We face a series of issues in the Middle East, some of them new and quite unprecedented. The first is how to bring to a conclusion the negotiating process that has been started. With respect to the negotiations between Egypt and Israel I do not think much needs to be said. They will be concluded within the very near future. They will create their own reality. They will mark both a political and a spiritual change, in the sense that two peoples who have thought of each other only in terms of hostility will now at least have an opportunity to address together some tasks of construction.

I would, however, say two things. It is perhaps not totally unfair to state that many Israelis, and Jews, operate on the principle that anything worth doing is worth overdoing. But I see no overwhelming political necessity that, for example, every Israeli busline establish a terminal in Cairo. I think, of course, it is important that contact starts with Egypt and Israel. I think it is important also that these contacts be developed in a manner that is compatible with Egypt's perception of itself, still a Moslem country and still related to other Arab countries. And I would strongly urge that within Israel and within the Jewish communities around the world some mechanism be established that vets the many brilliant approaches that are being generated by every original Jewish thinker, a number that exceeds the total Jewish population.

I believe that if we are going to move into a genuine period of increasing cooperation there must be some priorities established, that there be some focal points created, and that the dialogue be conducted in a manner compatible with the self-respect and the self-image held by all the parties, lest this fragile plant be destroyed at its very beginning.

Second, there is in Israel, among a people that in all of its existence has never known peace, a perhaps romantic notion about what peace is. There is a tendency to forget that almost all wars in history have started between people that were at peace. It was a peculiarity of the Middle East that the wars have started between countries that were already at war. And, therefore, one should not believe that a peace treaty is the end of history. Or the end of any political conflict. Or that one can rest on that for all eternity. It needs the most careful and thoughtful nurturing.

Now, in the exhilaration about the agreement with Egypt it is not always fully faced that there is also an agreement about the West Bank. I will not engage in an exegesis of its meaning. I do not think there is any overwhelming imperative constantly to give answers to questions that have not yet been asked. However, on any interpretation of the meaning of this agreement, it will inevitably reduce Israeli control over the future destiny of the West Bank.

There are two imperatives in this process we are discussing. The first is that Israelis become clear among themselves just what it is they think they have agreed to and what the historical process is that will have been generated. And the other is that some private understanding be reached between the United States and Israel as to where this historical process is going. I say private because I think it is dangerous for Israel and dangerous for the Jewish communities to conduct all of these diplomacies as a series of public confrontations of unilateral statements on either side, which are then papered over.

In previous periods we often had disagreements. But I believe I am correct in saying that we always worked out a strategic agreement with a government in Jerusalem about where we were going and what we were trying to do. This did not always insure that we agreed on all the
tactics. But at least philosophically, when we were engaging in the disengagement agreements, while sometimes the terms became controversial, the strategy was clear. It is very dangerous to permit a series of crises to develop and to try to resolve them under the impact of deadlines, even if it has worked once. Conditions are not the same on the West Bank as in the Sinai.

I am basically optimistic that something can be worked out, especially if we keep in mind that in the Middle East it is sometimes easier to do something than to talk about it, that some relationship has to be found between the legalistic Talmudic tradition of Jewish negotiators and the epic poetry tradition of Arab approaches to these problems. On a number of occasions it has proved possible to work out practical agreements. In 1975 there was a great debate about uninterrupted access to the Abu Rodeis oil fields before any of us knew that there was only one road and that the topography was such that no other could be built. Finally, in despair, I proposed that both Israel and Egypt use the same road on alternate days. I only thought it would get me through two weeks while I thought of something better. It turned out that this was the formula that both enthusiastically accepted. Whose sovereignty controls this road nobody has ever determined and nobody has ever asked.

So I think that in the future of the West Bank some attention might be given to an approach of de facto arrangement. But I would also like to make a few observations beyond the immediate about the problems of peace.

I think we owe it to ourselves to admit that peace will present a profound psychological, political, and even spiritual challenge to a country that has sustained itself for all of its existence by the heroic myth of isolation amidst enemies. It is a new world when Israel becomes one of several Middle East states and not the focal point of all of the diplomacy. It requires a major adjustment of thought processes. And I would suspect that the Jewish communities outside of Israel will also have to adjust their thinking and their operating procedures. They have been geared to dealing with a series of crises and confrontations, of exacting specific promises and definable amounts of assistance, but the problems of peace do not lend themselves to being segmented into these individual items. It is much more difficult than before, if not impossible, to create under those conditions an agreement that can then become a permanent guideline for extended periods of time. So, once again, I am glad that the World Jewish Congress has established an Economic and Social Commission, presumably to deal with precisely some of these long-term issues.

Third, now that peace is approaching, at least in some of its manifestations, Israelis and Jews all over the world have to ask themselves much more seriously than before, not only about the conditions of the survival of Israel, but about the conditions of stability and progress in the whole area. We have seen Soviet attempts to use individual Arab countries as a base of radicalization of the area. But we have seen something even more fundamental—a dual process, whereby the concepts of development that the West has introduced all over the world in the name of economics are producing political dislocations to which the originators of the concepts have been unable to give answers. And these political dislocations may be quite unrelated to the Arab-Israeli disputes, yet have the profoundest consequences upon it.

We see today in Iran that the Shah is caught between those who think he has moved too rapidly and others who think he has not moved rapidly enough. And I am frank to say I believe that abstract human rights slogans by the United States are accelerating this process. Anybody who has had to conduct Middle East diplomacy knows that a pro-Western stable Iran is absolutely essential for a peaceful Middle East. If Iran should become a neutralist country, the whole pattern of relationships would fundamentally change, and the prospects of peace that make us all so hopeful today would be fundamentally altered. We cannot concern ourselves only with Israel, because this turmoil will affect the stability and the survival of all the countries in which we are interested.

And when this is combined with the geopolitical thrust that can be spelled in such names as Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia, designed to produce a sense of impotence on the part of the moderate regime and of irrelevance by the United States, then we can see a situation in which—not because the peace agreements are unsatisfactory, but because domestic evolutions have gone out of control—there is a total radicalization of the Middle East and a loss of all that has been achieved. And the obsession with whether a particular leader was abrasive or not, or well-chosen for that occasion, is relatively trivial compared to these fundamental historical forces that are at work there.

It is, therefore, essential that we understand the geopolitical challenges and the developmental challenges, whose political consequences we have totally neglected in a materialistic obsession with a belief that economic development is an end in itself and does not produce political and philosophical dislocations of the profundest nature. And it is in this sense that, paradoxically, Israel could make a tremendous contribution. Because it has gone through a process of economic development, it has solved to a considerable extent the question of political legitimacy (though you could not prove it from all of the debates in the Knesset). It could operate on a scale more compatible with that of its neighbors than the United States, which thinks any experiment can be tried once. Surely no assistant professor is worth his salt unless his theory has been inflicted on some foreign country, at least somewhere in the world. And even in the geopolitical sense, what used to be a concern only with the immediate dividing lines could, over a period of time, involve an understanding of the fundamental equilibrium on which the peace of the world and the peace of the Middle East depends.

I have raised concerns in a moment that otherwise lends itself to euphoria. I want to stress, however, that these are good problems to have. What I have described can be grave, but it also is soluble. And whether it is solved or not is largely within our control.