Moral Discourse Under Fire: The Example of the Middle East

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George Kennan, a prominent spokesman of the "realist" political school, said some years ago: "Let us face it: in most international differences elements of right and wrong, comparable to those that prevail in personal relationships, are—if they exist at all, which is a question—simply not discernible to the outsider. Where is the right and wrong of the Kashmir dispute? I am glad it is not my task to seek it. And how about the conflict between the Israeli and the Arabs? The very establishment of the State of Israel, at which we Americans warmly connived, was—whether right or wrong—essentially an act of violence."

Nadav Safran, in his influential book on the Middle East, *From War to War*, has come to the same conclusions. Safran asserts that the tendency of well-intentioned people to couch the Arab-Israeli conflict in moral terms distorts the conflict and therefore prevents both a proper understanding of "the concrete unfolding of events" and an adequate formulation of "a policy relevant to the conflict." Safran, like Kennan, presupposes a theoretical separation between moral discussion on the one hand and policy discussion on the other. The argument is that since these two forms of discussion or discourse are separated in theory, we ought to keep them separated in practice. What merit is there to this claim that moral categories are irrelevant to foreign policy issues? I would like to test this and two other competing claims.

The *second* claim is that when it comes to foreign relations, Americans are of all men most "moralistic," which means that they go around the world arbitrarily imposing their own moral values on other people. It is their very moralism that makes Americans "arrogant" and "domineering" toward the other peoples of the world. Chester Cooper, in his recent book, *The*

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Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam, puts the position well:

> At the close of the 19th century, American thrusts into the world outside were justified to ourselves and explained to others by high moral preachments. . . . Before we could savor [the] first tasty fruits of our new imperialist role, we had to sugar them with a sticky coating of humanitarianism, sentimentality, and righteousness. We were on God's side. And we've stayed there in all our foreign adventures since. When we weren't fighting the heathen, we fought others to save (and hopefully convert) him.

Our evangelical zeal to spread the "American creed" —the rights of all people to self-determination and to consent to their governments and the need to establish a reliable international framework for ensuring these rights—is, we are told, precisely the kind of "messianism" that led Woodrow Wilson astray, and has continued to mislead American foreign policy ever since Wilson. The real trouble with American messianism is that it provides a cosmetic or deceptive cover for an otherwise self-serving foreign policy.

Whereas these first two claims about the relation of "morals and foreign policy" are negative in that they raise questions about the pertinence or helpfulness of couching foreign policy questions in moral terms, the *third* claim is different. It contends that moral categories—matters of right and wrong—are not only pertinent to foreign policy discussions but can be applied in a direct and simple fashion that yields an unambiguous directive for making policy. Much of the discussion surrounding the Vietnam debate makes this assumption, as do many of the arguments, on both sides of the debate, over what ought to be done in the Middle East. On the one side, there are those who are able to discover that the "moral responsibility" of the United States in the Middle East requires that we hold the Arabs primarily to blame for the threat to peace and justice in the area,

and at the same time that we give virtually unequivocal support to Israel. (I have in mind, for example, the three-quarter-page ad in the *New York Times* on Sunday, June 4, 1967, signed by Protestant and Catholic leaders such as John Bennett and Martin Luther King, which, in the context of the June War of 1967, put things very much in this perspective.)

On the other side there is the position of what Maxime Rodinson calls "the international left," which gives the Arab cause "a near-absolute value"; "[it] maintains that Israel is a bastion of imperialism; [that] her very existence is held to be a threat to progress and liberty in the world at large, and in the Arab world in particular." Consequently, the United States ought to adopt a policy, if not of abandonment of Israel, one that unmistakably favors the objectives of the Arabs to the detriment of Israel.

I have two strong convictions about these claims: First, it is clear to me that we must test them carefully, if only because, at certain points, they contradict each other. Obviously, one cannot agree with Kennan and Safran that moral categories are irrelevant to international disputes and go on to assert that America's "moral responsibility" in the Middle East is to side wholeheartedly with the Israelis or the Arabs. Second, I am drawn more and more to the conclusion that the best way to test claims like these is to "get down to cases." In order to find out how moral appeals do work in international disputes, one must look at the arguments and actions of the relevant parties in an honest-to-goodness international dispute. The actions and the justifications for those actions which make up the so-called "Dilemma of the Middle East" will serve very nicely as an appropriate test case.

