



## POSTSCRIPT TO OSLO: THE MYSTERY OF NORWAY'S MISSING FILES

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*In Norway, the secret negotiations culminating in the 1993 Oslo agreement are still seen as a shining moment in the nation's history, so when the files of the entire process were discovered to be missing from government archives, a minor public scandal erupted. After laying out the Oslo "myth" and its cast of characters, the author recounts the story of the disappearance of the files, new revelations concerning their scope, and the (thus far unsuccessful) quest to recover them. The author concludes by exploring the implications of the backchannel negotiations for the entire Oslo process and its lessons for conflict resolution, particularly third-party mediation in highly asymmetrical conflicts.*

THIS SEPTEMBER marks the fifteenth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo accord that was expected to bring peace to the Middle East. It is doubtful that the date will be widely celebrated. By now it is clear that the 13 September 1993 Declaration of Principles, though it resulted in the creation of a Palestinian self-governing authority, failed to lead to peace. For the Palestinians, it resulted in the parceling of the West Bank, the doubling of Israeli settlers, the construction of a crippling separation wall, a draconian closure regime, and an unprecedented separation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Far from being celebrated, Oslo in many quarters in the occupied territories and the Palestinian diaspora is at best desperately clung to as a last-ditch legal basis for some form of a Palestinian state, and at worst vilified as the beginning of the end of Palestinian hopes for meaningful sovereignty.

There is, however, one place where the Oslo process still occupies a privileged place in the public mind: Norway, the country under whose auspices the backchannel negotiations that led to the signing of the agreement were held. There, despite evidence to the contrary—including my own study published in April 2004<sup>1</sup>—the Oslo process retains all its allure and mystique, representing a shining moment in Norwegian history.

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### THE OSLO PROCESS IN THE NORWEGIAN NATIONAL PSYCHE

Along with fame and prestige, Norway's "crusader diplomacy" in the Middle East brought tangible benefits. It helped promote the image of a country with something special to offer in terms of political morality and conflict mediation, increasing Norway's influence on the international peace scene. Norway has long hosted the Nobel Peace Prize; following the 1993 diplomatic breakthrough in the Middle East, Oslo seemed established as the world's "capital of peace."<sup>2</sup> Peacemaking became one of the country's chief exports,<sup>3</sup> with Norwegians becoming involved in peace processes from Guatemala and Columbia to Sudan, from Sri Lanka to Cyprus and the former Yugoslavia.

Indeed, Norway's "Oslo achievement," in the national psyche, is such that any aspersion cast on its role in the process, any assault on the Oslo mystique, generates controversy and hostility. The Oslo myth is well entrenched: A personality-driven explanation of events, the story tells of a small coterie of idealistic and resourceful citizens of tiny Norway who, through perseverance and the "Oslo spirit" they created, succeeded where the superpowers had failed in bringing age-old enemies together to make peace.

More specifically, the story focuses on four indisputably attractive individuals. First and foremost in the public imagination is Terje Rød-Larsen, the charming, self-confident diplomat-of-action who, as head of the Norwegian research institute Fafo, got the "peace ball" rolling. Next is his elegant wife, Mona Juul, a Middle East specialist at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) who helped create the cozy, homey atmosphere that fostered the breakthrough. State Secretary Jan Egeland, the handsome, results-oriented idealist who welcomed the chance to test the hypothesis of his political science thesis about how small states can create results in international politics unattainable for superpowers, was the third player. Once the process was underway, the trio became a quartet with the addition of Norway's newly appointed foreign minister, the dynamic Johan Jørgen Holst, whose can-do approach and shrewd mediation overcame eleventh-hour snags to bring the process to its successful conclusion on the White House lawn in Washington, DC.

The legacy is guarded like a national treasure, to such an extent that the discovery in early 2006 that the "Oslo files"—the documents concerning the backchannel negotiations that launched the accords—had gone missing, with no trace either in the MFA or in the national archives, became a running topic in national newspapers for almost a year.

