Evidence of *Polythink?*: The Israeli Delegation at Camp David 2000

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Abstract

The concept of Groupthink advanced by Janis some twenty years ago
(1982) and further articulated, refined and tested by Smith (1984), places a
premium on conformity of group members to group views, opinions and
decisions, due to peer pressure, social cohesion of the group, self-censorship
and variety of other factors (Janis 1982).

According to Janis (ibid), one of the consequences of Groupthink is
defective or "bad" decision-making. This paper introduces the concept of
Polythink, which is essentially the opposite of Groupthink: a plurality of
opinions, views and perceptions of group members. We show how one can
measure *Poly*think. We then report decision-theoretic results based on
qualitative, face-to-face interviews with the actual members of the Israeli
delegation to the peace negotiations at Camp David 2000, to determine
whether there was evidence of group conformity and uniformity among
members of the Israeli delegation that led to the collapse of the talks or
whether there is evidence for *Poly*think.

Specifically, we asked each of the Israeli participants at Camp David
2000 to "sketch" the decision matrixes of Palestinian Authority Chairman
Yasser Arafat and former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. We then
compared the sets of alternatives and dimensions to determine whether there
is a significant overlap in the decision alternatives and dimensions of the
delegates. To our surprise, the interviews revealed the *Poly*think

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syndrome—multiple and varied perceptions of and opinions on the same issue by different group members. The consequences of *Poly*think are discussed. The "Hat" thesis consisting of five potential explanations (labeled as the Institution "Hat", Coalition "Hat", Normative "Hat", Novice/Expert "Hat" and the Leader/Followers "Hat") is offered in an attempt to explain these results.

Introduction

The collapse of the U.S. sponsored Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Camp David 2000 has had dramatic and catastrophic consequences for the Middle East and world peace. Specifically, since the beginning of the Palestinian Intifada (uprising) that followed Camp David, there were more than 900 Israeli dead, 4000 wounded and more than 2500 Palestinian dead and close to 20,000 wounded. The economic ramifications of the collapse of the talks were also disastrous for both sides. The unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is at unprecedented levels. Poverty in the Palestinian areas has reached alarming levels. The Israeli economy has also suffered from a severe crisis with virtually no tourism, little foreign direct investment, high unemployment (of more than 11 percent), a skyrocketing defense budget, a growing deficit, and difficult overall economic conditions. Over 1.5 million Israelis, including 500,000 children are reported to be below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

Moreover, from partners in the Oslo process and agreement, Israelis and Palestinians have turned into enemies that have been engaged in a low-intensity conflict known as the "Al-Aqsa Intifada." Prospects for resumption of peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians have greatly diminished over the past 3 years. The introduction of the Road Map for peace in the

Middle East by the Quartet (the U.S., Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations) has not led thus far to any results.

Prior attempts to analyze the collapse of the talks at Camp David have focused on socio-psychological and cultural factors (Mishal and Morag 2002), lack of marketing of a potential Camp David agreement to respective constituencies (Malley and Agha 2001), and domestic political calculations (Sher 2001). For example, Mishal and Morag (2002) pointed to significant discrepancies between the parties' cultural perceptions of the peace process. Sher (2001) claimed that the Palestinian negotiators feared adopting positions and accepting proposals that would undermine them back home. Malley and Agha (2001, p. 59) pointed out that Arafat felt pressure from both Israel and the United States in Camp David, was humiliated publicly when former Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak decided to first concentrate on reaching an agreement with Syria rather than with the Palestinians, and that powerful Palestinian constituencies—"the intellectuals, security establishment, media, business community, "state" bureaucrats, political activists" were disillusioned with the results of the Oslo peace process. According to Malley and Agha (op. cit, p. 63), Arafat's behavior at Camp David emphasized risk aversion in face of what he perceived to be an Israeli trap. He therefore tried to cut his losses, rather than maximize his gains.

While most studies of Camp David 2000 focused on what went wrong at Camp David, our goal is to attempt to "diagnose" and explain the Israeli team's group decision making pattern at Camp David 2000, and in particular whether it suffered from one key symptom of defective decision making-- group conformity-- or alternatively, from what we call *Poly*think.

