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There has been a remarkable consistency in the definition of overall U.S. national interests and general policy goals in the Middle East. However, the specific means of protecting these interests and achieving these goals have shifted radically from one administration to another and even within the course of single administrations. The basic reasons for these shifts in the means to carry out U.S. policies in the region have been changing perspectives of whether the political instability of the region results from Soviet intrusion into the Middle East, or whether Soviet expansion was made possible by that instability. This paper examines both the history of American involvement in the Middle East peace process (with its close relationship to U.S. perceptions of the extent of the Soviet threat in the area,) and the policies followed by the Reagan administration in seeking peace between the Arabs and the Israelis.

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THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES
IN THE SEARCH FOR AN ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE

by

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INTRODUCTION

For over forty years, the United States has shown great interest in the Middle East. The reasons for this interest are many and varied. One is the Christian heritage of the vast majority of the American people: the Middle East is the site of most of the events depicted in both the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible. There is also the fact that a very significant portion of the world's proven oil reserves are located in the area. Then there is the moral affinity that many Americans feel for the Jewish people, who were one of the primary targets of the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. Finally, Americans have extensive business interests throughout the area.

But regardless of the specific reasons for the interest in the region, there has been a remarkable consistency in the definition of overall U.S. national interests and general policy goals in the area. However, the specific means of protecting these interests and achieving these goals have shifted radically from one administration to another and (as has been the case in both the Carter and Reagan years) even within the course of single administrations. The basic reasons for these shifts in the means to carry out U.S. policies in the region have been changing perspectives of whether the political instability of the region results from Soviet intrusion into

the Middle East, or whether Soviet expansion was made possible by that instability.

The basic purpose of this paper is to examine the shifts in the means used by the United States in its approaches to a resolution of the central problem in the Middle East: the Arab-Israeli confrontation. The first part of this paper will examine the policy approaches of the Reagan administration, to include its most recent initiatives and reactions to events occurring in the area. In the second portion, I will place the fluctuations of President Reagan's approaches to an Arab-Israeli settlement in the context of the actions taken by the various American governments since the end of World War II and the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

In short, this paper will examine both the history of American involvement in the Middle East peace process (with its close relationship to U.S. perceptions of the extent of the Soviet threat in the area,) and the policies followed by the Reagan administration in seeking peace between the Arabs and the Israelis.

CURRENT U.S. APPROACH TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

As the Reagan administration took office in early 1981, the United States was entering a period in which the basic focus of President Carter's efforts to effect a lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict was shifting rather radically. For several years, the Carter administration had attempted to solve the root causes of the conflict as though the region were almost totally isolated from the other parts of the world. With the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the resulting threat to the security of Middle East oil supplies, the Carter administration began instead to gauge its actions in the Middle East within the overall context of the global American-Soviet confrontation.¹

With Ronald Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," the emphasis on the Middle East vis-a-vis the American struggle with the Soviet Union continued. On 23 March 1981, Richard Burt, President Reagan's director of the State Department's bureau of politico-military affairs, listed the new administration's Middle East objectives as follows: first, to demonstrate the ability to counter the influence of the Soviets and their allies; second, to ensure continued Western access to Middle East oil at a reasonable price; third, to ensure the continued existence and strength of U.S. friends in the region; and finally, to continue to work toward

peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors.²

It has been the Reagan administration's most basic belief that the central foreign policy problem facing the United States is the Soviet Union. Secretary of State Alexander Haig emphasized that standing up to the Soviets would make it easier to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the other disputes plaguing the Middle East.³ Secretary Haig announced that the Reagan administration would attempt to develop a "strategic consensus" to counter the Soviet Union in the area stretching from Pakistan to Egypt, including such nations as Turkey, Israel, and Egypt.⁴ Even here, the emphasis was on protection of Persian Gulf oil supplies, with little direct attention paid to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In Secretary Haig's opinion, the most serious internal threat to Middle East stability was Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi. Even this threat was considered in the strategic Soviet context, as Qaddafi was regarded as a Soviet surrogate.⁵

In pursuing an anti-Soviet strategic consensus, the Reagan administration concentrated its efforts on combined military exercises with such countries as Egypt and Israel, seeking basing and transit rights for the Rapid Deployment Force (designed primarily to defend Persian Gulf oil supplies). The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat on 7 October 1981 disrupted U.S. efforts to form closer military ties with Egypt. Attempts to form closer military ties with Israel were

suspended in December 1981, after the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights.

At this point, it is useful to examine President Reagan's "decision-making style," as defined by Alexander George.⁶ Even before assuming office, President Reagan announced that he was going to downgrade the role played by the National Security Council (NSC) in previous administrations, relying instead on cabinet officers as his primary foreign policy players. The result has been very close to what George called the "formalistic model" of the Truman administration.⁷

President Reagan's variation on the formalistic model is characterized by the following: (1) a penchant for strong cabinet officers, who are allowed to disagree with each other in providing input to the policy-making process; (2) each cabinet officer is considered to be a "duty expert" on those aspects of foreign policy under his cognizance; each cabinet officer briefs the President on those aspects of foreign policy falling under his jurisdiction; (3) each cabinet officer receives information and advice from his own subordinate organizations; (4) the President does not encourage his cabinet officers to communicate with each other, although he does not forbid it; (5) displaying a lack of interest in running the details of foreign policy from the Oval Office, the President tends to stick to channels, seldom reaching down to bypass a cabinet head to consult subordinates; and (6) tack-

ling issues on an ad hoc basis, as they arise or are brought to his attention by the cabinet officers. In addition to these formalistic aspects of his style, President Reagan tends to rely heavily on his personal aides, such as Meese, Baker, Deaver, and Regan.