To examine dynamics of the Middle East, we will try to find preliminary answers to the following three questions: (1) Are moral categories in fact irrelevant to the dispute between the Arabs and the Israelis, as well as to the formulation of United States policy toward the Middle East? (2) If moral categories have been employed in defense of particular policies by the United States, as well as by the other parties in the dispute, to what extent were these categories arbitrarily (or illegitimately) imposed on the situation by a "moralistic" or "messianic" America? (3) If moral categories are relevant to the "Dilemma of the Middle East," to what extent may they be applied so as to yield a simple and unambiguous directive for making policy?

Unfortunately, before we can get our preliminary answers to these questions, we must do a bit of preparatory work. In order to make our discussion intelligible at all, we must clarify what we mean by those important, but fuzzy, words "policy" and "moral discourse." Because people do not spend time trying to get these terms straight in their heads, much of the discussion surrounding "morals and foreign policy" quickly becomes confused.

On the face of it, the word *policy* seems straightforward enough. Harold Lasswell and Abram Kaplan define "policy" as "a projected program of goal values and practices." Less simply, Karl Deutsch speaks of it as "an explicit set of preferences and plans drawn up in order to make the outcomes of series of future decisions more nearly predictable and consistent." Each of these definitions appears to presuppose the four basic features of a "classical" *rational model of decision-making.* According to such a model, an agent, or agency, as the case may be, determines a policy or program of action (1) by assuming a *standard of value(s);* (2) by identifying and selecting a specific *goal or objective* on the basis of that standard; (3) by selecting the most "efficient" *means* to attain the end, which, in turn, is determined (4) by selecting the means whose *consequences* will most likely yield maximum benefit at minimum sacrifice (cost). With respect to this model, a policy would be "rational" if its particular values, ends, and means were *consistent* with each other, and if the consequences predicted as the result of the policy appeared, in fact, to be *realistic.*

However straightforward this may seem, some students of policy-making doubt that the rational model is of much use in understanding the meaning of "policy" in the real world. They contend that when it comes to making actual policy—say, in connection with the Middle East—one is impressed how "irrational" most policies are. Values, ends, and means are not, in most cases, smoothly consistent, and consequences must usually be calculated in face of great uncertainty. Policies seem to be determined more by group pressure and by "the play of power and influence" than by rational deliberation. In short, the rational model seems artificial and, therefore, irrelevant to the study of policy.

While much can be learned from such criticisms, those who advance them overlook one important role the rational model plays in common, everyday discussion over "matters of policy." That is the role of the model when it comes to *justifying* policies, to deciding whether they are good or bad. Above all, it must be remembered that a policy, whether made by a government, a school administration, or even a private citizen, *invites justification.* Up to a point it is always acceptable to ask a policy-maker to defend, or to "give reasons why" he is recommending a particular policy. When we ask a policy-maker to give his reasons, as we constantly do in the field of foreign affairs, we are, whether we know it or not, requiring that his reasons pass a few tests before they can stand as "good reasons," that is, as reasons which will justify his policy. And if we look closely, we will see that these tests derive from our rational model of decision-making.

It is not uncommon for a policy to be condemned

because the means of action it recommends are in-consistent with, or contradictory to, its ends. The folly of America's Vietnam policy is captured for many in the now infamous statement by the American army officer during the Tet Offensive: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it." Nor is it uncommon for a policy to be criticized because the results promised for it appear unrealistic, or the costs of pursuing it appear to outweigh the benefits. Again, examples of this sort of charge abound among the critics of the Vietnam policy.

We need not belabor what should be a fairly obvious point: In order to be considered justified, policies must pass certain tests of rationality, such as being *consistent* and *realistic*. These are not the only tests we employ in evaluating policy, but they are basic and unavoidable. Our rational model does not, therefore, seem entirely irrelevant to "matters of policy."