The paper tackles this important issue by advancing a decision theoretic perspective to the talks. Specifically, we focus on group information processing and group decision-making. Thus, we used qualitative interviews with the nine actual members of the Israeli negotiating team to identify decision matrixes of Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak at Camp David 2000. The interviews were conducted in mid-2002 with former Israeli Foreign Minister Professor Shlomo Ben Ami; former IDF Chief of Staff, Lt.General (res.) Amnon Lipkin-Shachak; former Cabinet Minister Dan Meridor; former Chief of the IDF Planning Division, Major-General (res.) Shlomo Yanai; former adviser to Prime Minister Ehud Barak Attorney Gilad Sher; former head of the Israeli Mossad, Dani Yatom; former Foreign Ministry Director-General, Reuven Merhav; former Deputy-Director of the Israel Security Agency, Israel Hason; and Deputy-Director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Dr. Oded Eran1

*Poly*think

By *poly*think we mean varied and multiple views, opinions and perceptions of group members of the same goals and alternatives. *Poly*think means *Poly (many)* *ways of perceiving the same decision problem, goals and solutions*. *Poly*think is characterized by pluralism of views, opinions and interpretations of reality by group members. It can be contrasted with homogenous, uniform, monolithic worldview of group members.

*Poly*think can be seen as a mode of thinking that results from membership in a highly disjointed group. Some of the symptoms of *Poly*think are independence of thought and the existence of contradictory interests among group members. This may create a situation where it becomes virtually impossible for group members to reach a common interpretation of reality and common policy goals (see below for a discussion of the consequences of *Poly*think).

*Poly*think can be operationalized and measured. One can determine empirically whether *poly*think exists in a group. This can be done by comparing the content of the responses, as well as by examining the number of overlapping choice sets of alternatives and dimension sets (or considerations) of group members. Such an analysis can reveal the extent of overlap in the matrixes, i.e. whether the alternative sets and dimension sets are 1) completely identical, 2) partially similar, or, 3) whether there is little overlap in the choice sets and the dimension sets.

Some known consequences of Groupthink are:

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1) An incomplete survey of alternatives

2) An incomplete survey of objectives

3) Failure to examine risks emanating from the preferred choice

4) Failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives

5) Poor information search

6) Selective bias in processing information at hand

7) Failure to work out contingency plans (Janis, 1982: 175).

According to Greenhalgh (1986), conflict resolution involves moving from a "Zero-Sum Game" situation to a "Win-Win" situation. It would appear that it is predicated on the existence of shared mental models within each delegation to the negotiations, which can then be refashioned during the course of the conflict resolution process. The lack of shared mental models would seem to suggest a diminished likelihood of achieving conflict resolution (ibid). Particularly disjointed delegations may produce the extreme opposite effect of Groupthink, namely "*Poly*think" (see below).

Measuring *Poly*think

Conceptually and empirically, it is possible to think about decision making in several different ways. These have important ramifications for the operationalization and measurement of *Poly*think.

a) The **content** of the choice set and dimension set: whether alternatives and dimensions of group members are similar or different. The extent to which they are different/similar across group members

b) **Binary** (bi-categorical) mode of decision making versus **multi-categorical** mode. In foreign policy, for example, state decision makers evaluate alternatives such as use of force or no use force; sponsor terrorism or oppose terrorism; or in a multi-categorical mode (e.g. attack, do not attack, negotiate, apply sanctions). One measure of *Poly*think is the number of alternatives in the choice set of each decision maker.

c) One can view decision making as **multi-dimensional** (based on several criteria/dimensions such as the military balance, political audience costs, deterrence) versus **uni-dimensional** (e.g. whether the decision will help the leader politically). 2 Consequently, another measure of *Poly*think is the number of dimensions/criteria in each matrix.

d) The **size** of the decision matrix is also an important criterion in comparing decision-making (Maoz 1990). Some decision makers conceptualize a decision problem in a relatively narrow way, while others in a more comprehensive and more encompassing way (e.g. by using a multi-categorical choice set and a multi-dimensional dimension set). The size of the decision matrix equals the number of alternatives * number of dimensions.

In the section below, we assess whether members of the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 exhibited signs of *Poly*think

The Israeli Team at Camp David: Groupthink or *Poly*think?

To answer the question whether the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 exhibited signs of group conformity and uniformity that led to defective decision making in Summer 2000 or was a victim of *poly*think, we compared the decision alternatives and dimensions of the actual Israeli delegates to Camp David based on face-to-face interviews with each of the delegate in early 2002. We asked each of them to sketch the decision matrix of both Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak at Camp David. We then compared their responses based on the **content** of the choice sets and dimension sets and such indicators as binary vs. multi-categorical choice sets, uni-dimensional versus multi-dimensional dimension sets, and the size of the decision matrix of each delegate.

