The Limitations of Third-Party Intervention in the Arab-Israeli Conflict:

Lessons from Selected Episodes, 1949-1956

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The Leonard Davis Institute of
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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INTRODUCTION

The period between the first and second Arab-Israeli wars, 1949–1956, witnessed a number of attempts by third parties to bring about either partial or comprehensive solutions to the underlying conflict separating Arabs and Israelis. The episodes selected for this overview discussion are the following:

1. Armistice negotiations, 12 January–20 July 1949
2. Lausanne Conference, 27 April–12 September 1949
3. Geneva Talks, 30 January–15 July 1950
4. Paris Conference, 13 September–14 November 1951
5. UN General Assembly Draft Resolution on direct negotiations, 1–18 December 1952
6.. UN Secretary-General's attempts to convene an Israel-Jordan conference under Article XII of the Armistice Agreement, 23 November 1953–early April 1954
7. Eric Johnston's shuttle diplomacy on sharing the Jordan waters, November 1953–October 1955
8. Operation Alpha (including the Anderson mission), December 1954–April 1956

The first two cases are probably the best known, and have been studied and analyzed in great detail. The last two have also become the object of

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academic scrutiny especially during the last decade. The middle four
episodes, covering the period 1950–1954, are the least well known, but
nevertheless form an integral part of the total package of negotiating
experience of the period.

Table 1 sketches the main characteristics of each episode under the
headings: format, third party's style, role of the powers, timing, parallel or
competing negotiating tracks or diplomatic initiatives, aims, and achieve-
ments. It is a schematic, shorthand way of offering (a) a vertical reading
of columns to summarize the main features of each episode, and (b) a
horizontal reading of rows to suggest comparisons among the various
episodes.

In the eight episodes discussed in this paper, the parties in conflict
attempted to grapple with four concrete, substantive issues:

(a) recognition of the de facto partition of Palestine and the resultant
    creation of the state of Israel
(b) the transformation of armistice lines into recognized international
    boundaries between Israel and the neighboring states
(c) compensation for and/or resettlement of the refugees who were
    displaced during the fighting of 1947–1949
(d) the status of Jerusalem

Only the last three, however, were overt agenda items during the period,
while the first issue lurked throughout–often determining, or undermining,
the course of negotiation attempts that were focused, in a formal sense, on
one or more of the latter three.

A second common feature is that outsiders, third parties, were operating
in a serious mediation or conciliation role. There were "multiple" mediators
engaged in the field: the United Kingdom, United States, and United
Nations, acting through its General Assembly, Security Council, and
Secretary-General, and particularly under the aegis of the Conciliation
Commission for Palestine (PCC), whose members were the U.S., France,
and Turkey. Unlike the 1956–1967 period, characterized by U.S.-USSR

TABLE 1. SELECTED EPISODES: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

	UN mediator	Conciliation Commission for Palestine (PCC)			United Nations		United States	US & UK
	Rhodes 1949	*Lausanne 1949*	*Geneva 1950*	*Paris 1951*	*Draft Res. 1952*	*SG Conf. 1953-54*	*Johnston 1953-55*	*Alpha 1954-56*
Format	Direct; bilateral conferences	Indirect; multilateral conference	Indirect; multilateral conference	Indirect; multilateral conference	Lobbying UN delegations for votes	Bilateral approaches from UNSG	Single-shuttle, confidential	Multiple-shuttle, secret, using an adapted version of the Trieste model
Third party's style	Firm conciliation	Conciliation (no formal plans)	Conciliation (no formal plans)	Mediation; presentation of "Comprehensive Pattern of Proposals"		Alternating activism and caution	Persistent indirect mediation, focus on practical issues, avoid politicization	Firm pressure on and incentives for Egypt and Israel
Role of powers	UK and US behind-the-scenes intervention in support of UN mediator	Firm US support for PCC, incl. pressure on Israel	Cautious US support, minimal US and UK intervention	Firm US support for PCC, incl. pressure on Israel; grave UK reservations	Official US behind-the-scenes support; official UK, unofficial US doubts	Strong support for UN; additional UK, offer of good offices	Sometimes imperfect US support; UK hesitations and skepticism	US and UK embassies, envoys, and intelligence agents as secret mediators

TABLE 1 (Cont'd.). SELECTED EPISODES: MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

	UN mediator	Conciliation Commission for Palestine (PCC)			United Nations		United States	US & UK
	Rhodes 1949	Lausanne 1949	Geneva 1950	Paris 1951	Draft Res. 1952	SG Conf. 1953-54	Johnston 1953-55	Alpha 1954-56
Timing	Pressure for military disengagement	No pressure from military situation; vote on Israel's admission into UN	Arab League resolution against separate peace deals with Israel; Tripartite declaration	SC Res. 95 on Israeli passage through Suez Canal; Nahhas renunciation of Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936	Ben-Gurion declaration on nonnegotiability of Jerusalem	Qibya raid, Bnot Yaacov waters dispute; Maaleh Akrabim bus attack	Qibya raid; deterioration of armistice; inability of MACs to handle border incidents	Suez evacuation agreement; Gaza raid; deterioration of Egypt-Israel armistice; Egyptian prominence at Bandung Conference; Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry; Kinneret raid; riots in Jordan
Parallel or competing negotiating tracks or diplomatic initiatives	Israel-Abdallah (secret talks at Shuneh supporting Rhodes); PCC Lausanne talks	Israel-Jordan (Shuneh alternative to Lausanne; Rhodes); uncompleted armistice negotiations (Israel-Lebanon, Israel-Syria); secret informal talks in Europe	Secret Israel-Abdallah negotiations; secret Israeli-Egyptian feelers	UN-Syria-Lebanon talks on refugee reintegration; UN-Israel informal talks on refugee compensation; US-UK attempts to organize ME Command against Soviet penetration	None	None	Alpha (esp. Dulles statement, Aug. 1955)	Johnston water negotiations; creation of Baghdad Pact; arms race under way; Israeli appeals for US, UK security treaty; Czech-Egyptian arms deal; IBRD financing of High Aswan Dam