It seems equally clear that when we call a policy "moral" we consider that *it is justified in a special way*. If we argue that the United States ought to adopt a policy of exclusive support for Israel for the sole reason of protecting United States oil or strategic interests in the Middle East, that is, of course, an attempt to justify a specific policy, but I doubt we would call the justification a "moral" one, at least as it stands. Similarly, if we argue that United States policy in Indochina ought to be one of complete and immediate withdrawal, regardless of the consequences to the Southeast Asians, and simply because it is "in our interest" to do so, we may call such a policy justified on grounds of *prudence*, but, again, I doubt we would want to call it "morally justified," as it stands. Before we would want to call either recommendation "moral," we would naturally want to ask some further questions. In the case of the Middle East, what will be the effects of exclusive support for Israel on the other interested parties in the area—for example, the Arabs? Will the policy account for their welfare, as well as for the welfare of the United States and, for that matter, the welfare of the Israelis? In the case of Southeast Asia, will total and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces make the Southeast Asians "better off" as well? It is possible, of course, to argue that what is prudent for the United States *is also* of overall benefit to those directly affected by United States policy. I am only suggesting that in order to call a policy "morally justified," one will have to make his case with regard to the interests or welfare of the other relevant parties, and not simply and exclusively with regard to the interests of one of the parties.

We may call this first, and perhaps most basic, condition or test for applying the word "moral" the other-regarding test. Kurt Baier, in his book *The Moral Point of View*, puts it this way: The word moral *means* "a point of view which furnishes a court of arbitration for conflicts of interest. Hence

[to look at a thing morally] cannot be identical with the interest of any particular person or group of persons." In an argument over policy that is also a moral argument, then, the relevant considerations will be not only the values, ends, means, and consequences of one member of a dispute. To be a moral argument, due consideration must be given to the values and ends of *both* parties, as well as to how the consequences of the policy will affect the ends and values of *both*.

Now notice what is involved in this "other-regarding feature" of the notion "moral." In a moral discussion, say, between me and someone else, we assume that the other party and his values or "interests" have a claim upon my deliberations, and vice versa. To be "moral" about it, I ought to respect his right as an independent source of interests and claims, as one who has a right to consent to policies affecting his welfare; and I, of course, have a right to expect equivalent treatment from him. Kant had something like this in mind when he formulated the second version of the categorical imperative as "treat others as ends and not as means only." Moral language seems to presuppose what we may variously call the mutual right of autonomy, self-determination, or of consent. In moral discourse each party is assumed to enjoy a certain sovereignty when it comes to policies affecting his welfare.

Notice one other feature. In a moral discussion one party's "interests" are "legitimate" or "justified" to the degree they allow for the right of self-determination on the part of the other party. Many arguments—including those in the Middle East debate—turn on whether one party's interests do, in fact, permit the other party to practice his right to freedom of choice or consent.

The reasons given in a moral discussion must, it seems, be other-regarding in still one more sense. They must measure up to what Kant called the *test of universalizability*. Whatever I prescribe for you in a particular situation, I must be willing to prescribe for everyone in a similar situation, including myself. This is, of course, simply another way of stating the Golden Rule.

I propose, then, that this brief (and truncated) sketch of the way we use the word "moral" in our everyday speech constitutes the "rock-bottom" terms or conditions of moral discourse. If a person (or agency) wants to provide moral justification for a policy, as distinct from some other kind of justification, his argument must be other-regarding in the sense that it accounts for the right of the other to control his basic welfare. The person must argue that his policy is "right" or "just" and "ought to be followed" because in reality it does account for the values and ends of the affected party, and that in formulating the policy he has seriously honored the affected party's right to consent to or dissent from the policy. He has, he must argue, shown due considera-

tion for the basic conditions of moral discourse.