A decision matrix consists of a set of decision alternatives (for example, Do Nothing, Apply Sanctions, Attack) and a set of decision dimensions or criteria (such as political considerations, diplomatic considerations, military dimensions and economic considerations, see Mintz 1993). Accordingly, we simply asked each member of the Israeli delegation to list:

a) The decision alternatives of Chairman Arafat (the specific question was: what were Chairman Arafat's policy alternatives at Camp David 2000)?

b) The decision criteria (dimensions) of Chairman Arafat (the specific question was: what were Chairman Arafat's decision dimensions at Camp David 2000)?

c) The decision alternatives of Prime Minister Barak (the specific question was identical to question #1 above but referred to Barak)

d) The decision criteria (dimensions) of Prime Minister Barak (the specific question was identical to question #2 above but referred to Barak).

Based on the responses of the delegates, we generated 18 decision matrixes (9 for each leader) and compared the alternatives and dimensions of all delegates to determine whether members of the group exhibited similar (a la Groupthink) or dissimilar (a la *Poly*think) decision matrixes.

Results

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The decision alternative and policy dimensions of Arafat and Barak's at Camp David 2000 as portrayed by each of the delegates to the talks, are presented in tables 1-6. Table 1 shows how the Israeli team viewed Yasser Arafat's policy alternatives at Camp David 2000. Table 2 reports how members of the Israeli delegation viewed Arafat's decision dimensions at Camp David. Table 3 shows how the Israeli team viewed Ehud Barak's policy alternatives while Table 4 refers to his decision criteria at Camp David. Finally, Tables 5 and 6 list the number of alternatives and dimensions and the corresponding size of the decision matrix for each leader at Camp David 2000.

Examining these Tables based on their content, the number of alternatives and number of dimensions, and the size of the matrix, reveals that *Poly*think among members of the Israeli group members is evident, especially in identifying Arafat's alternatives and decision criteria. Specifically, members of the delegation held varied points of view regarding both Israeli and Palestinian alternatives, goals and policy dimensions regarding negotiated outcomes. Interestingly, the interviews strikingly reveal that there was no uniformity and little consistency in the way members of the Israeli delegation have even viewed Barak's decision matrix (although evidence for *Poly*think is more pronounced while comparing the responses' views of Arafat's options and dimensions).

Content

Arafat's alternatives:

Most of the delegates at Camp David listed "Do Nothing" as an option that Chairman Arafat has considered at Camp David. Beyond this option, no other alternative was listed by more than 3 delegates, with 12 alternatives listed by only 1-2 delegates each.

Arafa't decision dimensions:

It is interesting to note that no dimension has received a majority of votes (5 out of 9). "Arafat's Historical Role" was listed by four delegates, whereas 5 decision dimensions were each listed by three delegates. Twenty-one other dimensions were introduced by only one or two delegates, showing a plurality of opinions regarding Arafat's decision dimensions at Camp David 2000.

Barak's alternatives:

Not surprising, there is evidence for more conformity among the Israeli delegates in identifying former Prime Minister Barak's alternatives at Camp David than Arafat's alternatives. Specifically, eight of the nine delegates listed "Permanent Peace Agreement" as an option for Barak. In contrast, "Interim Agreement" was identified by 3 delegates. Beyond that, nine alternatives were mentioned by only one or two delegates.

Even if one combines versions of the same alternative ("Interim Agreement" and "Partial Agreement") there is little evidence for conformity in the alternatives that delegates listed for Barak, although compared to Arafat's choices, there is much more commonality in the responses of the Israeli subjects.

Barak's decision dimensions:

With regard to the factors that influenced Barak's decisions at Camp David, five Israeli delegates mentioned "Security Considerations", three delegates listed "Political Considerations" and three "Personal Considerations". Even if one combines political considerations with partisan and leadership considerations, there is little evidence for Groupthink among the Israeli delegates to Camp David as twenty-five (!) dimensions were listed by only one or two delegates.

Number of Alternatives, Dimensions, and Size of Decision Matrix

Tables 1-4 show little evidence for group conformity among the Israeli delegates to Camp David 2000 in identifying Arafat and Barak options and dimensions at Camp David 2000. Members of the delegation lacked agreement regarding the Palestinian delegation's alternatives (acceptance of a permanent agreement, reaching a partial agreement, doing nothing, ensuring physical survival, etc.) Members of the delegation were also divided on how they viewed the dimensions or issues that the