Early in the Administration, a bitter debate arose between Secretary of State Alexander Haig on the one side, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger on the other, as to who would be the chief architect of American foreign policy. Within the overall context of the global East-West confrontation, Haig favored a traditional pro-Israeli stance in the Middle East, but with the principle focus of American foreign policy remaining in the European area. Weinberger (and George Shultz, the man who eventually replaced Haig as Secretary of State) favored a more pro-Arab point of view, with the focus of American foreign policy to be shifted to the Persian Gulf region, and less attention paid to Europe.⁸

The Weinberger-Shultz view was reinforced by a series of "violent shocks" to the Administration and to American public opinion: the Begin-Sharon policy of expanded Israeli settlement in the West Bank; the June 1981 attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor; and strong Israeli resistance to the sale of U.S. AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia.

The Reagan administration's first attempt to address the situation in the Middle East outside the context of the global

U.S.-Soviet confrontation came with the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel. The Reagan administration criticized the Israeli invasion and demanded an immediate Israeli withdrawal. In his efforts to bring a peaceful resolution to the immediate conflict in Lebanon, President Reagan decided to insert American troops.

The initial troop insertion was for the purpose of aiding in the evacuation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Beirut. At first, the efficiency with which this was accomplished greatly enhanced American prestige in the Middle East. With a very minimal investment in troops, the Reagan administration gained the thanks of Lebanese officials. The Administration thought that the post-conflict influence of the radical Arabs would be diminished, as would the influence of the Soviet Union in the region. The moderate Arabs and the Americans would gain prestige and influence, and the role of the Camp David process would be enhanced. However, the United States was unable to rely on the assurances of safety for Palestinian civilians which had been given by the Israelis and certain Lebanese confessional groups. With the reports of the massacres in the West Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla, it became apparent that the Reagan administration had actually lost rather than gained prestige.

The average American cannot tolerate extensive violence, particularly when that violence is broadcast through evening

news reports during the dinner hour. The resulting public outcry against the Israelis for allowing such a horror to occur was also directed against the Reagan administration, which was widely perceived as being supportive of the Israelis. It therefore became necessary for the Administration to take some sort of action to counter the negative effects of the initial insertion of American troops. The decision was made to reintroduce American troops as part of a Multinational Force (MNF).

This MNF was given the following missions: provide appropriate assistance to the Lebanese armed forces; facilitate the restoration of Lebanese government sovereignty and authority over the Beirut area; and to not engage in any actual hostilities.⁹ There were no real problems anticipated in the execution of these missions; after all, there were now two successful models to follow, since no real problems had been experienced by the military forces used in 1958 or those used to evacuate the PLO.

However, a number of events combined to preclude a successful conclusion of this second insertion of American troops into the Lebanese war. The lack of a nationalizing figure perceived as impartial to both Christian and Moslem factions (such as General Chehab during the 1958 crisis) meant that the Reagan policy of strong support for the Amin Gemayel government led to a perception that the principal mission of

the Marines was to buttress Phalangist control of the Lebanese government. This was particularly true when, in December 1982, the United States assumed responsibility for training and equipping the Lebanese Army.¹⁰ The Amin Gemayel government moved the Lebanese Army into Moslem West Beirut, suppressing Moslem factions while almost completely ignoring the Christian Phalangist militia in East Beirut.¹¹

Soon, the growing dissatisfaction with the central government was also directed at the U.S. contingent of the MNF.¹² This led to overt attacks on the Marines; when the bloody results of these attacks were broadcast into the living rooms of America, public support for the continued presence of the Marines in Lebanon eroded rapidly. The last straw for the various opposition factions within Beirut and the rest of Lebanon was the open use of American naval gunfire and air support on the side of the Maronite-Phalangist government. Once the Marines were perceived as overtly taking sides in the Lebanese civil war, the continued utility of U.S. troops in Lebanon had ended.

In September 1982, President Reagan personally made a proposal which he hoped would lead to peace in the Middle East. Called the Fresh Start Initiative, Reagan's proposal contained seven principal points: (1) resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict through negotiations involving an exchange of territory for peace (in other words, the basic

concepts embodied in U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338); (2) U.S. opposition to any proposal threatening the security of Israel; (3) no U.S. support for an independent Palestinian state; (4) Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza eventually to have full autonomy over their own affairs; (5) the U.S. would not support any future Israeli settlement in the West Bank; (6) the best chance for a durable and lasting peace is offered through self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan; and (7) Jerusalem would remain undivided, but its final status to be decided through negotiations in the context of an overall Middle East settlement. In short, the Reagan Initiative also incorporated the two basic principles of the Camp David agreements: self-government and security, hopefully leading to a broad and lasting peace for all parties.¹³