In fact, the discovery that the files were missing had actually taken place several years earlier—it just hadn't hit the press. In 2001, I was commissioned by the Norwegian MFA to conduct a comprehensive study of the Oslo back channel. In order to carry out the research, I was granted privileged access to all relevant, still-classified files in the ministry's archives. Given that the MFA had been at the heart of the process—either directly through the involvement of Egeland, Juul, and Holst, or indirectly as the funder of the backchannel talks

initially overseen by Fafo's Rød-Larsen—there seemed no doubt that all the documents I needed would be there.

But when I set to work at the archives, to my surprise, I found not a single scrap of paper for the entire period from January to September 1993—precisely the period of the backchannel talks. I alerted the head of the MFA archive, who was astonished and more than a little puzzled. Surely they had been misplaced, perhaps stored in improperly marked boxes. After an exhaustive search by the archive's staff, who combed through indexes, storage rooms, and shelves looking for misfiled documents, all doubt was removed: There were no files. Fleeting suggestions that the backchannel process might have been oral, without written record at the request of the participants, were immediately dismissed, not least because excerpts from the missing documents had already been quoted in memoirs by Israeli participants such as then foreign minister Shimon Peres, then deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin, and to a lesser extent, chief negotiator Uri Savir.<sup>4</sup> A number of these quotes were from letters written by Foreign Minister Holst, who died in January 1994. Given his key role in the later stages of the talks, and in light of his known penchant for writing long memos and detailed analyses, it seemed logical that if his own Oslo writings were not in the MFA archives, they would be found among his private papers. I therefore secured an interview with his widow, Marianne Heiberg, who had accompanied her husband on several of his Oslo missions and even participated in some of the secret meetings. This, too, proved to be a dead end: Heiberg, herself a researcher and a Middle East specialist, had originally planned to write about the peace process herself but had been surprised to find no documents relating to her late husband's involvement in the Oslo back channel among his private papers.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the MFA contacted Rød-Larsen and Mona Juul on my behalf to ask if they had any information or documents to contribute, but the MFA's requests, as well as my own, went unanswered.<sup>6</sup>

In the end, I had not a single original Norwegian document to work with. This was an obstacle, to be sure, but not insurmountable. Through scores of interviews with the key players (Norwegian, Israeli, Palestinian, and American), excerpts from key missing documents published elsewhere, and a good dose of common sense, it was possible to put together a comprehensive picture of the back channel, its pitfalls, and its limitations, focusing on Norway's role. My book caused a considerable stir when it came out in April 2004.<sup>7</sup> I had challenged the prevailing myth by demonstrating that Norway had acted very much as the United States had acted (albeit for different reasons): Norwegian facilitators, anxious to bring the agreement to conclusion, had consistently sided with Israel, shared information with them, and leaned on the Palestinians to give in at crucial moments. In all the controversy around the book—a controversy augmented by the fact that Rød-Larsen and Juul publicly attacked my conclusions—the reference to the missing files in my introduction was overlooked.<sup>8</sup> Though I tried to generate interest in the mystery by mentioning it to a number of people, including journalists, no one followed upon on it, and the issue faded away.

### THE SCANDAL ERUPTS

In October 2005, the well-known journalist Odd Karsten Tveit, for many years Middle East correspondent for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, published *War and Diplomacy: Oslo-Jerusalem 1978-96*.<sup>9</sup> In Norway, where anything on Norway's role in the peace process receives instant coverage, Tveit's book, too, created a stir, but for different reasons than my own: While it painted a bleak (and quite accurate) picture of the ultimate outcome of the process, it portrayed the Oslo back channel itself as a success. More important, it left entirely intact the idealized image of the role of the Norwegian actors that continues to be widely embraced by the Norwegian public. Tveit not only admires Rød-Larsen and Holst, but embraces their versions of the peace process, especially that of Rød-Larsen, with whom he worked closely on the project.<sup>10</sup>