Palestinians had focused on during their talks with Israel (commitment to the Palestinian cause, regime survival, fear of an American/Israeli trap, Arafat's historical role, territorial concessions, domestic Israeli considerations, relations with the USA, fear of physical attacks on negotiators, Jerusalem, Temple mount, the refugee problem, historical precedence of territorial withdrawals, and Palestinian state). Some delegates (Hason, Eran, Lipkin-Shachak, Meridor and Yatom) sketched Arafat's choice set in a binary mode, while others (Ben-Ami, Merchav, and Sher) in **multi-categorical** terms. A few (Ben-Ami, Hason,Yanai) have identified decision dimensions and criteria in a **binary** mode while others (Eran, Lipkin-Schachak, Merchav, Meridor, Sher and Yatom) in a non-binary, **multi-dimensional** (n>2) framework. Delegates Yatom, Sher, Meridor, Merchav, and Lipkin-Schacak sketched a comprehensive decision matrix for Arafat while others (Ben-Ami, Hason and Yatom) a relatively narrow one. In other words, members of the Israeli delegation did not have clear and consistent *collective* conception of what dimensions and issues were motivating the behavior of the Palestinian delegation or what alternatives the Palestinians could reasonably choose from.

To a lesser extent, members of the Israeli delegation did not share a common conception as to which alternatives also constituted the actual choice set of former Prime Minister Barak and which dimensions and factors had the greatest impact on Israel's negotiating stance (e.g. desire for peace,

regional considerations, domestic political considerations, the need to deny Arafat room for maneuver, the need to reveal true Palestinian intentions, Barak's historical role and personal considerations, pan-Arab coalitions, Israeli public opinion, security arrangements, Israel's international standing, or demographic considerations). For example, Lipkin-Shachak listed only one option for Barak at Camp David ("dictate an agreement"), whereas Yatom, Meridor and Ben-Ami listed three and Sher four.

Tables 5 and 6 show that the *size* of the decision matrix representing the perceived alternatives of Arafat ranges from a very small matrix (of one by two) to a gigantic decision matrix of six by ten! Specifically, former assistant to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, Gilad Sher identified Arafat's dilemma as a very complicated one, consisting of 6 alternatives and 10 dimensions, while former Deputy-Director of the Israel Internal Security Agency, Israel Hason, saw it as a merely a 2*2 problem. While five delegates listed two alternatives for Arafat, one delegate identified one alternative, two delegates listed three alternatives, and one claimed that Arafat had six alternatives at Camp David! As for *the number of dimensions* or criteria that the delegates listed for Arafat, three delegates claimed that Arafat had two dimensions, one delegate found him to have four dimensions, three claim that he had five dimensions, and two delegates identified ten dimensions which have influenced Arafat's Camp David's decision!

With regard to the Israeli position at Camp David, the delegates identified Barak's decision matrix as ranging in size from five to twenty eight. With regard to Barak's alternatives at Camp David, one delegate identified one alternative, four delegates claimed that he had two alternatives, three delegates have identified three dimensions, and one claimed that Barak had four alternatives. In terms of dimensions, three delegates claimed that Barak considered three dimensions, two identified four dimensions, two claimed that Barak had five dimensions, and two identified seven dimensions that influenced Barak's decision at Camp David.

While there might be significant difference across delegates in their cognitive complexity and information processing skills (e.g. Sher and Yatom's matrixes are more complicated than others' for both Arafat and Barak), we have re-examined the Tables while excluding these delegates (especially Sher). The results are essentially the same. Moreover, the content of both the alternative sets and dimension sets varies so widely across delegates as demonstrated in Tables 1-4, that there is little doubt that the Israeli delegation has exhibited symptoms of *Poly*think at Camp David 2000.

The interviews seem to point to extreme bewilderment, from a collective point of view, on the Israeli side. Consequently, while individual delegates had clearer conceptions of alternatives, risks, opportunities, dimensions and issues, the delegation as a whole suffered from paralysis as a

result of *Poly*think and its resulting behavior was similar to that reported in studies of Groupthink.

Potential Consequences of *Poly*think

Some of the consequences of *Poly*think are similar to those of Groupthink. This is the case *not* because the group is thinking alike or sharing the same views but because the group is failing to carry out any significant collective thinking. However, there are a number of important consequences that are unique to *Poly*think.

As is the case with Groupthink, *Poly*think is likely to lead to:

1) Defective, sub-optimal decisions

2) Limited review of alternatives, objectives and risks

3) Selective use of information

4) Paralysis in decision making

However, there are several consequences of *Poly*think that are very different from those of Groupthink:

1) **Greater likelihood for group conflict:** as group members have different, sometimes even opposing views of the situation and of potential solutions, there is greater likelihood for group conflict due to *Poly*think, compared

with Groupthink, where group members share more common views of things.

2) **Greater likelihood for leaks**: since group members do not hold uniform views of the situation under *Poly*think, they are more likely to leak information (e.g. to undermine positions that they oppose) than if it is a groupthink situation.