All elements of the Reagan administration put a great deal of time and effort into making a success of the Fresh Start Initiative. Unfortunately, a number of events combined to cause the Initiative to fail. Within two weeks of the launching of the plan, President-elect Bashir Gemayel of Lebanon was assassinated; the Israeli military had forcibly moved into West Beirut; and, after a mere two-week absence, U.S. military forces were again rushed into Lebanon in the wake of the Sabra and Shatilla massacres. Additionally, the Reagan administration had failed to take into account a number of

major obstacles, any one of which were sufficient to doom the plan to failure. These included: the complexities of the Lebanese situation; the critical role of the PLO; the dynamics of inter-Arab relations and the crucial role of Syria; the basic incompatibilities of Jordan and the PLO; and the fact that it was totally unacceptable to the Begin government.¹⁴

In early May 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz was so eager to salvage the Reagan Initiative that he even sought the help of the Soviet Union.¹⁵ This was a radical departure from the "evil empire" label with which members of the Reagan administration had previously characterized the Soviet Union. However, the Soviets did not agree to support the Fresh Start Initiative.

The Reagan administration has suffered from some very basic misperceptions concerning the Middle East which were shared by previous administrations. The first is the belief that the United States is omnipotent. It is taken "for granted that it is in the power of the United States to achieve positive results if and when it wishes."¹⁶ But this has rarely been the case in the Middle East. Past history has shown that only when the regional players are ready and willing to negotiate seriously can the United States play a truly effective role in the Middle East peace process. By itself, without the willing cooperation of the regional actors, it is

highly unlikely that the United States will ever be able to create a situation in which successful negotiation can take place.

The second misconception is an exaggeration of the extent of Soviet influence in the Middle East. The Reagan administration, like most post-WW II administrations, views the Soviet-American struggle as a "zero-sum" game in a loss for the United States automatically results in a corresponding gain for the Soviets. The actual precariousness of the Soviet position in the Middle East was shown by Egypt's expulsion of the Soviets after Anwar Sadat succeeded Gamel Nasser as President of Egypt. Similarly, the Syrians have not shown themselves to be totally tractable Russian puppets. Particularly after the poor showing of Soviet-supplied arms during the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Soviets greatly feared expulsion from Syria.¹⁷

Perhaps the most significant error made by the Reagan administration in the Middle East peace process concerns the significance of Syria. The Syrians are the strongest of Israel's Arab opponents, and they exercise a great deal of influence with the more radical Arab states. No comprehensive Middle East peace proposal can succeed without at least the support of the Syrians. Such support will not be forthcoming unless Syrian desires in regard to the Golan Heights are satisfied. Until Israel returns the Golan Heights to Syrian

control, no real change in Syrian intransigence can be expected.¹⁸ For example, it was lack of Syrian support which was primarily responsible for the failure of the May 1983 agreement between Israel and the Lebanese government of Amin Gemayel. This agreement had been actively and personally supported by U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz.

Since the final withdrawal of U.S. troops from Lebanon in early 1984, the Reagan administration has continued to support the Fresh Start Initiative as the official American policy in the area. The Reagan administration has been cautious in acknowledging subsequent efforts by other factions in the region to seek a settlement. This was particularly true of an independent effort by King Hussein of Jordan. Hussein and PLO leader Yasir Arafat signed an agreement on 11 February 1985 which outlines a Framework for a Joint Approach to Peace in the Middle East.¹⁹ The principles outlined by the Hussein-Arafat agreement include: total withdrawal from all territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war; right of Palestinian self-determination within the context of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian state; and peace negotiations under the auspices of an international conference. The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and all the parties to the conflict, including the PLO, would participate in these negotiations.

The Reagan administration has stated that it is willing to play a more active role in the Middle East²⁰, but has been

very reluctant to do so ever since the rejection of the Fresh Start Initiative. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz remains upset over the general Arab refusal to support his 1983 accord between Israel and Lebanon. Shultz has stated that the U.S. will only take action when the Arab states declare themselves ready for direct talks.²¹ Perhaps the most significant objection is the American concern over the inclusion of the Soviet Union in the negotiating process. This objection reflects the fact that the Reagan administration's viewpoint has again shifted to an emphasis on the Soviet Union as the primary problem in the world.²²

Another U.S. concern is the strong Israeli refusal to consider any form of negotiation with the PLO.²³ In spite of these reservations, the Reagan administration continues to involve itself quietly in on-going Middle East negotiations. Most recently, this involvement has taken the form of attempting to select Arab delegations which include Palestinians who are acceptable to both the Arabs and the Israelis.²⁴ These efforts have met with little success.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE
ARAB-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION

American interest in the Middle East began with missionaries and with oil. Prior to the First World War, the British had produced only about 5% of the world's oil. By 1919, through diplomatic maneuvers involving the League of Nations and the establishment of the League's mandate system, the British gained control of over half the world's known oil reserves.²⁵ The United States protested the growth of British control over oil reserves, insisting that the U.S. deserved a share of Middle East oil because the U.S. had used a significant portion of its own reserves to help fuel the Allied effort against the German empire during World War I. As a result, several American companies were permitted to join with a group of European companies to operate the Iraqi Oil Company.²⁶

THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

With the exception of the missionary community, oil, and Woodrow Wilson's interest in national "self determination" (as well as his support for Lord Balfour's call for a Jewish national home), there was little American involvement in the Middle East until the Second World War. The withdrawal of British and French forces from the region, combined with American concern over apparent Soviet expansionism, led President Truman to spell out what has become known as the Truman Doctrine.