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	Rhodes 1949	Lausanne 1949	Geneva 1950	Paris 1951	Draft Res. 1952	SG Conf. 1953-54	Johnston 1953-55	Alpha 1954-56
Aims	"to seek agreement ... by negotiations conducted either directly or through the Acting Mediator, with a view to the immediate establishment of [an] armistice" (UNSC Res. 62, Nov. 1948)	"to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding" between the parties (UNGA Res. 194, Dec. 1948): i.e., boundaries, refugees, and Jerusalem	To break post-Lausanne deadlock by combining direct negotiations with PCC mediation over narrow issues	Exchange of nonaggression declarations, to be followed by discussion of PCC Comprehensive Pattern of Proposals: (1) war damages; (2) refugee repatriation; (3) refugee compensation; (4) blocked bank accounts; (5) amendments to GAA regime	Passage of Res. A/AC.61/L.23, urging "the Governments concerned to enter at an early date, without prejudice to their respective rights and claims, into direct negotiations for the establishment of such a settlement, bearing in mind the resolutions as well as the principal objectives of the United Nations on the Palestine question . . . " (GAOR Ad Hoc Political Committee)	High-level direct talks (or formal conference?) under Article XII (3) of the IJGAA: " . . . either of the Parties may call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convoke a conference of representatives for the purpose of reviewing, revising, or suspending any of the provisions of this agreement. . . . Participation in such conference shall be obligatory upon the Parties."	Parallel water-sharing agreements; easing of political tensions through economic cooperation	Avert Israeli "preventive" war by holding either (a) direct Egypt-Israel negotiations, or (b) US-UK mediation leading to a comprehensive settlement on: (1) territorial adjustments; (2) refugees; (3) Jerusalem; (4) open borders; (5) Arab boycott; (6) state of belligerency; (7) Jordan waters; (8) security guarantees

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Achieve-ments	Four GAAs	Lausanne Protocol; plans for functional cooperation (unblocking frozen bank accounts, refugee family reunification)	Deadlock	Deadlock	No resolution; Arab backlash against Western powers	No direct talks; hardening of Arab attitudes against Western powers' attempts to force them into peace with Israel	Tacit water-sharing agreements based on separate, parallel draft memoranda of understanding; functional cooperation, 1956-67	None

polarization, or the post-1970 period of almost "solo" U.S. mediation,[1] the 1949–1956 period reflected the transitions within the international system of the time, and featured a combination of increasing U.S. involvement, declining British and French influence, incipient Soviet involvement, and the calculated use of the United Nations, and especially its Secretary-General, by the powers.

The mediators were clearly more concerned, and more enthusiastic, about conciliation efforts than either or both of the protagonists, whose activities often took the form of negotiation-avoidance. Following the achievement of the Rhodes armistice (episode 1), the aim of the remaining seven negotiations was either to build up the shaky and deteriorating armistice regime, or else to go beyond the armistice to create a situation of normalization or de facto (if not de jure) peace. As a result, two different yardsticks may be applied to measure the success of negotiation efforts during those years: (1) a "negative" one, i.e., activity that serves to maintain the status quo, to prevent a reversion to open warfare ("peacekeeping"), and (2) a "positive" one, i.e., activity that shows signs of moving the parties from armistice to peace ("peacemaking").

THE "LESSONS" APPROACH

Any list of "lessons" must necessarily begin with a few explanatory or qualifying remarks about the "lessons approach" in general. First, I do not believe there is any such thing as a *permanent, constant,* or *absolute* "lesson" of political behavior. Every lesson is *contextual*; it is, almost by definition, *what appears relevant* to the would-be learners, to their present and future situations and options. Thus, reflecting their differing interpretations of the results of any episode, actors will often derive *different* lessons from the *same* event. Second, some lessons are *immediately apparent*, whereas others are slow to sink in, or dependent on a culmination of a series of episodes. Many of the lessons inferred below are general enough to appear applicable to and valid for *all* mediation-negotiation situations of protracted regional

conflict, whereas others may seem particular to the cultural or historical context in which Arabs and Israelis have staked out their conflicting claims.

There is an even more serious qualification: as Gazit and other scholars have observed, it is questionable how well theoreticians, historians, and practitioners extract and apply the cumulative wisdom of previous (recent or distant) negotiating experience. Gazit suggests that this may reflect, in part, a built-in disinclination of mediators and diplomats to search for, and learn from, lessons of the past. Such disinclination may be attributed to several factors, including the widely held belief that diplomacy is an art, based on intuition or innate talent of the practitioner, not really susceptible to (social-)scientific learning. Another, related reason is the supposition that each negotiating situation is unique, therefore requiring skills of improvisation rather than replication from previous experience.[2] Thus, in the present discussion, we should not at all be surprised to find little concrete evidence of policymakers and mediators consciously framing their policies and proposals, in subsequent decades, as a direct function of "lessons" they might have deduced from the wealth of pre-1956 negotiating experience.