Tveit's book was actually the second part of a dual project, the first part having been a documentary film of the same title that aired on Norwegian television in May 2004.<sup>11</sup> Rød-Larsen, Juul, and Holst figured prominently in Tveit's film, much of which comprised extended interviews with Rød-Larsen and Juul intercut with documentary footage. In 2000, Tveit had received some \$180,000 in funding for the film/book project from the Norwegian MFA, which also granted him privileged access to the ministry's classified files. When these facts were revealed by the press in September 2000, a controversy ensued, particularly in academic circles, as the funding and access to classified documents for any but the most "scholarly" research was virtually unprecedented in Norway.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the MFA's grant and unrestricted access to its classified documents (which are not mentioned in the film credits or the book acknowledgments), Tveit's book did not reference any MFA files on the back channel—not surprisingly, since, as I knew from my own research during the same period, there were no such files. Instead, the 200-some documents for this period cited in the book were referenced in a highly unusual manner: In his preface, Tveit explained that to protect his primary sources, he had "deposited" a "supplementary footnote manuscript with references to sources" with Norway's national archives.<sup>13</sup> The footnote manuscript had been placed in a box at the national archives that had been marked as classified for 25 years by Tveit himself. Though the classified source system was extremely obscure—not to say impenetrable—because of my familiarity with the Oslo back channel I was able to recognize in the book references to some documents already identified as missing, as well as a substantial number of other internal documents not previously known. Thus, while the book did not offer much that was new by way of content or interpretation of the secret negotiations, what was new and important was that it confirmed the existence of backchannel files still unaccounted for. Moreover, a number of the quotes were more extensive than the meager excerpts already published in other works, demonstrating that Tveit had access to the actual documents and must have had them, or copies of them, in front of him while

he wrote. For those well familiar with the case, this was very big news indeed. Media attention surrounding the book was focused elsewhere, however: on the incidental revelation that the wife of the head of a Norwegian NGO had been a Mossad agent. The news about the mysterious classified box and the missing files went entirely unnoticed.

But then, on 17 January 2006, *Ny Tid*, an old socialist periodical reincarnated as a trendy weekly, appeared on news stands with a photo of Mona Juul splashed across its glossy cover along with the title of its lead article: “The Documents That Went Missing.”<sup>14</sup> Within days, and continuing over the following weeks, the case of the missing files was extensively covered in segments of the national press, with articles bearing such titles as “Archive Mess To Be Raised with MFA,” “Where Are the Documents?” and “Clean-Up Demanded,” escalating within the next few weeks to “Rød-Larsen and Juul Are Lying” and “Lured by Tveit.”<sup>15</sup> In the initial round of Norwegian media coverage on the matter, the impression was given that the actual documents were stored in the national archives.<sup>16</sup> By early February, however, the truth was out, and Jon Herstad, head of the national archives (a position of considerable national prestige in Norway) felt called upon to weigh in on the matter. In an op-ed in a leading daily, *Dagbladet*, Herstad confirmed that his institution did not possess a single document relating to the Oslo back channel and that the now-famous “Tveit Box” was empty, or at least contained no documents. Instead, the box contained only a CD with the book’s complete footnote manuscript. He added that the national archives had not received a single document upon which Tveit’s account was based and ordered an investigation into the whereabouts of the documents.<sup>17</sup>

### SEARCHING FOR THE FILES

Following Herstad’s initiative, the MFA publicly acknowledged—though without explanation—that none of the relevant documents had ever been filed with the ministry to begin with. At a meeting between the two government institutions, a plan of action for following up on the missing files was formulated and a division of labor decided: The MFA would approach Mona Juul and Jan Egeland, both MFA employees at the time of the backchannel talks in 1993, while Herstad would contact Terje Rød-Larsen and the family of the late Johan Jørgen Holst.<sup>18</sup>

The attempts to recover the documents did not get very far. On the MFA side, former state secretary Jan Egeland, who in the meantime had become UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator at the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in New York, went through his private papers and sent eight documents to the MFA.<sup>19</sup> Although some of these are important and had been missing—particularly the Sarpsborg document and Holst’s statement to the Parliamentarian Foreign Affairs Committee<sup>20</sup>—none of them belonged to the most crucial phase (May–August 1993), when Egeland’s involvement had been largely eclipsed by the increasingly central role of Holst. Mona Juul, on the other hand, who had