By the same token, if a person (or agency) seeks to provide moral justification for rejecting some policy that affects his welfare—for calling it "wrong," and possibly for taking countermeasures against it—he must attempt to show that he, therefore, has a right to resort to the measures necessary to recover what is properly his. (At this point, the criteria of the just-war tradition obviously become relevant.) He must try to show that the policy in question does not respect his right to consent and to control actions affecting his basic welfare.

He might, of course, challenge the policy at any number of points. For example, he may claim that the ends and means adopted by another party categorically deny his basic right to autonomy or self-determination. He may agree with the values and ends of the policy, but try to show that the means adopted are not consistent with the ends and, in fact, that they produce very unhappy consequences from his point of view. Or, he might contend that "on paper" the whole policy looks good, but that its predicted results are unrealistic and will, as a matter of fact, work against him.

Moral policies, then, must pass at least three tests: Like all national policies they must be, first, consistent and, second, realistic, although they must be so from the point of view of all the affected parties. Thirdly, they must demonstrate regard for the basic right to autonomy or self-determination of all affected parties.

Having mapped out the understanding of "policy" — and "moral discourse," I turn to the dispute between the Arabs and the Israelis to ask: (1) whether moral analysis and evaluation of the dispute is hopeless and irrelevant to policy questions because, as Kennan says, questions of right and wrong in such situations are impenetrable and insoluble; (2) whether, if moral analysis and evaluation is relevant, the appropriate categories are the fruit of American "messianism"; and (3) whether a clear moral imperative for the United States policy-maker emerges from our examination of the disputes.

Despite the assertions of Kennan and Safran, one recognizes very quickly two things about the debate between the two sides: (1) the dispute, whatever else it is, is a "moral" dispute, very much in accord with the conditions of moral discourse, as we laid them out above; (2) it is difficult to avoid evaluating the claims and counterclaims, particularly in thinking about questions of policy.

Interestingly enough, both sides presuppose as the foundation of all their moral claims the basic right of political self-determination. Both Arabs and Israelis contend that each seeks only what rightfully belongs to every people—an opportunity to consent to its own government and to control its own welfare,

free of arbitrary interference. But in their disputes with each other, the appeal to self-determination functions in a rather complex way.

On the Arab side the emphasis upon the language of self-determination is striking indeed. The establishment of the British Mandate over Palestine in 1922 by the League of Nations was, from the Palestinians' point of view, expected "to be an attempt at a partial fulfillment of Allied, and especially Wilsonian, promises that an Allied victory [in World War I] would foster the principles of independence, self-determination and democracy based upon the will of the people." Over against the extensive immigration of Zionists into Palestine during the 1930's and 1940's, the Arabs put the case for their "self-evident rights" in the following way:

> The whole Arab people is unalterably opposed to the attempt to impose Jewish immigration and settlement upon it, and ultimately to establish a Jewish State in Palestine. *Its opposition is based primarily on right.* The Arabs of Palestine are descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the country, who have been in occupation of it since the beginning of history; they cannot agree that it is right to subject an indigenous population against its will to alien immigrants, whose claim is based upon a historical connection which ceased effectively many centuries ago. Moreover, they form the majority of the population; as such they cannot submit to a policy of immigration which if pursued for long will turn them from a majority into a minority in an alien state; and *they claim the democratic right of a majority to make its own decisions in matters of urgent national concern.*

> [Any just arrangement] must recognize *the right* of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine to continue in occupation of the country and to preserve its traditional character. .... It must accept the principle that the only way in which the will of the population can be expressed is through the establishment of responsible representative government. . . . In other words, it should be a government which the whole community could regard as their own, which should be *rooted in their consent and have a moral claim upon their obedience.*

> [Finally] the Arabs are irrevocably opposed to political Zionism, but in no way hostile to the Jews as such nor to their Jewish fellow-citizens of Palestine. Those Jews who have already entered Palestine, and who have obtained or shall obtain Palestinian citizenship by due legal process, will be full citizens of the Palestinian state, enjoying full civil and political rights and a fair share in government and administration....
> [Cited in *The Israel-Arab Reader*, edited by Walter Laqueur; italics supplied.]