Yet many would agree with Gazit in not letting practitioners off the hook that easily. "The education of newcomers in the onerous duties of peace-broking," he observes, "should not be left to accident or to good fortune." He believes that we should not view kindly a mediator "who manifests indifference towards the labors of his predecessors" because such "past endeavors very frequently do matter, and the diplomatic process of accommodation seldom starts from scratch with the appointment of a new mediator."[3]

Contrary to those who may still view diplomacy as an idiosyncratic art rather than a rational activity susceptible to social-science analysis, I believe that academics and policy advisers, working with all the advantages of hindsight and broadened context, can indeed piece together profitable historical lessons. Despite the infrequency of successful outcomes, there is

much to be learned from the eight negotiation attempts in our sample. Since there is a high degree of continuity in the basic positions of the protagonists and in the kinds of opportunities that arise for contacts and diplomacy, practitioners of current and future negotiations may benefit from knowing how parties have acted and reacted under given circumstances in the past. Anyone who probes into past Arab-Israeli negotiation attempts will be struck by the repetitiveness of certain situ-ations and patterns of behavior over the long history of this protracted conflict.

By examining the behind-the-scenes calculations and motives of the parties as they face the prospect of negotiating with their adversaries, one becomes better able to distinguish between their highly developed advocacy, propaganda, and posturing on the one hand and their equally skillful tactical maneuvering in pursuit of specific political goals on the other. Sober historical study of these negotiation episodes may enable one to assess the complex mixture of emotional and rational components of each party's stance. In addition, the student of Arab-Israeli diplomacy will be better equipped to put into perspective the parties' *declared* goals, camouflaged under the banners of principles or ideology, while devoting more credence to their *true motives* driven by realpolitik and balance of power considerations.

It is not clear whether people learn better from their successes or from their failures. In any case, we are dealing here with extracting lessons from six clear-cut failures and two partial successes. In their useful summation of the lessons of experience leading up to the 1991 Madrid Conference, K. Stein and Lewis suggest that "unsuccessful talks do not necessarily fail entirely. A nonsuccess can lay the groundwork for later efforts.... Yesterday's rejected or ignored proposal, document or procedure may become tomorrow's accepted agreement, newly adopted position, or process."[4]

Thus, careful extrapolation and cautious application even of failed attempts at negotiation can reward the student with a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THESE EPISODES

The following is a balance sheet of the positive and negative lessons that we may deduce from the cumulative experience of these eight intensive negotiation attempts that were undertaken between the first and second Arab-Israeli wars. These lessons will be summarized under eight subheads, utilizing several old-fashioned concepts in the fields of political science and international relations.

Timing and Context

No negotiating episode takes place in a vacuum. Activism of third parties in search of a diplomatic resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is seldom a primary goal for its own sake. As Shamir notes, "contacts in search for a settlement were always by-products and side-shows of greater dramas."[5] Touval likewise observes, with respect to American pursuit of the Anderson mission, that "peace, however desirable, was not a goal on its own merits." The mediation attempting to produce an Egyptian-Israeli agreement, he stresses, "was in part an instrument used in the pursuit of another and more important goal."[6] For much of the period under review, Cold War calculations were primary influences on British and American officials, who believed that "the defence of the Middle East [against Soviet influence and "penetration"] will never really be organised on a sound footing unless peace is concluded between Israel and the Arab States."[7]

The importance of timing and context is equally clear when viewed from the protagonists' vantage point. In the final years of our period, Egyptian and Arab decisions on ways of dealing with Israel in responding to the Johnston and Alpha initiatives were framed in the light of Egyptian-Iraqi rivalry, as represented by the supporters and detractors of the Baghdad Pact. Likewise, Israeli and Arab reactions to peacekeeping and peacemaking diplomacy were conditioned by fears and expectations attached to a rapidly intensifying arms race.

Given the special complexities of Arab-Israeli relations after 1949, efforts

on one front are often distracted or disturbed by the existence of simultaneous ongoing initiatives being conducted by other actors. Apart from the eight selected episodes, which involved international or third-party mediation, there was also serious diplomatic activity occurring in several sets of semisecret bilateral channels: Israel-Jordan, Israel-Egypt, Israel-Syria, and Israel-Lebanon.

Successes in Arab-Israeli negotiations from 1949 to 1956–modest as they were–came only at moments when the status quo was more painful, or more uncomfortable, to at least one of the parties than the risks of entering into a negotiating situation. Efforts to persuade the entrenched antagonists to consider negotiations are often stymied by the conundrum captured in the dictum: "If I am too weak, how *can* I negotiate? If I am strong, why *should* I negotiate?" This was the case, for example, with Israel during and after the Rhodes and Lausanne conferences. It also operated with the Egyptians, who deflected Alpha initiatives before the Czech arms deal on the ground of being "too weak," and then proceeded to stall the Anderson mission because of the need for time to absorb new Soviet armaments.

Finally, the experience of the period under review suggests that would-be mediation attempts seldom emerge from the appearance of a "window of opportunity," set against the backdrop of a "neutral" status quo. Instead, they most often develop out of the pressures of a deteriorating status quo, and involve calculated risks associated with "bad" and "worse" options.

In sum, the timing and context factors seem to be more of a determinant of success than any of the other "lessons" deduced below. One of the main reasons there was no post-1948 diplomatic breakthrough from armistice to peace was that neither party was ever placed in a situation where it felt compelled to make serious concessions for the sake of an agreement with the other side. The parties entrenched themselves behind their post-1949 declared positions, preferring to wait for the status quo to become uncomfortable enough for the *other* party to give way and make the first overture toward talks.