accompanied Holst on his various missions and who was in charge of keeping his documents organized, had little to say. By that time Norway's deputy head of mission to the United Nations in New York, she had already been questioned about the files in early January and affirmed that she had no documents except those that belonged to her. She declined to elaborate.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, Herstad's attempts on behalf of the national archives met with even less success. Holst's widow, Marianne Heiberg, had died in December 2004, having maintained to the end that she had no idea where her husband's Oslo papers might be; the Holst family had no further information. As for Rød-Larsen, by this time head of the United Nations-affiliated International Peace Academy in New York and simultaneously UN Special Representative for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1559 calling for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, he seemed little inclined to share his thoughts. Already confronted with the issue in January 2006, he had insisted that he had only "private" memos and a "private" archive from his engagement in the Oslo negotiations, although both he and his wife noted that Fafo might have the ministry's missing files. The research institution affirmed, however, that none of the ministry's files were in its possession.<sup>22</sup>

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The search for the documents reached its ultimate dead end in early May 2006, when Rød-Larsen sent a letter to Herstad on official International Peace Academy stationery making absolutely clear that he had no intention of turning any of the documents in his "extensive private archive" over to the Norwegian state. In his estimation, Norway's involvement in the Middle East peace process was basically a Fafo initiative, and in his capacity as the organization's director and the leader of its "negotiation project," he was the one who had liaised between Israelis and Palestinians, arranged the necessary briefings, and coordinated with the MFA. Fafo, he elaborated, had organized the secret negotiations at the request of the Israelis and the Palestinians, who had wanted, among other things, to "avoid the reporting and filing routines which civil servants are bound by." He wrote that he had noted "with interest" statements from "some Norwegian historians, officials in the MFA, and the head of the national archives himself" regarding the missing files, but claimed that none had attempted to contact him directly. This being the case, according to Rød-Larsen, neither the participants in the public debate nor their alleged lack of communication had "contributed to the relationship of trust that is a necessary precondition when donating a private archive including memos from sensitive conversations with, among others, still-living politicians and diplomats from many countries." In consequence, he concluded, "I will donate my private archive to an internationally recognized archive abroad."<sup>23</sup>

Notwithstanding the definitiveness of Rød-Larsen's letter, the controversy continued, fueling an ongoing debate within Norway's academic circles on the

entire issue of ownership of archives. Several months after the scandal of the Oslo missing files broke, Herstad, commenting on an analogous case involving a government minister who had decided to keep her “private archive” on Norway’s mediation efforts in the Sudan, declared unambiguously—as he also had in February—that the absence of filed documents represented a “conspicuous violation” of Norway’s laws on archiving, that a person who participates in a mediation process does so as a public person, not a “housewife,” and that there are no such things as “private documents from such a process.”<sup>24</sup> Few readers of the chief archivist’s statements had any doubt that they were directed at least as much to the far more politically sensitive case of the Oslo files.

### THE ISSUE IS DROPPED

Indeed, it seemed to many observers that the public nature of the Oslo process was beyond dispute. Critics of Rød-Larsen’s approach noted that Norway’s role in 1993 had been cleared by the prime minister and had been closely followed from the outset by Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg and State Secretary Egeland, to say nothing of Juul’s undisputed employment with the MFA. When Holst took over as Norway’s foreign minister in April 1993, he began virtually to run the Oslo process, moving Norway’s involvement from “facilitator” to active “mediator.” Moreover, it was pointed out, PLO leaders (including Yasir Arafat, as far back as 1979) had tried to interest Norway in mediation between the two parties, and these requests were to the state, not to any individuals.<sup>25</sup>