By this sort of argument, the Arabs are obviously making a moral claim. They contend that Zionist policies of immigration, in part supported by Great Britain, and later by the United States, constitute a direct threat to the rights of self-determination and consent of the governed. As such, they are "arbitrary" policies—policies for which no good and sufficient

moral reasons can be given. Furthermore, the pursuit of such unjustified policies may be taken as a "just cause" for counter-measures aganst the Zionists. The Arabs argue that they do not mean to disregard altogether the welfare of the Palestinian Jews. On the contrary, they seek, they claim, to promote the legitimate interests or welfare of the Jews in the area and are, therefore, properly other-regarding in that respect. The interests of the Jews are taken to be "legitimate" or "justifiable" insofar as they conform to the "self-evident right" of the Arabs to their self-determination, a claim the Arabs would make for anyone in similar circumstances.

But are the Arabs themselves being arbitrary in stating their case in this way? Are they themselves restricting without good and sufficient reason the legitimate aspirations of the Zionists? That is, of course, the Zionist contention, and we must observe how their counter-arguments work. In the State of Israel Proclamation of Independence of May 14, 1948, the Israelis speak of "the natural and historic right of the Jewish people" "to lead, as do all other nations, an independent existence in its sovereign State."

The Israeli claim to political self-determination in Palestine is grounded in various ways. There is the familiar reference to a "Divine Mandate," or a "mandate from the Bible." As former Premier David Ben-Gurion puts it:

> Certainly in Israel today we are messianic; the Jews feel themselves to have a mission here; they have a sense of mission. Restoration of sovereignty is tied to a conception of redemption. This had determined Jewish survival and it is the core of Jewish religious, moral and national consciousness. It explains the immigration to Israel of hundreds of thousands of Jews. . . .

And there is the contention that the fact that Palestine had been a Jewish country for about a thousand years B.C. provides warrant for Jewish sovereignty in the area. But, in most Zionist writings, these religious and historic claims are usually combined with two other sorts of argument: (1) that Jews, because of their history of persecution, have a distinctive *need* for a national home, and that overriding need establishes the right to self-determination; and (2) that from the point of view of the Palestinian Arabs and their welfare, the development of a Jewish national home will either promote their welfare or, at the least, will not appreciably frustrate their welfare.

The argument for need was classically put by Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1937:

> Whenever I hear a Zionist . . . accused of asking for too much—Gentlemen, I really cannot understand it. Yes, we do want a state; every nation on earth, every normal nation, beginning with the smallest and humblest who do not claim any merit, any role in humanity's development, they all have States of their own. That is the normal condition for a people. Yet, when we, the most abnormal of peoples and therefore

the most unfortunate, ask only for the same conditions . . . then it is called too much . . . I would remind you . . . of the commotion which was produced in that famous institution when Oliver Twist came and asked for "more." He said "more" because he did not know how to express it; what he really meant was this: 'Will you just give me that normal portion which is necessary for a boy of my age to be able to live.' I assure you that you face here today, in the Jewish people with its demands, an Oliver Twist. . . .

Jabotinsky admits that the Zionists seek Jewish sovereignty in Palestine and that the inevitable displacement of Palestinian Arabs will work some hardships on them:

> but when the Arab claim is confronted with our Jewish demand to be saved [from persecution] it is like the claims of appetite versus the claims of starvation. . . . Usually in human affairs any tribunal . . . has to concede that both sides have a case . . . and, in order to do justice, they must take into consideration *what should constitute the basic justification of all human demands, individual or mass demands—the decisive terrible balance of Need. [Israel-Arab Reader;* italics supplied.]

