



## Aharon Klieman (1939–2021)

*Emmanuel Navon*

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I first heard the name Aharon Klieman as a graduate student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. My PhD adviser had written down on a piece of paper the two authors whose books were required reading for my dissertation on Israel's foreign policy: Michel Brecher and Aharon Klieman.

Aharon's contribution to the study of international relations and Israeli foreign policy is invaluable, and he inspired my own work on Israeli diplomacy and undoubtedly that of many others. His major publications were: *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (1970); *Israel's Global Reach: Arms Sales as Diplomacy* (1985); *The Rise of Israel: Zionist Political Activity in the 1920s and 1950s* (1987); *Statecraft in the Dark: Israel's Practice of Quiet Diplomacy* (1988); *Israel and the World After 40 Years* (1990); *Compromising Palestine: A Guide to Final Status Negotiations* (2000); *Great Powers and Geopolitics: International Affairs in a Rebalancing World* (2015); and, edited with Stuart A. Cohen, *Routledge Handbook on Israeli Security* (2019). Some of those books became classics.

In 2001, shortly after Aharon inaugurated the Abba Eban Graduate Program for Diplomacy Studies at Tel Aviv University (TAU), I applied for a teaching position there and he hired me. From that first meeting, Aharon made a strong impression on me, especially his warmth, gentlemanliness, and wit. Besides our common academic interests, we were both observant Jews in an overwhelmingly secular department. He quickly became a mentor and friend.

In 1994 Aharon founded the Tel Aviv University Ambassadors' Forum—a regular platform to which foreign ambassadors and Israeli scholars were invited to discuss topical issues. In November 2003, he asked me to speak about Abba Eban (who had passed away a year earlier) at a forum event attended by Eban's widow, Suzy, which was a great honor and for which I will always be grateful.

Besides founding the Abba Eban Program, Aharon was the Nahum Goldman Professor of Diplomacy, and he chaired the political science department of TAU for many years. He was also chair of the geopolitics committee of the International Political Science Association (IPSA), as well as senior editor of *The Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs*. Over the course of his long academic career, he was often invited to lecture overseas. He had an ongoing relationship with Georgetown University from 1979, which included nearly thirty summers of teaching and research until 2009, and stints as visiting Israeli professor in 1979–80 and in 1984–85. In addition to Georgetown, Aharon was a visiting professor at the Universities of Chicago and Denver; Trinity College, Dublin; as well as UCLA and Brown. He also served for a time as chair of the political studies department at Ashkelon Academic College. I remember Aharon carefully reading and annotating his students' assignments, and I admit that his professionalism puts me to shame whenever I grade papers.

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Aharon was born in Chicago, on July 27, 1939, and as a youngster attended the Chicago Jewish Academy High School. From there he went on to earn a BA (1961) at Roosevelt University in Chicago and an MA at Columbia University's School of International Affairs. He completed his PhD at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in 1969. In August of that year, immediately after receiving his degree, Aharon and his devoted wife, Adrian, immigrated to Israel. They settled in Ra'anana, where they became pillars of the community and raised a loving family. In time, they were blessed with many grandchildren, of whom Aharon was especially proud. His youngest grandchild was born shortly before he died.

After he retired in 2007, Aharon and I shared an office at TAU (bizarrely dubbed "the retirees' room" although it is mostly used by adjuncts). In the countless impromptu encounters that took place there, we shared ideas and cultivated our friendship. After I completed the manuscript of my book *The Star and the Scepter: A Diplomatic History of Israel*, Aharon carefully read the first draft and made many invaluable comments. For me, it is both heartening and heartbreaking that he referred to my book in his last article, "First Among the Nations? A Cautionary against Triumphalism in Israeli Foreign Policy," published in the previous issue of this journal, which appeared just weeks before his passing. In that text, he warned against hubris in Israeli statecraft.

Aharon's writings reflect his unique combination of clear-sighted patriotism and intellectual integrity. For example, his 2020 review of four books on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in this journal (XIV:1) is a level-headed and fervent defense of Israel against some of its malevolent detractors in academia and a

warning against the delusional policy recommendations of American Jews who lecture Israelis from the other side of the Atlantic. That was Aharon Klieman: a proud Jew and an honest scholar.

I last spoke with Aharon a couple of months before he died. He did not complain about the precarious state of his health. He was in good spirits and did not miss the opportunity to crack a joke. Upon Aharon's passing, I posted a tribute on social media. Among the reactions was this one from an Indian scholar: "A major chunk of my thesis relied on his fabulous works on Israeli arms sales diplomacy . . . . [We] briefly interacted in 2010 . . . . May his soul rest in peace and his legacy live on forever." A former student commented: "He was a wonderful teacher and supervisor."

When I visited his family during the *shiva*, I recognized Aharon's goodness and humor in his children. Aharon was a *mensch*. May his memory be a blessing.