Given the wide consensus, at least in academic circles, on the MFA’s right to the Oslo files, there was considerable surprise when, in early 2007, the MFA suddenly appeared wholeheartedly to embrace Rød-Larsen’s views on the ownership of the documents. This was in sharp contrast to its earlier stance. In March 2006, for example, the MFA had emphasized in its correspondence with Juul and Egeland that they were obliged to return all documents in their possession, including all minutes and private notes, and even specified that the secret, backchannel nature of the talks did not constitute a justification for not returning the documents.<sup>26</sup> But in January of 2007, the MFA’s spokesperson, questioned on the present status of the ministry’s quest to recover the documents, was quoted as saying: “Our conclusion is that there are no documents concerning the Oslo process in his [Rød-Larsen’s] possession that are missing from the MFA’s files. Therefore, we consider the case closed.” The MFA spokesperson went on to elaborate that “the MFA had a very limited involvement in the secret negotiations. On behalf of Norway, it was mainly Foreign Minister Johan Jørgen Holst and Terje Rød-Larsen from Fafo who were involved.” When asked whether or not Rød-Larsen should be seen as having acted on behalf of Norway, the spokesperson replied, “No, he participated on a mission from the foreign minister.” The spokesperson specifically identified Mona Juul as “the only one from the MFA.”<sup>27</sup>

Even leaving aside the rather astonishing implication that the Norwegian foreign minister is not part of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the MFA’s

statement raised eyebrows. There was speculation in some quarters that internal Norwegian politics and political party alignments had played a role in the case. Some suggested that the new foreign minister, from the Labor party, may have seen Rød-Larsen's important international and U.S. contacts as more useful to Norway than the principle of correct filing and future historical research. Be that as it may, and whatever the real reasons behind the MFA's about-face might have been, it left a number of observers unhappy. The new head of the national archives, Ivar Fønnes, who took over from Jon Herstad in August 2006, privately remarked at the time that while his institution could not force Rød-Larsen to donate his archive to the nation, he (Fønnes) intended to pursue the matter with the MFA.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, however, Fønnes decided that a public conflict over the documents would serve no useful purpose.<sup>29</sup> Thus, ever since the January 2007 *Ny Tid* article, the missing files issue has quite simply disappeared from public view, aside from the occasional passing reference in the extreme left-wing press.

#### THE MISSING FILES: WHAT IMPORTANCE?

Why should we bother about missing documents, or care that they are not in government archives? More specifically, what does it matter whether or not the Oslo backchannel files are available for public (or scholarly) scrutiny, especially since the broad outlines of the Oslo story are already known?

Whatever the ultimate fate of the Oslo process, there is no question that it constituted, for better or for worse, a turning point in the history of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This being the case, it is important for the historical record to know how this process unfolded, and particularly why the Palestinian positions progressively crumbled in the course of the backchannel negotiations. Historians cannot rely on excerpts, which are by definition selective; they must have access to documents in their entirety to reach a full and accurate assessment of what happened and why.

The importance of the documents can be illustrated by an episode in July 1993, when the entire backchannel enterprise seemed on the brink of collapse as the Palestinians refused to make the compromises and concessions demanded by Israel. According to Israeli accounts, Holst and the Norwegians were instrumental in getting the talks back on track. Holst took advantage of an official visit to Tunisia to arrange a personal meeting with Arafat that took place at PLO headquarters on 13 July. Prior to the meeting, the Israelis, as was their habit, briefed Holst on what questions to raise with Arafat and what Israeli red lines to convey, and asked him to stop in Israel afterwards to brief them. Holst was accompanied at the Arafat meeting by Rød-Larsen and Juul, but it was he who did the talking on the Norwegian side. Much of the discussion centered on Arafat's insistence on extraterritorial corridors (what Arafat called "kissing points") between the West Bank and Gaza, with Holst insisting instead on the vague and essentially meaningless formulation "safe passage." A second meeting was arranged a week later, on 20 July, because Israel wanted additional



clarification on Arafat's thinking on this issue (the Palestinian leader would not be pinned down). Other issues were apparently also discussed, and Holst was able to advise the Israelis that if Jericho were not included in the final package as a PLO foothold in the West Bank, Arafat would have a hard time selling the deal.<sup>30</sup>