There is a supplementary argument. Ben-Gurion has contended that the genuine interests and welfare of the Palestinian Arabs are not bound up with occupancy of Palestine, as is the case with the Zionists. The Arabs do not really want national self-determination, despite their rhetoric:

> Certainly to compare the 'nationalist' outlook of Palestinian Arabs to the Jewish ideal of Israel doesn't make sense. It's like judging oranges in terms of lemons. The two feelings, concepts, views of this region and its meaning to each inhabitant are not comparable and cannot be meaningfully discussed in the same terminology. One outlook is individualistic and rooted to a piece of small personal property. The other is generalized and attached to the idea of a whole compromising a formal State. *The latter I think of as true nationalism,* the proof of its validity being that it did in fact produce a State. . . . If one would need further confirmation of this lack of true nationalist feeling [among the Palestinian Arabs], the military record supplies it. . . . [They] have shown little tenacity to open battle on this soil. The Jews are known to fight with passion, with all the strength they possess. . . . The Arab shows no such emotional involvement. Why should he? He is equally at ease whether in Jordan, Lebanon, or a variety of places. They are as much his country as this is. And as little. . . . The conduct of Arab troops in the field since 1948 proves the lack of personal involvement with which the individual fighting man approaches what one can only term *the fantasy of a nationalistic claim to this land.* [Italics supplied.]

Ben-Gurion went on to give as further proof of his assertion the fact that the Palestinian Arabs showed so little concern for developing the land, preferring instead to remain "at the most rudimentary levels of human existence." It was therefore in the Arabs'

interest, as well as in the Jews', to encourage the Zionists to reclaim what the Jewish Agency called in 1939 "a derelict country."

The Arab response to these claims is not entirely favorable. As was stated in the defense of the Arab case quoted above, the Palestinian Arabs claim presumptive rights to residence and self-determination on grounds of centuries of uninterrupted occupancy. They do not accept Zionist claims to Palestine made on historical or religious grounds as in any way overriding, nor do they find the invidious comparisons between the aspirations and the competence of the Israelis and the Arabs at all compelling.

If I may step into the role of evaluator for the moment, I must say that, as between the two sides *on these specific issues*—excluding, for the moment, Jabotinsky's reference to the "needs" of the Jews—the arguments so far seem to me neither impenetrable nor insoluble. On the contrary, according to the conditions of moral discourse, the Arabs appear to me to have much the stronger case. (Here I am thankful to George F. Hourani's "The Ethical Dimension" in *Palestine: A Search for Truth*.)

Were we, for example, to universalize, or to apply to everyone, Zionist claims to rights of residence and self-determination simply on grounds of ancient history and privileged sacred entitlement, "the whole earth," as I. F. Stone put it, "would have to be reshuffled," and one claim to residence would be as good as another. Under such conditions, the very notion of "rights" to things like residence and political independence—including the "rights" of the Israelis—would be thrown into a cocked hat. For why stop with the ancient history of the Jews, or with the special dictates of the God of the Jews, as they are controversially interpreted by the Zionists? Is not everybody's ancient history and everybody's "Divine Mandate" as good as everybody else's? The concept "right" entails that one claim is superior to another, according to some commonly acceptable standards, and it seems that Zionists are unable to supply any such general standards in making their claims.

D o the moral dimensions of this dispute have any relevance, either to the policies of the Great Powers toward the Middle East—and particularly of the United States—or to the determinations of the international agencies, the League of Nations and the United Nations?

To a large extent the dispute over rights to self-determination, including the grounds for those rights, sets the terms of the decisions of the international agencies, and of the policies of the Great Powers. From the enunciation of the famous Balfour Declaration of 1917, up through the interpretations by the British of their Mandate, through many of the deliberations of the League of Nations and the United Nations, and, finally, to the U.N. Partition Plan of

1947 and beyond, there is a striking and abiding concern to balance what are repeatedly considered the fundamental rights of the Palestinian Arabs to self-determination with what are also acknowledged as legitimate Zionist claims to rights of residence and statehood.

It is worthwhile observing, for example, that the British White Paper of 1939, while proclaiming, on the one hand, that the Jewish people have a National Home in Palestine "as of right and not on sufferance," on the other hand expressed considerable alarm over Zionist immigration practices, and over the disturbing consequences of such practices over time, from the perspective of the legitimate interests of the Arab residents. In the words of the White Paper:

> The alternatives before His Majesty's Government are either (i) to seek to expand the Jewish National Home indefinitely by immigration, against the strongly expressed will of the Arab people of the country; or (ii) to permit further expansion of the Jewish National Home by immigration *only if* the Arabs are prepared to acquiesce in it. The former policy *means rule by force*. . . . [The] time has come to adopt in principle the second of the two alternatives. [Italics supplied.]

