmoud Abbas is also often referred to by his *kunya* (Arabic), Abu Mazen. Kunyas are honorific
patriarchal titles widely used through the Arab world in place of given names and are commonly used when
respectfully referring to politicians or other public figures.

while maintaining its security, and Abbas by demonstrating that Palestinians are able partners for peace) and, (2) to strengthen Abbas' political standings given the rise to government power of the extremist group Hamas. Ironically, for Palestinians who already perceive Abbas as a sellout or as an Israeli collaborator who does not deliver results, the affectionate embrace may have further reinforced their view of his drifting too far from his group's boundaries. Effective leaders shape and improve their group's boundaries towards the enemy, while not letting their members feel alienated. This is admittedly a delicate balance to achieve.

Greenprint #4: A developmental model to understand peace building behavior (B)

The Developmental Model of Conflict Resolution posits that individuals hold different worldviews depending on their level of maturity (Danesh & Danesh, 2002; 2004).[4] These worldviews include a perspective on how the world is organized, principles that guide action, and a driving purpose. They also shape the conflicts people experience, their behavior in such situations, and their attempts at resolution. Figure 4 shows various worldviews and their link to major stages of human development (childhood, adolescence, and adulthood), with resulting governing dynamics and strategies to resolve conflict.

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[4] Hossain and Roshan Danesh, a father-son pair of international experts and Iranian Canadian Baha'is, created the Developmental Model of Conflict resolution. Their model has an impressive track record at the core of arguably the world's largest systematic peace building effort, facilitated by the International Educators for Peace Institute (EFP) in Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH). BiH, devastated by a brutal civil war between Bosniaks (Muslim), Croats (Catholic), and Serbs (Orthodox Christian) leaving over a quarter million dead, is the only country in the world attempting to integrate principles of peace into all subjects of its educational curriculum in all primary and secondary schools. Since the year 2000, 112 primary and secondary schools have participated, involving about 80,000 students, 5,000 teachers and staff, 130,000 parents, as well as community leaders. I encourage all peace builders looking for large-scale, systematic models to examine and be inspired by this effort (www.efpinternational.org).

Figure 4.	Developmental Model of Conflict Resolution

Figure 4. **Developmental Model of Conflict Resolution**
(Prywes adaptation of Danesh & Danesh, 2002)

The corresponding elements of their worldview at each stage of development

Stage of Development	Childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood
Perspective	World is dangerous	World is a jungle	World is One
Principles	Might is Right	Survival of the Fittest	Truth and justice
Purpose	Self/Group Preservation	To "Win"	Unity in Diversity

The corresponding mode and governing dynamic at each stage of development

Stage of Development	Childhood	Adolescence	Adulthood
Mode	A- Mode (Authoritarian)	P-Mode (Power)	C-Mode (Consultative)
Dynamic	Dominance & Submission	Competition	Divergence & Convergence

The model can be applied to individuals and groups (e.g. communities and nations), as well as to their conflict resolution processes (e.g. mediation, legal, political systems). As the figure shows, at the childhood level, the world is seen as a dangerous place, where "might equals right," and one's primary purpose is preservation. The governing dynamics at this stage – called A-mode where A=authoritarian – involves dominance and submission. This worldview and resulting behavior is appropriate when a child is very young, but as a child matures, this mode becomes oppressive and dysfunctional. This same dynamic appears on a societal level when a population's efforts to participate in an authoritarian government or express their dissenting opinions are

suppressed. Like children under the thumb of a dominant parent, these societies may appear peaceful on the surface since they are sacrificing their dissenting voice for security. Occasional outbursts – equivalent to childhood tantrums – inevitably occur, but are often dealt with swiftly and forcefully, restoring a state of strained calm. Such governments, operating on A-mode are founded on a society's sense of insecurity, which can erupt into violence.

An adolescent worldview sees the world as a jungle, where survival of the fittest and "winning" are primary drivers. Resources are viewed as scarce, and thus one's gain is another's loss. Called "P-mode," (where P=power), this stage is also characterized by an internal struggle of identity formation and external competition for autonomy and independence. A large majority of individuals and societies in the world today operate primarily in this worldview, concerned about itself, and inviting competition and power struggles with others, fighting to have their point of view dominate, to be right, and to win at the expense of the other. While these are necessary phases of development, they have limits, are not always appropriate, and over-reliance on them facilitates conflict and violence.

These first two stages can be seen to describe the governing dynamics and mindset of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, characterized by insecurity, fear and pain, the idea that "only the strong survive," and the need by both parties to assert their dominance and authority over the other in order to protect themselves. As a result of living and operating in a violent environment, people in this conflict are embedded in "A" and "P" modes of thinking and behavior. However, despite having adaptive origins, "A" and "P" modes now also have detrimental effects. Behavior driven by a need to protect oneself in

the short-term actually makes both Palestinians and Israelis *less* safe in the long-run by continuing to nurture more violence, death, and destruction. Some people on both sides are beginning to realize – as Albert Einstein observed – that peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved through understanding.