On 12 March 1947, President Truman stated that America could only be secure in a world where freedom was the norm. It must be U.S. policy "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subversion by armed minorities or by outside pressure ... Totalitarian regimes imposed on free people ... undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States."²⁷ Initially applied in Greece and Turkey, the Truman Doctrine was very plainly directed at both overt and covert Soviet expansionism and aggression.

However, the Arab states in the Middle East did not feel threatened by the Soviet Union. Still mistrustful of the United States because of American support for the Balfour Declaration, the Arabs were opposed to the Truman Doctrine.²⁸ Their mistrust of the United States deepened when the U.S. voted in the United Nations to partition the

British Mandate for Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. When British authority over Palestine expired at midnight on 14 May 1948, the United States immediately extended recognition to Israel, closely followed by the Soviet Union. (Interestingly, the Arabs seemed upset by the American recognition of the new state of Israel, but were not bothered by Soviet recognition.) The Arabs rejected the U.N. partition plan, and went to war in hopes of eliminating the newly born Jewish state.

The United States supported the United Nations' efforts to end the fighting. Hopes for peace faded in view of the general Arab attitude toward recognition of Israel. The one exception to the Arab refusal to recognize Israel, King Abdullah of Jordan, was assassinated as he tried to negotiate a peace settlement with the new nation.²⁹

For the United States, the period after the first Arab-Israeli war was a time of growing fears of Soviet expansionism; the cold war became the most important concern in U.S. foreign relations.

Alfred J. Atherton, Jr. suggests that, since World War II, there has been a remarkable amount of unanimity and consistency in the perception of both American national interests and American policy objectives in the Middle East. He summarizes these national interests as: unconditional and unrestricted use of the area's air and sea routes; ready access to the

Middle East's oil supplies for both the U.S. and its allies; and the security and survival of the State of Israel.³⁰

Atherton lists three policy objectives which have been consistently pursued by every administration since Truman: the existence of stable governments which maintain good relations with the U.S.; peaceful resolution of the area's conflicts, particularly the one between the Arabs and the Israelis; and the prevention of a dominant Soviet presence in the Middle East which would adversely affect U.S. interests in the region.³¹

This consistency in formulating concepts of American national interests and overall policy objectives has unfortunately not been matched by a consistency in the approach chosen to achieve these interests and goals. The Atherton article argues that the American approach to the Middle East has made some radical shifts back and forth between two broad approaches. The first approach is advocated by those who view the conflicts in the Middle East as simply one more arena for superpower confrontation. Initiatives aimed at solving the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict are given less priority than considerations of overall strategy. This leads to a concentration on efforts to enlist the support of the Middle East countries in countering the global Soviet threat.

The second approach de-emphasizes the East-West confrontation, concentrating instead on efforts to solve the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Those who advocate this approach

maintain that only after this conflict is resolved can the U.S. realistically expect to enlist the aid of the Middle East countries in combatting expanding Soviet power and influence. However, most efforts to get at the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict have floundered primarily for one reason: the consistent refusal of most Arab states to recognize Israel's right to exist. In continuing this discussion of the American involvement in the Middle East, it will be shown that there is considerable justification to support Atherton's concept.

One of the first acts taken by the Truman administration after the end of the 1948-1949 war was to join with Great Britain and France in issuing the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950. These three Western powers attempted to ensure peace in the Middle East by declaring their opposition to the use of force in the region. This was the first (and last) great power agreement to limit the flow of arms to the Middle East. Previously, the United States had unilaterally attempted to limit arms deliveries in 1947. This attempt had been very damaging to the Truman administration in the eyes of the American public. Since the British continued to supply arms to the Arabs, this policy only served to hurt the Israelis.³²

Throughout the remainder of the Truman administration, efforts to end the Arab-Israeli conflict were focused through a United Nations' mediation group called the Palestinian

Conciliation Commission (PCC), of which the United States was a member. Although the PCC submitted numerous proposals to Israel and the Arab states for resolution of the many political, territorial, and economic problems in the region, none of the proposals were seriously considered by either side.³³

THE EISENHOWER YEARS

More concerned with the Soviet Union and the threat of international Communism, the Eisenhower administration abandoned attempts to resolve the conflict through the efforts of the PCC, preferring instead to concentrate on establishing anti-Soviet alliances with the Middle Eastern states. These alliances were designed to prevent the Soviets from gaining a foothold in the region. For the Eisenhower administration, oil and the political "value" of the Arab states were the key to the prevention of Soviet penetration of the Middle East. Therefore, the U.S. attempted to follow a more "evenhanded"

approach than had the Truman administration, showing less official favoritism toward Israel.³⁴

The first effort at regional alliance was the formation of the Baghdad Pact in February 1955. This alliance was a mutual defense treaty among Great Britain, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey. Although the United States supported the Baghdad Pact and was instrumental in its establishment, the U.S. did not formally become a member. The Eisenhower administration did not want to antagonize Egypt by formally allying itself with Iraq (at that time, Egypt's chief rival). Unfortunately for U.S. policy, Egypt's response to the Pact was to denounce Iraq vehemently for aligning itself with the West. Egypt's president, Gamal Abdul Nasser, then requested military equipment and advisors from the Soviet Union. Moscow quickly moved to provide the requested support to its first client in the Middle East. Ironically, the Baghdad Pact did not have the hoped for effect of keeping the Soviet Union out of the region. Indeed, one might even argue that it opened the door to Soviet influence. Syria soon followed Egypt's lead in receiving military aid.