In all their responses to the peacemaking efforts of the UN and the Western powers, the Arabs employed the tactic of working for the return of the refugees in order to weaken or subvert, rather than make peace with, Israel. The corresponding Israeli tactic was to stall as much as possible in order to consolidate the military gains of 1948–1949 without having to offer significant territorial concessions or a return of refugees. In Zartman's terms, the stalemate was not sufficiently "mutually-hurting," and the perception of a "way out" not sufficiently clear, for the parties to have taken any negotiation risk to achieve a breakthrough.[8]

Posturing and Positioning
Bickering over procedure, agendas, and symbols masks, and often substitutes for, efforts at defining and attempting to resolve differences over substantive issues. Parties become adept at posturing and avoiding commitment, while making all the correct noises about their earnest desire to resolve the conflict. Given this reality, our understanding of the true dynamics of negotiating behavior is best enhanced by applying the concepts associated with *prenegotiation*, a field of study that was given some attention during the late 1980s.[9]

Beneath all the public platitudes about desiring peace and wishing to cooperate with UN peace efforts, the diplomatic activity of Arabs and Israelis during the period of our study was, in many ways, a continuation and expansion of patterns established during the Mandate period. Arab and Israeli post-1948 diplomacy can be characterized as mostly posturing and maneuvering so as to avoid being forced to accept solutions that fell short of their respective irreconcilable goals. Whereas Israel's goal was to consolidate the status quo, the Arab states' goal was to revert as much as possible to the status quo ante–each party nevertheless keen to appear reasonable while making its adversary's unreasonable stance appear as the cause of a lack of progress toward peace.

In an amusing quip, illustrating the futility and wastefulness of the parties' positioning and posturing, Rafael describes the 1950 Geneva talks as

a "culinary carousel" in which "never had so few ... consumed so much ... to produce so little." [10] Two examples of such behavior especially stand out from among the eight episodes: (a) the Israeli delegation's successful tactical obstruction at the Paris Conference of 1951, and (b) Israel's successful tactics in diverting and transforming U.S. pressure on Israel for a territorial "gesture" on the Negev in late 1955 into pressure on President Nasser to agree to face-to-face talks by 1956. In the former case, the Israeli delegation invoked a seemingly endless series of legalistic rationales over the course of four weeks, refusing to accept the PCC's "Comprehensive Pattern of Proposals" as a basis for discussion–all the while keeping up appearances and pledging its sincere desire to continue the conference. In this way, Israel avoided being blamed for causing the breakdown of the Paris talks, while attempting to have them fail in a way that would be interpreted as being caused by the Arab delegations' rejection of the PCC's proposed nonbelligerency declaration. In fact, two weeks after the opening of the Paris meetings, one official of the Israeli Foreign Ministry noted a striking similarity between the Arab and Israeli delegations: both expected the conference to fail, "and the only question was which will be blamed by the Western Powers for the failure." [11]

During November and December 1955, Operation Alpha appeared to be floundering because of Israel's refusal to indicate a willingness to negotiate on Egypt's claim to territorial contiguity with Jordan through the Negev. But by late February, Israel had succeeded in shifting this State Department presumption through its careful handling of Robert Anderson, who seems to have convinced President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles that the key prerequisite to a settlement lay elsewhere: namely, in getting Nasser to prove his sincerity by agreeing to hold direct secret meetings with Israelis–an agreement that never came. This outcome seemed to justify U.S. Ambassador Henry Byroade's conspiratorial spin on the mission, recalling that he had told Dulles at the start of Anderson's visit: "What really scares me is that no matter how this fails, Nasser will get the blame." [12]

Bilateral vs. Multilateral Talks

Evidence from the period validates a well-known truism, as refined by K. Stein and Lewis, that "success has come only from bilateral negotiation, and then only with a very active third-party mediator." [13] Without embarking on a detailed discussion of this well-known and accepted dynamic of the Arab-Israeli negotiating game, we need only remind ourselves of the decline of flexibility when the Arab side is composed of representatives of several rival states. Rabinovich has described the "mechanism of political overbidding" by which "Arab politicians sought to raise their political stock by portraying themselves as advocates of a political position more radical and pure than that of their competitors. The practical outcome of these dynamics was a radicalization of the Arab side's position and conduct." [14]

Direct vs. Indirect Talks

Evidence from the period would seem to validate another well-known truism, namely, that success comes only when–as in the case of armistice talks under UN mediator Ralph Bunche in 1949–the outside facilitator insists on holding face-to-face meetings between the main protagonists, rather than accommodating the Arab countries in their refusal in principle to meet with Israeli representatives.

Yet this truism may not be entirely valid; the case of Eric Johnston's shuttle diplomacy on sharing of the Jordan waters provides evidence that serious practical achievements are *also* possible through indirect negotiations pursued by a persistent and respected mediator.

The Role of Third Parties

Even when performing the ostensibly neutral and helpful function of "postman" between two parties that are not in direct communication, third parties have to be wary of being maneuvered into a position of appearing to act as the advocate of one of the parties. Usually, the receiving party attaches more weight to a message transmitted via a third party, and may well presume some outside endorsement of the incoming message. From

the specifically Israeli perspective, the use of a third party as postman in the early 1950s carried the disadvantage of allowing Arab politicians to perpetuate their avoidance of direct dealings with the Jewish state.

Despite pressures from some quarters for full *"mediation"*–i.e., active intervention involving specific proposals or packages–most third-party activity took the form of what was then distinguished as *"conciliation,"* a more restrained form of diplomatic activity, facilitating diplomatic exchanges between the main protagonists *without* proposing or endorsing specific solutions. Protagonists differed over whether the outside mediator should play a more restricted or a more interventionist role. Usually, Israelis preferred to keep outside mediators restricted to a modest role, whereas the Arab states calculated that activist outside mediation would have proved more beneficial. Such preferences are not, however, permanent or fixed; instead, they are a function of each party's perception of where the third party would align itself, if forced to pronounce on the issues in dispute, and how that intervention would affect the balance of power between it and its rival.