All this is known not from documents but from interviews with the participants, written accounts, and excerpts (published in Israeli sources<sup>31</sup>) from letters Holst wrote to Peres directly after the meetings to recount what had transpired. What we learn from Tveit is that Holst also wrote "long and detailed minutes in English" after the meetings.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Tveit's book is replete with passing allusions to Holst's compulsive note-taking throughout the entire four months of his involvement in the process: his aide-memoires before and after meetings; his memoranda on discussions by telephone or in person with various leaders; his exhaustive draft minutes, often written on airplanes as he traveled from one destination to another—not to mention his letters to various key players.<sup>33</sup> Tveit's revelation that voluminous Holst documentation of the Oslo back channel exists solves a mystery that has long puzzled those familiar with the foreign minister's habits, to wit: Why had he written so little on a project of such vital interest to his country? (From my own research, I can affirm that the MFA archives are overflowing with copies of his copious writings, often in his own hand, on every issue that concerned him throughout his Foreign Ministry career *except* the secret Oslo talks.) Given Holst's exceptional thoroughness, the importance of the missing documentation in providing insights into the workings of the Oslo track cannot be overstated.

It is also not difficult to imagine how precious Holst's detailed descriptions of his meetings with Arafat would have been for the Israeli negotiators at the time. As we know from Israeli accounts, Rød-Larsen and Juul personally delivered Holst's letter to the Israelis a few days after the first meeting. The Tveit book adds the important detail that the couple also delivered his full minutes of the meeting; unable to come to Israel himself, Holst wrote Peres that he was sending Rød-Larsen and Juul as his "special envoys" to brief Peres's "people" directly.<sup>34</sup> The pair thus met with the entire Israeli team, supplying additional details and being on hand to answer any questions about the nuances of Arafat's responses, his tone, his body language. The advantage to the Israeli side of such prior knowledge of the adversary's thinking needs no emphasis.

Even without access to primary documents it had been possible to put together what is increasingly recognized (at least in academic circles) as an accurate picture of what happened in the Oslo channel, particularly as concerns the structure of the mediation and its impact on the negotiation results. Had the missing documents (especially the extensive Holst material whose existence has now been confirmed) been accessible at the time of writing, there seems no doubt that the findings of my report would have shown even more starkly the extent to which the Oslo process was conducted on Israel's premises, with Norway acting as Israel's helpful errand boy. Indeed, it is not far-fetched to

suggest that the very prospect of making public blow-by-blow descriptions of the mediation could have some bearing on why the files went missing in the first place. Such considerations may even have played a role in the MFA's decision to renounce its claim to the files, and explain the "news blackout" on the subject that followed. It seems clear that important interests both inside and outside government are determined to avoid a critical discussion of Norway's peacemaking and peace-building efforts, on which billions of dollars are spent.

Given the overwhelming imbalance of power between the Israelis and the Palestinians, Norway probably could not have acted otherwise if it wanted to reach a deal—or even if it wanted to play a role in the process at all. Israel's red lines were the ones that counted, and if the Palestinians wanted a deal, they would have to accept them, too. Indeed, in third-party mediations between vastly unequal parties by a small state like Norway, the only chance for "success" in reaching an agreement is for the small state "facilitator" (a role that in Norway's case evolved into that of mediator) to play by the rules of the stronger party, acting on its premises, while using carrots and sticks on the weaker party to persuade or cajole it into making further concessions.<sup>35</sup>

The missing documents would almost certainly show why the Oslo process probably never could have resulted in a sustainable peace. To a great extent, full documentation of the back channel would explain the disaster that followed Oslo. More broadly, it would have shed important light on the limits of third-party mediation by a small state in highly asymmetrical conflicts. Indeed, the Oslo process could serve as the perfect case study for flaws of this model. In asymmetrical conflicts, only the international community (if it has the will) or a superpower (if it has the desire and the vision) is capable of imposing on the parties a reasonably fair, and therefore sustainable, agreement.

Without the power to impose solutions, and above all dependent on the stronger party, the weak state mediator in unequal contests must rely heavily on "process symmetry," where the two sides are treated with absolute equality, provided with exactly the same accommodations, allotted exactly the same amount of time to make their case, and so on. The Norwegians went to great lengths to achieve this symmetry (as did the Americans in their mediating efforts between Palestinians and Israelis, albeit for different reasons). The problem with *process* symmetry is that it cannot address the *power* asymmetry that inevitably distorts the outcome of negotiations. Process symmetry and the entire facilitative exercise can create a sense of equality between adversaries and the illusion of genuine communication, even trust. The Norwegians believed that through dialogue and a gradual building of trust, an irreversible peace dynamic would be created that could push the process forward to solution. The problem with this entire approach is that the issue is not one of trust, but of power. The facilitative process masks that reality. In the end, the results

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that can be achieved by a weak third-party facilitator are no more than the strong party will allow. Short of unusual generosity or truly far-sighted vision, such a solution can only be unbalanced and unfair, and therefore ultimately unsustainable. The question to be asked is whether such a model can ever be appropriate.