The Tripartite Declaration, which had stated its opposition to "the development of an arms race between the Arab states and Israel," had a loophole: it did not forbid an arms race between Arab states. In addition to the arms Egypt and Syria received from the Soviet Union, several of the Arab

states also received arms from Britain and France. Great Britain built up the Iraqi air force in order to maintain British interests in Iraqi oil. The British also built up the Egyptian air forces in order to assure Nasser's continued acceptance of British control over the Suez Canal.³⁵

Israel attempted to find a source of arms as a counter to the growing strength of Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. The Eisenhower administration refused to provide assistance, advising Israel to rely on the "collective security" of the United Nations.³⁶ Britain also refused to provide arms, instructing the Israelis to make whatever concessions necessary to avoid war with the Arab states. France finally agreed to arm Israel, primarily out of fear that the British and Soviet weapons furnished to Egypt would eventually wind up in Algeria.³⁷ The Tripartite Declaration had a very short life span indeed.

The situation became desperate for Israel and Great Britain (and also had potentially grave consequences for France) when Egypt announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal on 26 July 1956, refusing to guarantee Israel access to the Canal. Israeli, British, and French forces attacked Egypt late in October 1956. By 7 November 1956, the Israelis had occupied the Sinai Peninsula, and the British and French forces had seized control of the Suez Canal.

The United States vigorously protested the invasions, and brought strong pressure to bear on all three aggressors, both

through official United Nations channels and through private communications, urging them to withdraw from Egyptian territory. Eisenhower declared that the actions of the three countries could "scarcely be reconciled with the principles of the United Nations."³⁸ By the end of 1956, all three countries had pulled their forces out of Egypt.

The resolution of the Suez crisis brought acute embarrassment to Israel, Great Britain, and France, but had brought about a brief flurry of enthusiastic support for the United States among the Arab states. The enthusiasm cooled rapidly when it became obvious that Washington's motives had not been to support the Arab governments against Israel, but rather a desire to forestall Soviet exploitation of the crisis.³⁹ Eisenhower's renewed overtures to enlist the Arab states in an alliance against international Communism were again ignored because the Arabs generally regarded Israel (not the Communists) as the most significant threat to Arab security.

Following the Suez Crisis, Eisenhower went before the U.S. Congress to urge support for a declaration which has become known as the Eisenhower Doctrine. Embodied in a joint congressional resolution (the Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East), the Doctrine stated, in part: "...if the President determines the necessity...the (United States) is prepared to use armed forces to resist...any nation or group of nations requesting assistance against armed

aggression from any country controlled by international Communism."⁴⁰

The first tests of the Eisenhower Doctrine came in Iraq and Lebanon. The pro-Western Hashemite monarchy in Iraq was overthrown by a regime which pulled Iraq out of the Baghdad Pact, aligning itself with the Soviet Union and the Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic. The government of Lebanon came under similar pressures from what Washington perceived as Soviet-supported factions. Eisenhower declared that Lebanon's "territorial integrity and independence were vital to U.S. interests and world peace."⁴¹ Over 15,000 American Marines and soldiers landed in Lebanon to shore up the constitutional government of President Camille Chamoun.

The withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact was also considered to be part of the serious Soviet threat to the region. The United States signed separate defense agreements with the three Middle Eastern states (Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey) remaining in the Baghdad Pact, which then became the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). The United States pledged itself to come to the defense of these three countries in the event of "communist aggression or subversion."

In sum, the predominant approach taken by the Eisenhower administration toward the Arab-Israeli confrontation emphasized a global anti-communist strategy. In the view of Eisenhower

and most of his advisors, once the threat to the region had been checked, then a long-term solution of Arab-Israeli differences would automatically follow.⁴²

KENNEDY-JOHNSON

In dealing with the Middle East, John F. Kennedy's style differed from that of his predecessors, as it did in most other respects. Kennedy sought to establish close and harmonious relations with the various Arab leaders, while at the same time reassuring Israel of his firm commitment to Israeli security. Kennedy attempted to deal directly with the Palestinian refugee problem, again using the U.N.-sponsored PCC as had Truman before him. Kennedy's attempts were totally unsuccessful, faltering on the absolute refusal of the Arabs to accept Israel's right to exist. President Kennedy did involve the U.S. in Middle East arms deals, attempting to maintain the military balance in the region by making the first significant arms deal with Israel (the Hawk surface to air missile system) in 1962.⁴³

Prior to 1967, the Johnson administration was very much pre-occupied with the undeclared war in Vietnam, and therefore made no significant efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Johnson attempted to prevent open warfare by maintaining the military balance in the Middle East. As Bernard Reich has stated, U.S. policies sought to prevent another Arab-Israeli war while promoting regional stability and socioeconomic development.⁴⁴ U.S. ties with Israel gradually improved during the early Johnson years as the Administration emphasized American support for the "territorial integrity and political independence of all countries in the Near East."⁴⁵