Two examples illustrate these points. Although it may have appeared to some observers that the United States during the Lausanne, Geneva, and Paris conferences was unfairly titling toward the Jewish state by rejecting appeals for an imposed settlement and by encouraging direct talks between the parties, the American stance on the major *issues* of the day–Jerusalem, territorial compromise, and return of refugees–was, in fact, much closer to the Arab than to the Israeli position. Not unexpectedly, Israel consistently pressed for *conciliation* (without outside proposals) and not *mediation.*   Second, while welcoming American help in pursuit of a settlement in mid-1955, Prime Minister Moshe Sharett stressed that

> such assistance, to be successful, need not be accompanied by the formu-
> lation of definite proposals for a peace settlement, either complete or
> partial. Indeed, ... the prior enunciation by the USA or by any other third
> power, of specific terms is liable to wreck the chances of a settlement. ... In
> the case of such decisive problems as territory and population, the setting

forth by a third party of concrete terms in advance may lead to fatal results
and should at all costs be avoided.[15]

Sharett's firmness reflected the fact that Israelis had become aware, at
the time, of secret Anglo-American discussions of possible territorial
concessions by Israel in the Negev, aimed at enticing Egypt into negotiations
with the prospect of an overland connection to Jordan.

Patron-Client Relationships

The deterioration of the 1949 armistice through border incidents, and the
inability of UN peacekeeping machinery to control this deterioration, put to
the test the ability of the powers (as "patrons") to control the behavior of
their respective "clients" in the region by the offer of carrots or the
brandishing of sticks. One glaring conclusion from a close study of the
period is that the patrons' actual ability to influence their respective clients
in the desired directions of tension reduction or peacemaking was less than
presumed by the powers themselves, less than most analysts presumed
during that time (and even in retrospect), and *far less* than what each party
believed the rival's patron was capable of exerting on its adversary. Thus,
the Israelis' belief that the British could have done more to "educate" the
Arabs to accept the new reality of a Jewish state in the Middle East was
matched by a parallel Arab view that the Americans were remiss in not
dictating to the fledgling Israeli state compromise terms on territorial
adjustment and return of refugees.

In the period under review, the Americans could point to three minor,
partial successes in wielding the stick. All three were directed against Israel,
taking the form of a threat to withdraw political or economic support. In
the spring of 1949, active U.S. backing for Israel's admission to the United
Nations was made conditional on Israel's agreement to sign the Lausanne
Protocol. Later that year, hesitation over providing a $100 million loan
through the Export-Import Bank of Washington probably helped the
Israeli cabinet to come forth with its offer to repatriate one hundred
thousand Palestinian refugees. And, finally, a late-1953 U.S. threat to cut

economic aid helped to secure Israel's agreement to suspend work on the Bnot Yaacov water diversion project, as demanded by the head of the UN Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) in response to Syrian complaints.[16]

By contrast, America and Britain working together suffered two major failures during this period in attempts to use carrots with the Arabs, in the form of offers of military or major financial assistance. In mid-1955, British Prime Minister Anthony Eden sought American backing to assemble an attractive package of arms aid to Iraq, which Eden hoped could be used to win Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said's open endorsement of Dulles's policy statement, which was based on the Alpha Plan. The Americans were not, in the end, very generous in their proposed contribution, while the pro-Western Iraqi prime minister decided to restrict his praise for the Anglo-American policy initiative to private conversations, once the Egyptian government and press came out sharply against Dulles's statement on the Alpha Plan of 26 August 1955.[17]

An even more glaring illustration of the patrons' inability to make overt links between a dangled carrot and a client's expected cooperative behavior was the case of the Anglo-American proposals to finance construction of Egypt's Aswan High Dam. Using economic aid as an instrument of Middle East peacemaking was not without its complications, and these were noted in the State Department as early as 1952.[18] Yet, in 1955–1956, the Western powers clearly sought to link their financing of this prestige development project (through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD) with Nasser's cooperation with Alpha and with the Anderson mission. During and after late November 1955, American officials quietly offered to use their influence to help speed up and finalize the protracted Egyptian negotiations with the IBRD as a carrot to induce Egyptian cooperation in Alpha. "It was clear," as Francis Russell, Dulles's special assistant, told British Ambassador Makins, "that Egypt could not afford both the Dam and an arms race, and this would have to be brought out." Yet Russell himself recognized the limitations of making his point too

obvious.[19] This opinion was echoed by Ambassadors Byroade and Stevenson in Cairo and by Russell's counterpart in London, Evelyn Shuckburgh. The latter feared the loss of secrecy that would undermine the effectiveness of one of the powers' best "carrots"–namely, the financial inducements that could never be stated openly: "the resulting outcry against Western bribery would make it more difficult than ever for any Arab statesman to accept our ideas. Yet without such inducements the Alpha proposals would be branded by the Arabs as an imperialist trick to force them into peace with the usurpers of their rights. Alpha would be damned forever."[20]

Indeed, what had once been considered the main incentive with which to win Egyptian cooperation in Operation Alpha seemed to disintegrate when put to the test. During the last months of 1955, any American hints given to the Egyptian leadership of a link between U.S. financial aid for the dam and a settlement of the Egyptian-Israeli dispute had to be kept subtle and discreet. In briefing Robert Anderson for his mission to Cairo, Secretary Dulles referred to aid for the Aswan Dam as an incentive that "could probably not be openly negotiated, but could be delicately suggested."[21] Yet, despite this careful briefing, Heikal claims that Nasser was "taken aback" by the "blunt and crude manner" in which the presidential envoy presented "the relation between financing of the High Dam and reconciliation with Israel."[22]

From an Egyptian point of view, any American hint that a settlement with the Israelis would be linked to assistance for the dam was considered heavy-handed pressure and unacceptable "political strings."[23] Thus, rather than providing an ideal economic carrot, the linkage between Alpha and Aswan proved incapable of creating the desired Egyptian flexibility on the Israel issue. By early February 1956, Eisenhower, Under Secretary of State Hoover, and Dulles began to realize "that there was little chance that financial backing for the Aswan project would produce enough political leverage to pressure the Nasser regime into a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict."[24] Several months later, Dulles formally and

brusquely informed the Egyptian ambassador of the withdrawal of the Anglo-American offer to finance the High Aswan Dam project, thereby precipitating Nasser's retaliation against "American and British conspiracies against Egypt" by nationalizing the Suez Canal[25]–thus setting the stage for the final descent to the Suez crisis.