## NOTES

1. Hilde Henriksen Waage, *Peacemaking Is a Risky Business: Norway's Role in the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1993-96* (Oslo: PRIO, 2004). My article "Norway's Role in the Middle East Peace Talks: Between a Strong State and a Weak Belligerent," based on that book, was published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2005), pp. 6-24.

2. Nils Butenschøn, *The Oslo Agreement in Norwegian Foreign Policy*, CMEIS Occasional Paper no. 56 (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Durham, 1997), p. 21.

3. "Norsk politikk selger" [Norwegian Policy Sells], *Aftenposten*, 31 March 1995.

4. Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1995), pp. 341-43; Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), pp. 106-13; Uri Savir, *The Process: 1,100 Days That Changed The Middle East* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 42-44, 51. See also Waage, *Peacemaking*, pp. 112-19, 125-26, 128, 147.

5. Marianne Heiberg, author interview, 13 May 2002.

6. Terje Rød-Larsen and Mona Juul were both given drafts of my various manuscripts with requests for help and information, both by me and by the MFA. At the urging of the MFA, they finally agreed to be interviewed by me in August and October 2002, respectively. Rød-Larsen would not allow me to tape the interview but asked to see the manuscript to verify his quotes. I sent him the manuscript as agreed; he did not contact me with comments despite my follow-up inquiries. When my report was declassified by the MFA and made public, however, he attacked me strongly in the media, claiming to have been misquoted and declaring that my findings had not been based on any solid sources.

7. See for example: "The Icon Breaker" [in Norwegian; henceforth, only the English translation will be given for all titles from Norwegian periodicals], *Morgenbladet*, 30 April 2004; "The Battle over History," *Dagbladet*, 27 April 2004; "A Scolded Accord," *Aftenposten*, 27 April 2004; "Too Big for Little Norway," *Dagbladet*, 26 April 2004; "Norway: Peace Mediator—Or Just an Errand Boy?" *Dagsavisen*, 26 April 2006.

8. In the introduction to my report, I wrote that "[a]bsolutely no documents . . . [n]o minutes, no memos, no letters seemed to have been filed. When, for instance, the Norwegian foreign minister had meetings to discuss the negotiations . . . with the Israeli foreign minister, the U.S. secretary of state, or the chairman of the PLO, not a single word seems to have been recorded. . . . Furthermore, while extracts from letters written by the Norwegian foreign minister have been quoted in books, these letters cannot be found in the archives of the Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs . . . [n]or . . . among his private papers." Waage, *Peacemaking*, p. 11.

9. Odd Karsten Tveit, *Krig og diplomati: Oslo-Jerusalem 1978-96* [War and Diplomacy: Oslo-Jerusalem 1978-96], (Oslo: Aschehoug, 2005).

10. See also Arne Ørum, "Prince of Peace," *Morgenbladet*, 18 November 2005; Arne Ørum, "The Oslo Documents Are Gone—So What?" *Palestina* 11, no. 1 (March 2006); Arne Ørum, "Dubious Sponsoring," *Morgenbladet*, 18 November 2005. Arne Ørum is the author of *Fred i vår tid. Retorikken bak Oslo-prosessen* [Peace in Our Time: The Rhetoric behind the Oslo Process] (Trondheim: Tapir Akademiske Forlag, 2004).

11. Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation (NRK), *Krig og diplomati* [War and Diplomacy], 3 May 2004.

12. "Sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," *VG (Verdens Gang)*, 2 September 2000. Tveit received 1.15 million Norwegian kroner. At the time

when Tveit was granted money as well as access to the secret files, Juul was the ministry's state secretary, and the Rød-Larsen-Juul couple's close friend Torbjørn Jagland was foreign minister as well as head of the Norwegian Labor party. The decision to grant Tveit both financing and access to the archives was most likely taken by the foreign minister himself.