3) **Less likelihood for the group to speak in one voice**: under *Poly*think, there is greater likelihood that group members will talk to their counterparts, constituencies, and even the media in different voices, while under Groupthink, where members share a more uniform, common view of the situation and/or the solution to the situation, they are more likely to speak in one voice.

4) **More likelihood for framing effects**: under *Poly*think, some members may frame offers, proposals, counter-proposals and even disagreements in different ways: some may give it a positive spin, while others may give it a negative spin. The likelihood of members of the group framing it in opposite direction when the re is a group consensus as in Groupthink, is limited.

5) **No room for errors**: Compared with Groupthink, under *Poly*think, the group is less likely to revise its offers if and when they are turned down or presented with a counter offer, as any updating of offers and proposals is

less likely to result in a consensus relative to a Groupthink situation where members share more or less the same position on things.

6) **Adoption of positions with lowest common denominator**: *Poly*think may create decision situations in which the lowest common denominator becomes the dominant product of the group. This is the case, because each member of the group needs to make concessions in his normative worldview, organizational and political agendas and in order to reach an accommodation with other members of the group (see below).

7) **Broader vision due to plurality of opinions of group members:** On the plus side, *Poly*think is less likely to lead to the "narrowing of vision" syndrome that often characterizes Groupthink.

Potential Explanations of *Poly*think: The "Hat" Theory

In this section we introduce potential explanations of *Poly*think. Specifically, we introduce the "Hat" concept. The Hat thesis suggests that delegates represent not only their country's position in the negotiation, but also wear different "hats" while negotiating: an institutional (bureaucratic) "Hat"; a political-coalitionary "Hat"; a normative " Hat"; an expert/novice "Hat", and a leader/follower "Hat". Below we discuss the potential effects of each "Hat" on *Poly*think, and assess how it contributed to *Poly*think at Camp David 2000. However, a test of this theory is beyond the scope of this paper. We show that collective considerations had to compete with interest-based

considerations (such as institutional, political, and normative considerations) at Camp David.

The Institutional "Hat": Graham Allison (1971) has coined the well-known phrase: "where you stand depends on where you sit". One potential explanation of Polythinking is what we call "Institutional Thinking".

Under this "hat", the goal of members of the group is to represent their bureaucracy/organization (see Allison's bureaucratic politics model 1971). Thus, members of the Military have their own institutional goals and agendas; delegates representing the Foreign Ministry have their own institutional perspectives and views and interpret proposals from these particular "lenses"; delegates representing the intelligence community have their own agendas and institutional interests; and cabinet members have their own set of calculations (e.g. political, coalitionary, etc) that affect perception and opinion.

The nine members of the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 included two representatives of the Israeli foreign ministry, two members of the Prime Minister's Office, two representatives of the Israeli military, one academician, and two cabinet ministers (in addition to the Prime Minister).

Such institutional diversity can benefit the delegation's leader as s/he can solicit input from diverse sources, and bounce off ideas on delegates who represent various agencies, bureaucracies and institutions in Israel. Yet,

our interviews have shown that this heterogeneous makeup of the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 may have also contributed to *Poly*think.

The Coalition "Hat": Robert Putnam (1988) has coined the term "Two-Level Games" to describe a typical negotiation setting where negotiators "play" at both the international level and the domestic level. As such, they take into account international considerations as well as domestic, political considerations (such as political audience costs, see Schultz 2003).

According to Rubin and Brown (1975), audiences whether physically present or only "psychologically present", play an important part in shaping the behavior of negotiations.   We theorize that in multi party coalition democracies, where governments typically consist of representatives of different parties with different platforms, agendas, constituencies, and interests, a two-level game can contribute to *Poly*think, as each delegate represents not only the national interest but also his party and constituencies' interests. Each delegate has to view his move then, in light of the coalition formation process with different potential partners.

The Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 consisted of representatives from different political parties: the One Israel party (Labor, Meimad and Gesher factions – with a total of 26 Knesset members), and the Center Party (with a total of 6 Knesset members). Meretz (10 Knesset members) was still a part of the coalition, though not serving in the

government. In addition, the government could rely on the bloc of 10 Arab Knesset members in the event of an agreement at Camp David.

Two cabinet ministers on the team (Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Dan Meridor) were from the Center Party. These ministers represented a centrist, middle of the road, mainstream political vision, and a less dovish political agenda. In addition, foreign minister Ben Ami was a dovish minister from Labor whereas Barak came from the more right-wing element within the Labor party. Yatom (who is now a Labor Knesset member) came from Barak's worldview. All the rest were bureaucrats without too much input into political issues (also see Sher 2001). Whereas the leftist party Meretz was not represented at the talks, Barak had to take into account its view as well, as it provided a "safety net" for potential concessions. The makeup of the group, consisting of representatives of different parties, political agendas, platforms and constituencies may have also contributed to *Poly*think among members of the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000.