This concern echoed a similar sentiment uttered by the King-Crane Commission in its recommendations to the League of Nations twenty years earlier:

> It can hardly be doubted that the extreme Zionist Program must be greatly modified. For "a national home for the Jewish people" is not equivalent to making Palestine into a Jewish State; nor can the erection of such a Jewish State be accomplished without the gravest trespass upon the "civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." The fact came out repeatedly in the Commission's conference with Jewish representatives, that the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, by various forms of purchase. . . . To subject [the non-Jewish residents] to unlimited Jewish immigration, and to steady financial and social pressure to surrender the land, would be a gross violation of the principles [stated by President Wilson], *and of the peoples' rights, though it kept within the forms of the law*. [Italics supplied.]

Finally, the U.N. Partition Plan of 1947 was another futile effort to strike some compromise between the conflicting claims of the two sides. The plan provided international legitimacy for a State of Israel in Palestine, though, of course, the amount of territory allotted Israel was considerably smaller than the proportions of present-day Israel. Although the Palestine Arabs were granted their own share of territory west of the Jordan, the Arab world rejected the plan, feeling it gave Israel more than its due, and, subsequently, the Egyptians mounted an attack against Israel, provoking the 1948 War. That bloody conflict resulted in the considerable extension of Israeli borders and the displacement of approximately a million

Palestinian refugees from their homeland.

All this is another chapter in the complicated story of the Middle East, a chapter with its own special "moral dimensions" and impossible to detail briefly.

The concern to find a "just balance" between the conflicting claims to self-determination also characterized U.S. policy in the Middle East beginning in the 1940's. President Roosevelt showed sympathy for the Zionist cause, but he gave assurance to the Arabs that he would take account of their interests and views in any proposal for a final settlement.

President Truman promised to stand by Roosevelt's assurances in developing a policy for the Middle East. But while the *end* of Truman's policy may have been an equitable settlement and a due regard for the rights of the Palestinian Arabs, the *means* he adopted, and the *consequences* resulting from those means, were hardly consistent with the end. His policy of encouraging unrestricted Jewish immigration into Palestine gave preference, as things turned out, to Zionist aspirations and, as much as anything, worked to undermine the possibility of securing Arab rights in the area.

What is most interesting about Truman's policies, from the point of view of our initial questions, is the role of certain explicitly moral considerations in his deliberations. Mr. Truman begins his discussion of Palestine in his *Memoirs* with the following words: "The fate of the Jewish victims of Hitlerism was a matter of deep personal concern to me . . . The plight of the victims who had survived the mad genocide of Hitler's Germany was a challenge to Western civilization, and as President I undertook to do something about it. One of the solutions being proposed was a national Jewish home [in Palestine]." He was persuaded, in effect, by the "argument from need." The short-range concern to alleviate Jewish misery was overriding in all Truman's reflections. But as Dean Acheson points out, Truman seemed to separate completely his desire for short-range amelioration from the long-range political and social *consequences* of the massive growth of Jewish population in Palestine. He undoubtedly shared his disregard of the long-range consequences with the great majority of Americans, whose hearts went out to ravished Jews.

However, Truman and his many supporters, although motivated by good will, overlooked some likely consequences. Given the upsurge of immigration, the passions of Zionism, the unwillingness of the larger powers to supervise and regulate affairs in Palestine, and the inability of the United Nations to do it, a state of Israel—and all the bitter conflicts created thereby—was the inevitable result. In my view, Acheson's position at the time was more responsible and foresighted than Truman's. "I did not share," he writes, "the President's views on the Palestine solution to the pressing and desperate plight of great numbers of displaced Jews in Eastern Europe. . . . The number that could be absorbed by Arab Palestine without creating a grave political problem would be inadequate, and to transform the country into a Jewish state capable of receiving a million or more immigrants would vastly exacerbate the political problem in the Middle East." And, I would add, the moral problem as well.