The third Arab-Israeli war, which started on 5 June 1967, marked a significant change in the U.S. approach to the Middle East. The Johnson administration began actively to seek a settlement of the causes of the conflict, rather than simply trying to prevent the outbreak of open warfare. Shortly after the end of the June 1967 war, Johnson set forth a five-point formula for peace in the Middle East: "Our country is committed -- and we have reiterated that commitment today -- to a peace in the Middle East that is based on five principles: first, the recognized right of national life; second, justice for the refugees; third, innocent maritime passage; fourth, limits on the wasteful and destructive arms race; and fifth, political independence and territorial integrity for all."⁴⁶

Despite the fears of most Israelis, President Johnson had decided not to repeat the Eisenhower approach of 1957, which had forced Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied in the 1956 war without substantive concessions from the Egyptians. Although President Johnson stated that Israeli forces should withdraw, he did not insist on a return to the boundaries which had existed prior to the 1967 war. Instead, President Johnson sought to achieve a lasting peace by using the occupied territories as "bargaining chips" to secure significant Arab concessions.⁴⁷ There could be no return to the situation which had existed before the Six Day War.

The most significant result of the prolonged (and often bitter) negotiations which followed the Six Day War was the British-sponsored U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967. Very similar in many respects to President Johnson's five point formula for peace, the resolution called for withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Arab areas; an end to the state of belligerency between the Arab nations and Israel; acknowledgment of and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every nation in the region; the establishment of secure and recognized international boundaries; a guarantee of freedom of movement through the area's international waterways; and a just settlement of the refugee problem.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, there has since been considerable disagreement over the precise meaning of some of the provisions of Resolution 242. The Arabs maintain that it means a withdrawal from every square inch of territory seized by Israel from the Arabs during the Six Day War. The Israelis, however, insist that the wording of the Resolution ("from territories" rather than "from the territories") does not require a total restoration of the pre-4 June 1967 boundaries.⁴⁹ Although Resolution 242 has formed the basis for virtually every peace initiative since its passage, this basic disagreement has caused little real progress to be made, except in the case of the separate Israeli-Egyptian treaties.

Shortly before President Johnson left office, relations between the U.S. and Israel began to deteriorate due to disagreements over the Israeli policy of violent retaliation for acts of violence aimed at Israeli citizens. The most significant incident involved an Israeli raid on the Beirut airport in retaliation for a Palestinian attack on an Israeli airliner in Athens.⁵⁰

NIXON-FORD

Richard M. Nixon assumed the presidency in 1969, greatly concerned that the situation in the Middle East was a "powder keg" which had the potential of igniting a disastrous nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers.⁵¹ In its first three years, the Nixon administration was very active in Middle East diplomacy, particularly supporting the work of the United Nations mediator, Gunnar Jarring. President Nixon also supported Charles de Gaulle's proposal for great power discussions involving the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France (as well as bilateral U.S.-Soviet talks) as a means of finding a solution to the problems in the Middle East. Israel was very much opposed to these talks, fearing the imposition of a great power solution which would not satisfy Israel's security requirements. Instead, the Israelis preferred direct Arab-Israeli negotiations, with the great powers playing virtually no role.⁵² Fortunately, from Israel's point of view, neither level of great power talks accomplished much of interest.

On 9 December 1969, American Secretary of State William Rogers gave a speech outlining U.S. Middle East policies. Rogers stated that superpower talks could not take the place of direct agreements between the Arabs and the Israelis. The United States would pursue a balanced policy "to encourage the

Arabs to accept a permanent peace based on a binding agreement and to urge the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territory when their territorial integrity is assured as envisioned by Security Council Resolution 242." Rogers further stated that alteration of boundaries "should be confined to insubstantial alterations required for mutual security." The refugee problem had to be resolved and the U.S. opposed "unilateral actions by any party to decide the final status of [Jerusalem.]" The Rogers Plan was the most detailed and specific proposal by any U.S. administration up to that time.⁵³

The Rogers Plan was not greeted with enthusiasm by any of the parties to the conflict. To a great degree, it was overshadowed by the war of attrition that Nasser initiated early in 1969. Nasser hoped to wear down Israeli forces on the east bank of the Suez Canal, and ultimately to force an Israeli withdrawal from the canal area because of the increased cost of maintaining military forces along the canal.⁵⁴

The Nixon administration then had to endure a very acrimonious debate over the situation in the Middle East due to Egyptian violations of the cease-fire agreement which had ended the Six Day War, Israel rejections of the Rogers Plan, and American efforts to link Israel's request for a new fighter aircraft to greater Israeli responsiveness in negotiations.⁵⁵

The situation was further complicated by the Nixon policy of detente with the Soviet Union. In view of detente, Middle

East experts within the State Department were determined to keep resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict separate from anti-Soviet strategic concerns.⁵⁶ At the same time, President Nixon's very influential National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, was convinced that the Middle East had to be viewed in the context of the global East-West confrontation. Kissinger was therefore reluctant to advise pressuring Israel, feeling that any concessions made to Egypt would be viewed as concessions to the Soviets.⁵⁷ With the White House and the State Department thus effectively neutralizing each other, there was little progress in the on-going Middle East peace negotiations.