The Israeli negotiating team was made up of politicians that were also, undoubtedly, aware of the bleak reality of a minority government without the support of most of the Knesset. Uppermost in everyone's mind was the need to rebuild the faltering coalition. Consequently, each delegation member had to take into consideration a different set of political calculations. Center party members may have been looking towards the desirability of bringing the Likud (or at least some of its moderate members)

into the government, whereas left-leaning Laborites would have preferred to bring Shas into the government. Consequently, the domestic political realities and the pressures of a minority government without a large enough "safety-net" of supporters within the Knesset, created a situation in which each politician in the delegation had to develop a different agenda and conception of what was needed to continue to maintain the government. *Poly*think was the outcome.

The Normative "Hat": Steven Walker and associates (1999) who analyzed Presidential "operational code" including their belief systems, pointed to normative differences in beliefs among leaders (see also Taber 1992). Members of groups represent not only the national interest but also their personal values and worldviews. They can be hawkish or dovish, conservative or liberal.

The relatively lack of formal "rules of the game" in Israeli political discourse contributes in our opinion to what we call "Normative Thinking" -- where the goal of members of the delegation is to represent their own world view and normative belief system (also see Taber 1992).

And indeed, members of the Israeli delegation advance different belief systems and worldviews when it comes to relations with the Palestinian Authority. Some are known to hold dovish views (Ben Ami, Lipkin-Shachak) while others are more hawkish (Meridor, Yanai). Reports indicates

that some delegates were therefore surprised from the concessions Prime

Minister Barak made at Camp David while others were not (Pundak 2001)

The Expert/Novice "Hat": Fiske, Kinder and Larter (1983, p. 393) found

that novices "employ knowledge-based strategies that differ from those of

experts". They process information and recall information in different ways

than Experts. Specifically, whereas experts offer focus on disconfirming

evidence and information, novices typically focus on confirmatory

information and strategies. Naturally, this can have a drastic effect on

*Poly*think.

Furthermore, negotiators need to project an image of competency,

expertise, and effectiveness to others. The level of expertise required is

rather diverse (e.g. military, diplomatic, economic, demographic, legal, and

psychological).

The Israeli delegation to the Camp David talks, in Summer 2000,

consisted of several experts in international negotiations (Dan Meridor,

Gilad Sher, Oded Eran, Reuven Merchav) and several novices in

international negotiations who came to politics from the military or from the

intelligence agencies (Amnon Lipkin-Shachak, Shlomo Yanai, Dani Yatom,

Israel Hason) and a professor-turned-politician (Shlomo Ben Ami). This

makeup of the delegation has contributed to *Poly*think

The Leader/Followers "Hat": Studies showed that leaders place significant constraints on the freedom of action of delegates. However, the inability of leaders to often share goals, objectives or strategies with group members, due to fear of leaks that will undermine the process or even "revolt" of delegates, may also contribute to *Poly*think.

With regard to Camp David 2000, two aspects related to the group's leader (Barak's) management style are particularly relevant to *Poly*think: on the one hand, Barak did not discuss his positions on critical issues with delegates due to the fear of leaks (Pundak 2001, p. 40) while at the same time, he exhibited a "hands off" management style giving his subordinates a wide degree of autonomy (Sher 2001). This combination of delegates enjoying relatively broad autonomy while being kept in the dark relating to key issues in the negotiations, coupled with the differing interests and values of the delegation members, all contributed to the resultant *Poly*think exhibited by the delegation. This has also underscored the lack of consensus in the delegation – because leaks are an often used as a tool to undermine and are the result of differences of opinion among members.

Due to different styles between the leader and followers at Camp David 2000 and especially Barak's negotiating and delegation management style, his delegation members could not come close to developing an agreed upon agenda based on a collective understanding of the issues. It this respect, they were *victims* of *Poly*think.

In sum, the upshot of the above discussion would seem to suggest that constituencies, parties, bureaucracies, world views, group leaders, and expertise place significant constraints on the freedom of action of negotiators and the "psychological presence" of these audiences act to curtail the cognitive processes and "information search" of negotiators. Collective considerations had to compete in the mind of each delegate, with other interest-based considerations (institutional, domestic-political and personal).

The five considerations listed above are not mutually exclusive. There is a natural overlap between some of these considerations. For example, between the positions of members of the coalition and their personal worldviews. When issues are more easily solved, there is less conflict between these five interests.