I am suggesting that although Truman was sensitive to certain of the moral problems in the Middle Eastern situation, he was not sensitive enough. As I argued earlier, the Palestinian Arabs had a very strong moral case which, it seems to me, was disregarded in practice by Truman's policy of unrestricted Jewish immigration. (As I mentioned above, there were other options open which should have been pursued.) Consequently, I would be critical of Truman's policy, from a moral point of view, for failing to take account of *all* the relevant considerations, including a realistic assessment of the probable consequences of his policy. If, as Truman said, he sought to honor Arab interests as well as Jewish, then the means and consequences of his policy were self-defeating. If, on the other hand, his real end was to meet the needs of the Jews to the exclusion of the rights of the Arabs, then that end was, in my analysis, morally unjustified.

Nevertheless, Truman's policy, one-sided as it was in my view, introduced some further moral considerations into the picture, considerations which greatly complicate the moral aspects of present-day policy-making. For the fact is that Israel was established, in great measure, through the moral compassion and encouragement of President Truman, and then through the continuing support of the American government and most other Western governments. For reasons that seemed to many in the late 1940's to be deeply compelling, we helped to cultivate the expectations of hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who poured into Israel to start new lives. They built their country on American promises. If we were then suddenly to revoke those promises and to undermine completely those expectations by reversing our policy, we would behave in a way that is itself morally hard to defend.

In short, the United States is now faced with a genuine moral dilemma in the Middle East. On the one hand, the U.S., not to mention Israel, has an enormous moral debt to the Palestinian Arabs who have been displaced from their homeland and deprived of their legitimate rights to political participation and self-government. On the other hand, we have, by our encouragement of Israel, incurred obligations to the inhabitants of Israel, at least within certain limits.

What can we say, at this point, about the three propositions concerning "morals and foreign policy" that I first mentioned: (1) whether moral analysis and evaluation of the dispute between the Arabs and Israelis is hopeless and irrelevant to policy questions; (2) whether, if

moral analysis is relevant, the appropriate categories are the result of American "messianism" in that they were illicitly imposed upon the situation and in some way distort it; (3) whether a clear moral imperative for the American policy-maker emerges from our examination of the disputes?

On the basis of preliminary probing and testing my verdict is generally *negative* on all counts.

(1) Moral analysis and evaluation—properly understood—is not irrelevant or impossible, either so far as the Middle East debate itself is concerned, or so far as U.S. policy goes. Moral categories have profound relevance to U.S. policy in the Middle East. The morals of the case may now be quite complicated, as I believe they are, but to say that moral analysis is difficult is *not* to say such analysis is impossible.

(2) The moral categories relevant to the determinations of U.S. policy were not, it appears, illegitimately imposed upon the situation as the result of American messianism, nor do the categories appear to distort the "real dynamics" of the situation. It *is* true that the relevant categories turn out to be the basic terms of the "American creed"—right of self-determination, consent of the governed, and the urge to create a reliable international framework to insure those rights—but *they are heartily espoused and appealed to by the parties to the dispute themselves.* Indeed, these categories, to a large degree, set the terms of the discourse. This fact leads me to suggest the following proposition, though I have hardly provided sufficient proof for it here: the dangers of messianism afflict the United States more at the point of applying its creed than of adopting it.

(3) While it is possible, I argued, to identify the basic moral responsibilities of the United States in the Middle East, the directives for policy which issue from my evaluation are anything but unequivocal. For some of the reasons I suggested, I regard the Middle East to be a "hard," not an "easy," case. That does not, however, mean we have nothing to say. On the contrary, the general conclusion I draw from my analysis and evaluation is that the U.S. ought to give "special consideration" to the Palestinian Arabs. It ought to apply all pressure, consonant with its obligations, to help protect the security of Israel (though one reduced in size), to "account for" the profound injustices that have been visited upon the Palestinians. In my judgment, to adopt a policy of special consideration toward the Palestinian Arabs will be one instance of the proper application of "morals to foreign policy."