The dynamics of patron-client relations during this period–and the success of British and American peacemaking efforts in the Arab-Israeli conflict–were predicated on three interlocking assumptions. The first was that an Israeli "gesture" toward the Palestinian refugee issue or on territorial adjustments was a prerequisite to obtaining Arab agreement to even consider engaging in negotiations with the Jewish state. The second was that only the U.S. patron could effectively pressure its Israeli client to deliver such concessions, while (third) only the British patron could induce its Arab clients to enter into negotiations and eventually accept the fait accompli of an Israeli state in the region.

One prominent illustration of the powers' focus on the prior gesture by Israel was the entire PCC effort during 1949–1951, which was hinged on receipt of an Israeli commitment to accept para. 11 of UNGA Res. 194 of December 1948 concerning the rights of the refugees. A second example of the same patron-client dynamic could be seen during late 1955 and early 1956, when Washington and London put much effort into obtaining a sign of Israeli willingness to consider territorial revisions in the Negev as a prerequisite for getting Egypt to agree to discuss the contents of Operation Alpha. In both cases, Israeli representatives stood firm against strong third-party pressure and refused to provide such gestures. All in all, the behavior of the client states during this period demonstrates both the untenability of the first assumption and the limited abilities of the patron states to wield their carrots and sticks.

Doubts about the exclusivity of an Anglo-American "franchise" in the Arab-Israeli arena also undermined the optimistic assumptions of a neat and balanced "division of labor" involving the two leading Western powers of the day. This Anglo-American hegemony was challenged both by France

(with its traditional privileged access to Syria and Lebanon, and in its secret arms dealings with Israel) and, in a major way, by the emergence of the Soviet Union after 1953 as a new, full-fledged alternate patron of the Arab states.

Another lesson in the realm of patron-client relationships was the way the Western powers used UN bodies or personnel–often the chair of the PCC, increasingly the UN Secretary-General–to serve as a legitimizing "cover" whenever the patron states faced obstacles or inconveniences posed by direct intervention with their respective clients. As far as actual success of UN conciliation and mediation efforts is concerned, the experience of the eight episodes shows how heavily UN officials had to rely on appeals to one or more of the powers to exert behind-the-scenes pressure on its client–as the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Office were often called on to do by UN mediator Ralph Bunche, by Mark Ethridge and Ely Palmer as chairmen of the PCC, and by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld.

Conflict Management vs. Conflict Resolution

Left to itself, the Arab-Israeli dispute of this period did not long remain a dormant one, easily "managed" as a low-intensity conflict. The multiplicity of actors, the explosiveness of unresolved issues, and conflicting interests provided ample opportunities for any would-be "spoiler" to engage in provocation that increased the salience and intensity of the dispute. Months and years of "border wars"–the escalating cycle of Arab terror attack and Israeli reprisal–had the cumulative effect of undermining each party's philosophical commitment to the armistice regime.

Moshe Sharett's criticism of UN peacekeeping was that "while Israel views the armistice agreements as a bridge to peace, the Arab states try to use them as cover from behind which they can carry on their warfare against Israel by all possible means short of a full-scale war." [26] As early as March 1954, alarm bells were beginning to ring in Washington and London about possible Israeli plans to launch a "preventive war" as a way of overcoming

the drawbacks of what they considered an untenable UN armistice regime. In fact, the British embassy in Tel Aviv warned in late 1953 that "we cannot long count on ... the comparative passivity of Israel" in deciding whether or not to become active in pursuit of an overall settlement.[27]

In the face of recurring threats of an outbreak of localized or regional hostilities, mere attempts to *manage* the conflict actually became untenable, and gave rise to periodic calls for outside intervention and ambitious proposals aimed at *resolving* underlying issues. London and Washington made repeated admonitions to Arab and Israeli representatives for statesmanlike behavior and restraint in the face of continuing mutual provocation. But these quickly lost their effectiveness, and became debased diplomatic currency. The cycle of incursion-reprisal-admonition became a tedious routine underlining the disintegration of the armistice regimes as conflict-management mechanisms.

Whenever circumstances did prod American or British outsiders into undertaking an initiative aimed at either a comprehensive settlement or resolving one of the core issues, resistance or obstruction by one or more of the protagonists led to decisions to revert to a more modest step-by-step approach. This is what took place, for example, during the transition from the Truman to the Eisenhower administration in 1952–1953. Initially proposing bold steps toward a "positive and constructive approach" to the problem of Arab-Israeli relations, Henry Byroade, newly appointed assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, stressed that "the United States must, in its own interests, devote a major effort toward easing the tensions that have sprung from" the Arab-Israeli impasse.[28] Within six months, however, the visit of the new secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, to the region convinced American policymakers of the virtues of *not* pressing Arabs or Israelis too hard. On his return, Dulles announced in a radio broadcast that the parties concerned continued to have "the primary responsibility of bringing peace to the area," and that the United States would "use its influence to promote a step-by-step reduction of tension in the area and the conclusion

of ultimate peace."[29] In private diplomatic conversations, the formerly-activist Byroade admitted that neither the U.S. nor any of its Western allies was "in a position to exert much influence on the Arab world today."[30]