13. Tveit, *War and Diplomacy*, p. 11.

14. "The Documents that Went Missing," *Ny Tid*, 17 January 2006, pp. 18–25.

15. "Archive Mess to be Raised with MFA," *Bergens Tidende*, 31 January 2006; Jon Herstad, "Where Are the Documents?" *Dagbladet*, 3 February 2006; "Clean-Up Demanded," *Ny Tid*, 3 February 2006; "Rød-Larsen and Juul Are Lying" and "Lured by Tveit," *Ny Tid*, 3 February 2006.

16. "Lured by Tveit," *Ny Tid*, 3 February 2006.

17. Herstad, "Where Are the Documents?"

18. "MFA Is Going to Hunt 'Oslo Documents,'" *NTB* [Norwegian News Agency], 1 March 2006; "Mona Juul Does Not Have Documents," *NRK*, 11 April 2006; "Oslo Process Lost," *Bergens Tidende*, 11 April 2006; "Cannot Find Documents," *Ny Tid*, 5 May 2006.

19. Since leaving the MFA in 1997, Egeland also served as secretary general of the Norwegian Red Cross and today is director of the Norwegian Institute for Foreign Affairs.

20. The Sarpsborg document was the first draft of a declaration of principles produced by the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in February 1993; the provisions of the document were substantially changed (in Israel's favor) in subsequent negotiations. Holst's statement to the Norwegian Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, dated 30 August 1993, was essentially a chronology of the backchannel negotiations up to then.

21. "The Documents That Went Missing," *Ny Tid*, p. 20.

22. "The Documents That Went Missing," pp. 21, 24.

23. Terje Rød-Larsen, president of the International Peace Academy, to Jon Herstad, head of the Norwegian National Archives [Riksarkivet], 9 May 2006.

Excerpts of the letter were published in "Have No Confidence in the National Archives," *Ny Tid*, 12–18 January 2007,

pp. 6–7. A copy of the entire letter was made available to me by the archives.

By the time of this controversy, Rød-Larsen may already have been embittered at the then-Conservative government in Norway. In 1999, Rød-Larsen had been appointed the UN secretary-general's personal representative to the PLO and the PA, and following the siege of Jenin in April 2002, he made a statement [see Quarterly Update in *JPS* 124] that angered many Israelis. To punish him, the Israeli Right in May 2002 leaked to the press that Rød-Larsen and Juul had each been awarded \$100,000 from the Peres Center, of which the Norwegian MFA had from the outset been a major supporter. At the time of the leak, Juul had recently (2001) been appointed Norway's ambassador to Israel. In an unprecedented move, she was recalled to Oslo by the foreign minister, reprimanded, and forced to return the money, although she continued at her post in Israel until 2004. Rød-Larsen, on the other hand, who was already with the United Nations at the time, said he deserved the money and kept it.

24. "Wants to Write the History Herself," *Ny Tid*, 5 May 2006. See also Herstad, "Where Are the Documents?"

25. See Waage, *Peacemaking*, and "Norway's Role," p. 7.

26. "Mona Juul Does Not Have Documents."

27. "Have No Confidence in the National Archives," pp. 6–7.

28. Ivar Fønnes, author interview, 18 January 2007.

29. Ivar Fønnes, author interview, 15 August 2008.

30. See Waage, *Peacemaking*, pp. 112–18, and "Norway's Role," pp. 12–13.

31. Peres, *Battling for Peace*, pp. 332–42; Beilin, *Touching Peace*, pp. 106–10; David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Washington: Westview, 1996), pp. 60–64.

32. Tveit, *War and Diplomacy*, p. 414.

33. See, for example, Tveit, *War and Diplomacy*, pp. 420, 429, 447, 466, 468, 475, 494, 497, 508.

34. Tveit, *War and Diplomacy*, p. 415.

35. For further exploration of the implications of a weak third-party facilitator in negotiations asymmetrical, see Waage, "Norway's Role."