The "no war, no peace" atmosphere of Nasser's war of attrition held until the eruption of the fourth Arab-Israeli war, initiated by Egypt and Syria on 6 October 1973. Largely through the efforts of Henry Kissinger, the United States and the Soviet Union arranged a cease-fire (which went into effect on 11 November 1973) based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 338. This Resolution called for an immediate cease-fire and the opening of negotiations for the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. Most significantly, at the insistence of the United States, this resolution required that the negotiations "be between the parties concerned." This was the first time that direct Arab-Israeli negotiations were called for.⁵⁸

Based on the requirements of Resolution 338, Kissinger then began the first of his "shuttle diplomacy" trips, resulting in the historic January 1974 troop disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel. By focusing only on immediate, often minor issues, Kissinger was able to negotiate this first-ever direct agreement between Israel and one of its Arab neighbors.⁵⁹

In early 1975, with Gerald Ford as president, Kissinger attempted to secure an agreement for a "second stage" disengagement in the Sinai, as part of his step-by-step approach to a Middle East peace settlement. When Israel hesitated, the Ford administration announced that it was "reassessing" its Middle East policies. Until that assessment was completed, consideration of Israel's request for \$2.5 billion in U.S. aid was suspended. This was a very thinly veiled effort to pressure Israel into being more flexible in upcoming negotiations with Egypt.⁶⁰ As a result, on 1 September 1975, the second Sinai agreement was signed. The most significant aspect of this agreement was the introduction, for the first time, of American personnel as cease-fire observers into the middle of the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁶¹

During the remainder of the Ford administration, Kissinger (aided by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt) continued to concentrate on step-by-step, partial solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The official U.S. policy of detente

with the Soviets was not applied: in these efforts, the U.S., Egypt, and Israel acted without consulting or involving the Soviet Union.⁶²

The Ford administration produced one other agreement with grave consequences for the Arab-Israeli peace process. This was the 1975 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Israel, committing the United States neither to recognize nor to negotiate with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) until the PLO accepted Resolutions 242 and 338, and recognized Israel's right to exist.⁶³ This MOU still complicates the search for a peace settlement, since most parties (except Israel) seem to agree that PLO participation is central to effecting a permanent Arab-Israeli peace settlement. As long as the Arab states insist that the PLO is the official spokesman for the Palestinian people, and as long as the PLO steadfastly refuses to accept the provisions of the MOU, there appears to be little chance of a lasting Middle East peace settlement.

CARTER

As Jimmy Carter took office, detente continued to be a factor in American foreign relations. The Carter administration focused its attention on seeking solutions to the root causes of the Middle East conflict.⁶⁴

In two respects, there was an important shift in emphasis. First, there was an attempt to achieve an overall, comprehensive peace settlement through re-convening the Geneva Conference, a move away from Kissinger's step-by-step approach. The second was an increased emphasis on the need to solve the Palestinian issue. The Geneva Conference proposal failed, due to lack of Israeli agreement on the participation of the PLO, and due to Arab differences over the issue of separate national delegations (the Egyptian position) versus a single Arab delegation (favored by the Syrians.)⁶⁵

Egyptian President Sadat became very frustrated over the failure to reconvene the Geneva Conference. He was convinced that a settlement had to be reached with Israel, so that he could begin concentrating on Egypt's serious domestic problems.⁶⁶ Therefore, Sadat made his famous journey to Jerusalem in November 1977. Despite Sadat's courageous initiative, efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement had stalled by the fall of 1978.

It was at this point that the United States began to take advantage of its unique central position in the Arab-Israeli situation. This was possible only because of America's special relationship with Israel and its steadily improving relations with the Arab states. President Carter took a major gamble, inviting both Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, to attend a summit meeting with him at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland. During 13 days of continuous haggling, the three men agreed on two accords: "a framework for peace in the Middle East," and "a framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel."⁶⁷

The first accord had six basic points: first, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan would agree on the means of establishing an elected, self-governing body in the West Bank and Gaza. Second, these three countries would negotiate an agreement establishing the powers and responsibilities of the self-governing body in the West Bank and Gaza. Third, Israeli armed forces would then withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza, except for certain specified security locations. Fourth, during a five-year transition period, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank/Gaza authority would negotiate the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. Fifth, Israel and Jordan would negotiate the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. Finally, all negotiations were to be based on U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. The Egyptian-Israeli peace framework basically

set up provisions for the return of the Sinai to Egyptian control and for the initiation of normal diplomatic relations between the two countries.

All of the other Arab states, along with the PLO, denounced the Camp David agreements, stating that as soon as the bilateral peace treaty had been concluded, Egypt's membership in the Arab League would be suspended. Domestic Egyptian opposition to the accords eventually resulted in President Sadat's assassination in October 1981. After the Israelis agreed to withdraw completely from the Sinai, and the two countries had completed a separate peace agreement, Egypt was barred from the Arab League; most Arab nations also severed diplomatic relations with Egypt.

At this writing, the accord on the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel has taken effect. The second Camp David accord on a framework for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East has floundered because of the general Arab rejection of its provisions, and also because Egypt and Israel have failed to reach agreement on several of its provisions. The Camp David framework is occasionally mentioned by one or the other of the factions in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but is generally assumed to be dead as a realistic vehicle for reaching a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.