A similar downscaling of expectations could also be seen after the U.S. State Department and British Foreign Office had collaborated for over a year in their elaborate exercise in coercive diplomacy known as Operation Alpha. When the Anderson mission of early 1956 failed to bring about direct Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, the powers aimed (with some nasty State Department operations under the code-letter Omega) simply at isolating Nasser and preventing the outbreak of a looming war.[31]

Applying the concepts elaborated by J.G. Stein to our period, we conclude that there was not enough dissatisfaction with this increasingly unstable status quo and insufficient "shared learning about the costs of the use of force from prior rounds" to move the principal parties from attempts to manage the conflict to attempts to resolve it.[32]

The Negotiating Agenda: Peripheral vs. Core Issues, or: Piecemeal vs. Comprehensive Approaches

The Arab-Israeli deadlock of the period under review was characterized by parties entrenching themselves into mutually incompatible positions, stipulating preconditions for a settlement that were unacceptable to the other side. Most diplomats interested in breaking the deadlock had reason to feel that attempts at a comprehensive settlement over fundamental issues in dispute were too ambitious and likely to fail, and thought it more promising to aim at modest goals. Hence, they sought to "attack the problem in piecemeal ways," work for the "cumulative effect of small solutions," or "nibble at the edges" of the core issues.[33] In concrete terms, this meant aiming at resolving minor or technical issues such as redrawing, or improved monitoring of, the armistice lines, refugee relief, family reunification, blocked bank accounts, or water sharing.

Yet even attempts at resolving peripheral or practical issues were often stymied because parties quickly appreciated, and balked at, the political ramifications of a pragmatic accommodation on the still unresolved larger issues. Examples abound. During 1950–1951, Israeli leaders preferred not to move too quickly to cooperate with PCC efforts to isolate and deal with refugee compensation, on the ground that "to grant compensation now would remove the incentive to a general settlement."[34] Another illustration is the unsuccessful Anglo-American initiative of mid-1954, pressing Israeli and Jordanian officials to consider an eleven-point plan for deescalating tensions along the Israeli-Jordanian frontier. Similarly, in mid-1955, Egyptians and Israelis were unable to agree on UNTSO Chief General Burns's four-point plan for reducing tensions on the Gaza border. In both cases, the protagonists insisted on viewing the piecemeal tension-reduction proposals as being linked to larger contentious issues.[35]

The contamination of practical, ostensibly nonpolitical, negotiations by political considerations is perhaps best illustrated by John Foster Dulles's speech of 26 August 1955. In disclosing the outlines of Operation Alpha in an attempt to jolt Arabs and Israelis into responding positively to at least some of the proposals, the speech nearly caused the fatal collapse of Eric Johnston's delicate Jordan-waters negotiations. The Jordanian prime minister informed one of his ambassadors that the Hashemite kingdom "would have to reject [the] Johnston proposals which [were] now tied to [a] political settlement."[36] In the wake of the 26 August speech, Johnston fought an uphill battle trying to convince Arabs, and especially Jordanians, to view his water-sharing negotiations as something separate from Dulles's statement of high policy. Although the ambassador did make some headway in this task, a number of Arabs remained suspicious that "the Johnston project by its nature represent[ed] a bridge which leads to the execution of the Dulles Project and which results in presenting the Arabs with a fait accompli."[37] As one scholar has recently summarized it, Alpha had "overloaded the political circuits of the Arabs, who could no

longer be persuaded to separate the functional and political dimensions of the [water-sharing] Plan." [38]

In the period under discussion, there does not appear to have been a sufficient volume or momentum of attempts at resolving such narrower issues to constitute "confidence-building measures" that might have been useful preludes to tackling the central issues of recognition, boundaries, and refugees. Three cases of feeble and futile attempts to create such confidence-building momentum in late 1954 were the successive ideas of having (a) all states in the region issue nonaggression statements endorsing the Tripartite Declaration, (b) Egyptian and Israeli representatives achieve a compromise on the disputed Israeli use of the Suez Canal, and (c) Israeli and British officials offer Jordan free-port facilities in Haifa in a de facto puncturing of the Arab economic boycott of the Jewish state. [39]

CONCLUSION

The period of 1949–1956 was rich in peacekeeping and peacemaking attempts–"opportunities" as some would call them–and a time of much intense activity. Seven of the eight episodes discussed involved a large measure of what we now call prenegotiation rather than negotiation proper. The dynamics and outcomes of these episodes are best understood as a search for the ever-elusive "ripe moment" at which the parties move from positioning, posturing, and prenegotiation to a commitment to enter into negotiations toward a resolution of their differences. [40]

By the spring of 1956, several years of sustained efforts at Anglo-American diplomacy for resolving the post-1948 Arab-Israeli dispute had run their course. Great-power and UN peacemaking efforts had indeed proved futile. As Zartman notes:

> Parties need to feel better off with [a] promised new situation, or else there
> will be no incentive to sign and to hold [to] an agreement. Mediators use
> carrots and sticks to bring out the perception of the present as unpleasant

and the future as promising for all. Both are required: the future must be seen as preferable to the present, and promises as well as pressures are needed. The stick needs to be associated with carrots, so that the promise as well as the pain can be brought out.[41]

Our review of these eight selected episodes has shown that no combination of carrots and sticks–promises and pressure–wielded by determined great powers of the day was able to bring about a successful diplomatic initiative to reverse the worsening spiral of violence along the Arab-Israeli borders. An unstable situation of eight years of "no peace, no war" finally gave way to the second Arab-Israeli war.