Did *Poly*think lead to the Collapse of the Camp David Talks?

Our interviews with members of the Israeli delegation to Camp David 2000 showed that they had a broad array of perceptions as to Palestinian and Israeli policy options and intentions at Camp David. There is no evidence to suggest however, that *Poly*think among members of the Israeli delegation at Camp David 2000 was the reason for the collapse of the Camp David talks. However, just as uniformity of opinions, views and perceptions and other symptoms of Groupthink can contribute to defective, sub-optimal decisions,

so can the extreme pluralism, lack of group cohesiveness and minimal conformity among group members lead to a failure to understand the other side and articulate policy options that are based on a consensus.

*Poly*think created for the Israeli delegates, a reality in which negotiations between and among Israelis themselves, became no less important than the negotiations with the Palestinians. Prime Minister Barak had to take into account the standing (in terms of domestic and bureaucratic politics and worldviews) of each of the Israeli delegates and thus his ability to assign authority and affect each of the Israeli delegates was more limited. Thus, whereas Barak required the help of aids in terms of expertise and information, he had limited the overall influence of these aids on the negotiating process (Sher 2001). In fact, it is well known that some members of the Israeli delegation have learned about some of Barak's proposals and plans <u>after</u> he introduced them at Camp David (Pundak 2001).

Cannon-Bowers, Salas and Converse (1993) claimed that shared mental models increase the speed, accuracy and flexibility in decision making by emphasizing the most salient dimensions. The existence of multiple mental models (a la Polythink) within the collective body may significantly hinder collective success (Thompson et al 1995, pp. 20-21). This fact creates a bewildering array of considerations that each delegate must take into account. Furthermore, as coalitions are more brittle, and issues more controversial, *Poly*think becomes more relevant.

The existence of multiple power bases, diverse institutional interests and bureaucratic agendas within a delegation may serve as an "advance warning" for unsuccessful outcomes in negotiations.

Future Applications of *Poly*think

The *Poly*think model may be applied to other international negotiations and perhaps even help predict their outcome. The proposed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians over President Bush's Road Map for peace in the Middle East may result in the opposite of what occurred at Camp David. This is because the current round of negotiations, when resumed, is likely to be between a more unified Israeli government with a clear majority in parliament than the Barak coalition, and a more divided Palestinian leadership. Hence, it is likely that the Israeli side may exhibit signs of Groupthink whereas the Palestinian side may exhibit signs of *Poly*think.

The concept of *Poly*think is also relevant to the current situation in Iraq. Due to the multi-religious, multi-ethnic makeup of Iraq, and competition among rival groups for power, any newly elected Iraqi government is likely to exhibit more symptoms of *Poly*think than of Groupthink.

Hence, the concept of *Poly*think may have broad theoretical and policy applications and can serve, with further development, as a useful tool to help explain and predict negotiation processes and outcomes.

Table 1

Palestinian Alternatives

Delegate Name

Alternative	Meridor	Eran	Lipkin	Ben Ami	Hason	Merchav	Sher	Yatom	Yanai
Ensure physical survival								X	
No agreement (reject Israeli/U.S. proposals)		X			X		X		
Do nothing		X	X			X	X	X	X
Submit counter proposals							X		
Accept Israeli & U.S. proposals							X		
Mobilize public opinion in favor of concessions							X		
Mobilize Arab public opinion against concessions							X		
Wait and see						X			
Count on Clinton						X			
Agreement based on Arafat's own terms			X		X				
Permanent agreement which spells out an end to the conflict	X			X					
Partial agreement that excludes Jerusalem				X					
Partial agreement that excludes Temple Mount and/or the Old City				X					

Partial agreement that leaves key issues to future negotiations	x								

Table 2

Palestinian Decision Dimensions

Delegate Name

Dimension	Meridor	Eran	Lipkin	Ben Ami	Hason	Merchav	Sher		
Arafat's historical role					X	X	X		
Inter-Arab political considerations			X				X		
Regime survival	X						X		
Israeli & U.S. political considerations							X		
End of conflict							X		
Independent Palestinian state							X		
Solution to the refugees problem		X					X		
Preserving Palestinian core beliefs							X		
Fear of a plot							X		
Emotional Considerations						X			
Personal considerations		X				X			
Relations with the U.S.						X			
Domestic Israeli considerations						X	X		
Religious (Islamic) considerations					X				
Commitment to the Palestinian cause				X					
Ability to justify concessions				X					
Israel's territorial concessions			X						
Solution to Temple Mount		X	X						
East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine			X						
Domestic Palestinian support	X		X						
Inter-Arab support		X							
Palestinian ideology	X								
Breaking Israeli taboos	X								