The third mode – "C-mode" or the consultative approach – represents the more mature phase regarding development and conflict resolution. In C-mode, an individual's and society's actions and fate are seen as fundamentally intertwined with the world around them. Truth and justice gain paramount importance. Resources are seen as potentially abundant for all if collaborative and creative efforts are deployed, consistent with the driving concept underlying this worldview: "unity in diversity." Unity – not to be confused with uniformity – is a conscious and purposeful convergence of multiple entities in a state of harmony, integration, and cooperation to create a new entity or entities. The new entity builds around a common goal and usually reflects more than the sum of its parts. For example, a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would seek to create an independent Palestinian state, coupled with the emergence of dynamic, cooperative relationships between the two neighboring states to ensure mutual security and economic development.

C-mode moves away from an individualistic focus towards a focus on resolving conflict as a collective group enterprise. It marks a shift in understanding that it is in one's best self-interest to cooperate with the other to end destructive conflict. C-mode behavior is dynamic, actively seeking divergence of perspectives that lay a foundation upon which to build convergence. Thus, listening and consensus-building are essential skills in this mode.

Leveraging C-mode towards creating peace requires work in the form of a specific mindset and skill set. Figure 5 details what I call the "consultative greenprint": a set of useful peace-building guidelines that help facilitate this C-mode state.[5] The consultative greenprint is a three-step peace-building and conflict-resolution process that involves (1) preparation, (2) exploration, and (3) integration. Each step has a number of guidelines that involve participants' head (intellect), heart (emotions), and hands (behaviors). The greenprint challenges the notion that peace is simply the absence of conflict and a static end-state, and it further represents a way to use conflict as an opportunity to grow and develop.

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[5] Figure 5, developed by the author, builds upon the work of Knefelkamp (2006b), Danesh & Danesh (2002), and Alderfer (1987, 1972). This "consultative greenprint" is a work-in-progress.

Figure 5.   ***A Consultative Greenprint:***

A 3-Step Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Model

(1) Preparation

Mental Preparation

- Get yourself into a learning orientation – mastering conflict is a life-long process.

- Make a conscious choice to utilize Authoritarian, Power, or Consultative modes.

Emotional Preparation

- Acknowledge and work with emotions but make sure they don't derail the process.

(2) Exploration

Understanding

- Nurture mutual efforts to better understand the conflict and different interpretative positions.

- Develop increased self-awareness and knowledge of others.

- Seek to understand how our perspective relates to our own previous learning, background and experiences.

Listening

- Agree to listen until you understand.

- Acknowledge that understanding does not imply agreement.

- Listen without preparing your response.

- Listen for the meaning and standpoint of others and the self.

Emotions

- Be free from the need to convince someone you are right.

- Stay in communication even when one is confused, angry, fearful, or unsure.

- Remember the impact of our communications on others is not always intended.

(3) Integration

Connect

- Acknowledge and build upon points of unity.

- See connections between various embedded systems.

Refine

- Develop the ability to critique in a mature manner.

- Search for the appropriate response.

- Seek understanding of multiple modes of inquiry and approaches to knowledge, and the ability to judge adequate and appropriate approaches from those that are not adequate or appropriate.

Build

- Take responsibility for one's own perspectives, stances, and actions.

- Lead towards satisfying universal human needs of existence, belonging, and growth.

- Strive for sustainable solutions.

Conclusion: Ensuring Survival through a Declaration of Interdependence

As Austrian American physicist Fritjof Capra, a Buddhist Catholic, noted in his best-selling book *Web of Life* (1997), that the more we study the major problems of today's world the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. Consistent with this view, the many facets of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are interconnected and interdependent, reflecting systemic problems. Divisive dualism and violence continue to dominate life in the region, with fears on both sides preventing those involved from recognizing that it is in everyone's best self-interest to move from childhood and adolescent approaches to conflict – defined in the "A" and "P" modes in the Developmental Model of Conflict Resolution – into more developed, adult approaches of the C-mode. Instead of competition begetting competition between the two cultures, cooperation would breed cooperation, and a high concern for self would enhance – not diminish – a high concern for the "other."

Reversing the trend of violence in the region requires systematically addressing underlying environmental issues (the "E" in Lewin's theory, including economic, educational and societal problems) that create hatred and misunderstanding between and among Israelis and Palestinians; and being conscious of how groups and cultures inform perspectives and identities of individuals (the "P" in Lewin's theory). In addition, consultative behaviors and mindsets should be used (by individuals and leaders) to create optimal boundaries between groups that meet mutual needs for security, economic prosperity, and self-determination. This bitter and intractable conflict has both sides understandably concerned with their own survival, without adequate recognition that neither side can attain security unless the other side also feels secure (Deutsch, 2006).

Neither side should be deterred by mutual perceptions about a lack of partnership on the other side because peace cannot be built alone. Creating partnership and sustainable security, and curbing extremists, is accomplished through consultative behaviors.

Effective political roadmaps for peace in the region will emerge if the greenprints described in this chapter are used to govern the process. These greenprints utilize individual and group dynamics models to understand – and resolve – the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These solutions require a "declaration of interdependence" – a radical shift in perceptions, thinking, values, and behavior from a regressed, short-term, reactive, self-interest worldview towards one that is sustainable, enlightened, inspired and built on mutual interest, cooperation, and unity.

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