NOTES

1. Kenneth W. Stein and Samuel W. Lewis (with Sheryl J. Brown), *Making Peace among Arabs and Israelis: Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, October 1991), pp. 4–6.
2. Mordechai Gazit, "Mediation and Mediators," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 5, 4 (1981): 80–81.
3. Gazit, p. 83; cf. p. 104.
4. Stein and Lewis, *Making Peace*, pp. 25–26.
5. Shimon Shamir, "The Collapse of Project Alpha," in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen, eds., *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 75.
6. Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1979* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 133.
7. Wardrop minute, The Effect of Arab Israel Relations on the Defence of the Middle East, 8 August 1951, quoted in FD4 (see credit note, p. 1), p. 15.
8. I. William Zartman, "Negotiation as a Mechanism for Resolution in the Arab-Israeli Conflict," Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, forthcoming.
9. See, e.g., Jay Rothman, "Developing Pre-Negotiation Theory and Practice" (Project on Pre-Negotiation Update), Policy Studies No. 29, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May

1989; Janice Gross Stein, ed., *Getting to the Table: The Processes of International Prenegotiation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

10. Remarks during "Study Day on the Lausanne Conference," organized by Israel State Archives and Ben-Gurion University, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, January 1996.

11. Gershon Avner, quoted in FD3, p. 181.

12. Quoted in FD4, p. 257.

13. Stein and Lewis, *Making* Peace, p. v; cf. Gazit, "Mediation," pp. 84–85.

14. Itamar Rabinovich, *The Road Not Taken: Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 82.

15. Sharett to Dulles, 4 May 1955, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955–1957,* vol. 14, *Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1955*, ed. Carl N. Raether (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), pp. 170-174 (Doc. 87).

16. For discussions of the March-April 1949 U.S. pressure on Israel, see Neil Caplan, "The Lausanne Conference, 1949: A Case Study in Middle East Peacemaking," Occasional Papers No. 113, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1993, p. 52; FD3, p. 82. On the July-August 1949 discussions on the ExIm loan, see Caplan, "Lausanne Conference," pp. 94–95, and FD3, pp. 109–110. On Washington's late-1953 pressure to stop Israel from proceeding with its Upper Jordan water-diversion project, see Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, "The Limits of Economic Sanctions: The American-Israeli Case of 1953," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988): 425–443; FD3, p. 221, p. 329, n.50.

17. For details, see FD4, pp. 134–135. In the end, Washington offered to underwrite expenses for ten Centurion tanks, rather than the seventy expected by the British.

18. Donald Bergus memorandum, An American Policy for Arab-Israeli Peace, 2 December 1952, discussed in FD4, pp. 283, 286.

19. "It might be fatal," he added, "to suggest to Nasser that acceptance of a settlement [with Israel] were a condition of Western assistance for the Dam." P.H. Russell remarks, as reported in Makins to FO, 28 November 1955, quoted in FD4, p. 287. Cf. *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS] 1955–1957*, 14, p. 877; William J. Burns, *Economic Aid and American Policy toward Egypt, 1955–1981*, Foreword by H. F. Eilts (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 53ff.

20. Shuckburgh to Macmillan, 13 June 1955, quoted in FD4, p. 130.

21. Memorandum of conversation at the White House, 11 January 1956, *FRUS 1955–1957*, 15, p. 20. Cf. Burns, *Economic Aid*, p. 53.

22. Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, *Milaffat as-Suways: Harb al-Thalathin Sana [The Suez Files: The Thirty Years War]* (Cairo, 1986), p. 388. Cf. Miles Copeland, *The Game Player: Confessions of the CIA's Original Political Operative* (London: Aurum, 1989), pp. 207ff.; Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East* (New York: Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, 1981 [Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1988]), p. 156.

23. See, e.g., *New York Times*, 12 December 1955, quoted in Kennett Love, *Suez: The Twice-Fought War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), pp. 307ff.; Burns, *Economic Aid*, p. 54.

24. Burns, *Economic Aid*, pp. 58ff.

25. Byroade report of Nasser speech, 26 July 1956, *FRUS 1955–1957*, 15, pp. 906-908 [D511].

26. Interview, *US News & World Report*, 17 September 1954, p. 68; quoted in FD4, p. 46.

27. Evans to Eden, 8 December 1953, discussed in FD4, p. 53; cf. FD4, pp. 164–165.

28. "U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East," address to Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 5 December 1952, *Department of State Bulletin*, 15 December 1952, v.27/pt.2, 932; FD4, p. 19.

29. Dulles radio broadcast, Report on Trip to the Middle East, 1 June 1953, in J.C. Hurewitz, ed., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914–1956*, vol. 2 (Octagon Reprint, 1972), p. 342; FD4, p. 20.

30. Byroade remarks, 9 June 1953, *FRUS 1952–1954* 9/11, p. 1235 [D622].

31. FD4, pp. 252–256.

32. Janice Gross Stein, "The Widening Gyre of Negotiation: From Management to Resolution in the Arab-Israel Conflict," Occasional Papers No. 68, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 1999.

33. FD3, p. 157; FD4, Ch. 3. Lewis Jones, a senior State Department official, applied the medical metaphor of "knitting tissue" over the wound; FD3, p. 159.

34. E. Elath remarks, quoted in FD3, p. 157.

35. These and other initiatives are detailed in FD4, Chs. 3–4, esp. pp. 34–41, 104–106.

36. Geren to USSD, 28 August 1955, *FRUS 1955–1957*, 14, p. 410 [D232].

37. Al-*Bilad al-Saudiyya*, 18 September 1955, quoted in FD4, p. 141.

38. Adam Garfinkle, "Deep and Wide: Water, War and Negotiations in the Jordan Valley, 1916–1993," unpublished ms., June 1993, Ch. 4.

39. FD4, pp. 41–45.

40. Cf. Zartman, "Negotiation as a Mechanism."

41. I. William Zartman, "The Negotiation Process in the Middle East," in Steven L. Spiegel, ed., *The Arab-Israeli Search for Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992), p. 65.