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Weaken Israel's bargaining position	X							
Demilitarized state								
Israeli control of border crossing checkpoints								
The Jordan valley								

Table 3

Israeli Alternatives

Delegate Name

Alternative	Meridor	Eran	Lipkin	Ben Ami	Hason	Merchav	Sher	Yatom	Yana
Permanent peace agreement	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Separation (unilateral Israeli withdrawal)							X		
Interim agreement	X				X				X
Do nothing		X							
Full initiative							X		
Indefinite partial agreement				X			X		
Oslo (1993) agreement Plus						X			
Leave Camp David without a deal	X			X					
Dictate an agreement			X						
Various security arrangements (e.g. re the Jordan Valley)								X	
Territorial concessions								X	

Table 4

Israel's Decision Dimensions

Delegate Name

Dimension	Meridor	Eran	Lipkin	Ben Ami	Hason	Merchav	Sher	Yatom	Yan
Preventing radicalism							x		
Finding a fundamental solution to the problem							x		
Regional considerations						x	x		
Domestic political considerations	x			x			x		
Effect on moderate Arab coalition							x		
Israeli public opinion							x		
Security considerations	x	x				x	x	x	x
Personal considerations		x	x			x			
Timing (window of opportunity)					x			x	
Oslo has reached a dead end					x				
Time is against Israel					x				
Pressing Arafat to a decision junction					x			x	
Arafat is a rational (realistic) leader					x				x
Strategic considerations			x						
Social considerations			x						
Economic considerations			x						
Evidence of leadership			x						
Intra-party considerations		x							
International-diplomatic considerations		x							
Demographic considerations	x								
Loss of strategic assets	x							x	
Israeli concessions over East Jerusalem									x

Temple Mount issue			x				
Temple Mount & Old City issues			x				
Non-personal, rational considerations						x	
Non-incremental changes						x	
Peace as a grand vision						x	

TABLE 5:"Decision Sketches" of Israeli Delegates at Camp David 2000

The Palestinian Position

Name of Delegate	# of alternatives * # of dimensions
S. Ben Ami	3x2=6
I. Hason	2x2= 4
O. Eran	1x3= 3
A. Lipkin-Shachak	2x5=10
R. Merchav	3x5=15
D. Meridor	2x5=10
G. Sher	6x10=60
S. Yanai	1x2= 2
D. Yatom	2x10=20

TABLE 6: "Decision Sketches" of Israeli Delegates at Camp David 2000

The Israeli Position

Name of Delegate	# of alternatives * # of dimensions
S. Ben Ami	3x3=9
I. Hason	2x5=10
O. Eran	2x4= 8
A. Lipkin-Shachak	1x5= 5
R. Merchav	2x3= 6
D. Meridor	3x4= 12
G. Sher	4x7= 28
S. Yanai	2x3= 6
D. Yatom	3x7= 21

Notes

1. We did not interview the Head of the Israeli delegation—former Prime Minister Barak-- as he was the leader of the group and our study attempted to determine if there was similar or dissimilar worldview among *members* of the delegation. Moreover, it is beyond the scope of this study due to limited access to the West Bank and Gaza, to analyze the Palestinian delegation.

2. Collective consensus is easier to achieve when relating to either broad national goals, or tactical/technical issues requiring the expertise of military or economic technocrats (such as the exact locations of borders, military force structure, etc.). As long as issues dealt with by the delegation at Camp David were more tactical and technical, it was easier to develop a consensus. The same was true regarding Israel's ultimate goals (remaining a Jewish state within secure and peaceful borders). However, when issues dealt with were strategic goals with practical implications (such as the status of Jerusalem, the question of allowing a limited return of Palestinian refugees, etc.), collective decision making became untenable. And it was precisely at the level of these strategic

goals with practical implications that issues of bureaucratic politics, domestic politics and personal proclivities came to the fore while reflection Polythink

3. A popular mode of uni-dimensional decision-making is the Lexicographic strategy, where choices are made based on the benefits along the most important criterion.

4. Interestingly, within each of these parties there were also significant differences among delegates: for example, within the Center Party, Meridor originally came from the center-right Likud party whereas Shahak was more of a leftist. And in Labor, foreign minister Ben Ami was a dovish minister from Labor whereas Barak came from the more right-wing element within the Labor party. Other members of the delegation were bureaucrats with little input on political issues.

5. Whereas our institutional and coalition models resemble Allison's bureaucratic politics and organizational politics models, the normative/personal, expert/novice and leader/follower "hats" add in our opinion to a fuller explanation of Polythink.

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