During the final months of the Carter administration, U.S. policy began to swing back to a concentration on Soviet

involvement in the region, primarily due to the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the growing threat to the security of Middle East oil supplies.⁶⁸

As mentioned in the previous section, the Reagan administration has been very concerned with the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union, but has also attempted to address the root causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict -- with little practical effect.

CONCLUSIONS

This has been a rather brief look at the part played by the United States in attempting to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. While there has been remarkable consistency in the formulation of U.S. national interests and goals in the Middle East, the means of achieving these goals have fluctuated a great deal. I agree with Alfred L. Atherton, Jr. that the sometimes radical shifts in the means can best be explained in terms of American perceptions of the extent and nature of the Soviet threat in the region.

Every American president must attempt to find some sort of solution to the problems involved in the Arab-Israeli con-

flict. Since the region has frequently been viewed as an important arena for American-Soviet competition, the Middle East has long had the potential for setting off open hostilities between the two superpowers. This, coupled with the inordinate amount of interest that the general American public and the U.S. business community have in the area, makes it inevitable that each succeeding administration will have to grapple with the area's problems.

However, there are severe constraints on any American action taken in the region. If the United States is going to have any success in helping to find a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, we must first understand the proper place of the U.S. in the peace process. The U.S. is a superpower, but not an omnipotent power. While American participation is acknowledged to be indispensable by almost all parties to the conflict, there is no way that the United States can bring about a unilateral solution. The U.S. cannot make a Middle East peace. It can mediate, it can sort out some of the difficulties, and it can occasionally push the participants. The United States is in a unique position to help further the peace process. Israel views the U.S. as its primary (though far from perfect) sponsor -- probably its only sponsor. The Arab participants see the U.S. as the only country which has any influence on the Israelis.

But peace cannot be worked out between the U.S. and the nations in the Middle East. Peace must be worked out between the Arab states and Israel, between the Arab states and the Palestinians, and between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The United States can play an effective role in helping to mediate a settlement, but all parties involved on both sides must first be ready and willing to negotiate in good faith. In this manner, it may be possible to find a lasting solution to the area's problems. It was in this way that Henry Kissinger and Jimmy Carter were able to help bring about partial solutions to small bits and pieces of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

ENDNOTES

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² Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (5th ed) (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1981), p. 7.

³ Judith Miller, "U.S. to Concentrate Efforts on Countering Soviet Strategic Threat to the Middle East," The New York Times, 23 February 1981, p. 1, col. 4.

⁴ Thomas L. Friedman, "Reagan Administration to Attempt Strategic Consensus in the Middle East," The New York Times, 20 March 1981, p. 1, col. 6.

⁵ Steven V. Roberts, "Haig Meets With Middle East Leaders," The New York Times, 11 October 1981, p. 11, col. 4.

⁶ Alexander L. George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 61-70.

⁷ This analysis of President Reagan's style was formulated from George's book (see footnote 6, above); from an article by Dick Kirschten, "Clark Emerges as a Tough Manager, Not a Rival to the Secretary of State," National Journal, 17 July 1982, pp. 1244-1248; from James Reston, "The Quiet Man," The New York Times, 6 September 1982, p. 27, col. 1.; and from personal observations and impressions.

⁸ For statements on Haig's foreign policy views, see Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 89. For the Weinberger-Shultz view, see Reich, The United States, p. 118. Also see Dick Kirschten, "Clark Emerges as a Tough Manager, Not a Rival to the Secretary of State," National Journal, 17 July 1982, pp. 1244.

⁹ Lawrence S. Eagleberger, "U.S. Policy Toward Lebanon," Department of State Bulletin, October 1982, pp. 49-50.

10 Thomas L. Friedman, "America's Failure in Lebanon," The New York Times Magazine, 8 April 1984, p. 37.

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20 Ibid.

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27 Quoted from Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf, American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p. 41.

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30 Ibid., p. 1195.

31 Ibid., p. 1195.

32 See Nadav Safran, The United States and Israel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 238; and Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (4th ed), pp. 46.

33 Bernard Reich, The United States and Israel, op cit., p. 5.

34 Ibid., p. 5.

35 See Tareq Y. Ishmael, The Middle East in World Politics: A Study in Contemporary International Relations (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1974), pp. 39-41; Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (4th ed), p. 46; Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (5th ed), p. 48; and Steven Green, Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984), pp. 76-91.

36 Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (4th ed), pp. 37 and 46.

37 Ibid., p. 46

38 Ibid., p. 47

39 Atherton, op cit., p. 1196.

40 Ishmael, op cit., p. 125-126.

41 Ibid., p. 26. See also Peter Mangold, Superpower Intervention in the Middle East (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 103-104.

42 Reich, op cit., pp. 7-8.

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45 Ibid., p. 12.

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47 Reich, op cit., p. 12.

- 48 Ibid., p. 15.
- 49 Atherton, op cit., p. 1198. See also Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (4th ed), p. 40.
- 50 Reich, op cit., pp. 18-19.
- 51 Ibid., p. 19.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
- 53 Ibid., p. 23. See also Congressional Quarterly, The Middle East (4th ed), p. 40.
- 54 Reich, op cit., p. 25.
- 55 Atherton, op cit., p. 1199.
- 56 Ibid., p. 1200.
- 57 Ibid., p. 1200.
- 58 Ibid., p. 1201.
- 59 Reich, op cit., pp. 30-31.
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- 62 Atherton., op cit., p. 1203.
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