

From Partial Peace to Real Peace in the Mideast

George W. Ball

For America in the fall of 1979 the strategic center of the world is the Persian Gulf, and I shall discuss the effect of Middle Eastern developments on the security of that area. Certainly, nothing that has occurred within the past few months is reassuring. Iran is ruled by a regime—one can hardly call it a government—that practices an indigenous form of fascism with a medieval Islamic overlay. Its basic outlook is xenophobic; it opposes Western concepts of progress and, therefore, the West itself—and particularly the United States.

How long that regime will remain in power is anybody's guess, but I do not see it as a permanent feature of the Persian landscape. Its ability to maintain control will no doubt depend largely on the degree to which various centers of opposition remain fragmented. There are disparate elements on the Left: the Tudeh party—the old Communist party that was largely wiped out in 1953—is cautiously trying to reorganize and extend its influence through an extensive cell structure. There are leftist workers' committees in the oil fields. The Khomeini regime has turned its guns on the two terrorist groups that helped bring down the shah. Though the Tudeh party is presumably orchestrated from Moscow, many Marxists in Iran are anti-Soviet, some Maoist rather than Leninist. Nevertheless, in the pervasive chaos that now prevails, the ultimate victor is likely to be the group with the most discipline and conspiratorial talent and the best-developed institutional structure.

The most likely alternative to a leftist takeover is a right-wing coup that would bring to power a new Reza Shah, but that would require first that the army pull itself together. Though the Khomeini regime now keeps the military on a tight leash for fear they may become a rival power center, it may be forced to remove restraints in order to repress the various separatist movements around the edges of the country—not merely the Kurds but the Baluchis, the Turkamen, the Arabs of

Khuzistan, and so on. The revolutionary guards, a ragtag crew of untrained fighters, are not likely to be adequate to that task.

One would hope, of course, for the accession to power of a Western-oriented democratic government drawn from the center—the old National Front. But that does not appear likely, since the enlightened professional classes that constitute this group either date from the days of Mossadegh and are thus too old to be effective or have been kept out of national life for the full twenty-six years of the shah's rule after 1953 and are thus inexperienced.

One could predict a longer tenure for the present regime if there were not already signs of factionalism, and even fragmentation, among the Islamic leaders. When something finally happens to the seventy-eight-year-old Khomeini, it is difficult to see where a similarly charismatic figure can be found to replace him.

What makes the present regime particularly disturbing to Middle East stability is that the ayatollah is by no means an Iranian nationalist. Instead, he sees himself as the head of a great Shiite community that knows no national boundaries. Thus, he is threatening revolution in Bahrein, where the population is 70 per cent Shiite, and is causing unrest in Kuwait, where the Shiite population is 20 per cent. Until last June he was actively stirring up the Shiites in Iraq, who constitute 52 per cent of the population, while the Iraqi, on their part, were smuggling arms to the Arabs in Khuzistan, a major oil-producing area of Iran; the Arabs constitute roughly 20 per cent of all the oilfield workers.

For the moment there seems to be some dampening of agitation on both sides, but one cannot rule out the possibility that relations between Iran and Iraq could, at some point, result in serious conflict. Iraq, lamentably, is no longer the solid regime it appeared to be a year or two ago. Saddam Hussein appears for the moment to have consolidated his position by the brutal liquidation of rival leaders and the repression and expulsion of many Shiites, but he is still troubled by the existence of a majority Shiite population and thousands of discontented Kurds. The Assad regime in Syria has its troubles too—witness the murder of the Alawite cadets some months ago.

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This article and the one that follows are based on remarks delivered at the 33rd annual conference of the Middle East Institute.

As for Lebanon, it is no longer a country but, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, "a darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night."

Nor is there complete tranquility in the Sultanates and Emirates along the Gulf. Though the earlier revolution in Dhofar was effectively put down with the help of Iranian troops, it could be revived again by agitation from South Yemen. Saudi Arabia, as well as the Gulf States, was badly shaken by the shah's disappearance: The overthrow of the largest absolute monarchy might be seen, though dimly, as a presage of future events elsewhere.

The Soviet beachheads in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, the strengthening of Moscow's presence in the Indian Ocean, together with its growing activities in South Yemen and its adventures in Afghanistan, have resulted in an increasing claustrophobia—a fear that the whole Gulf area is being encircled. This pervasive sense of disquiet has been greatly intensified by the continuance of the Arab-Israeli struggle and the schism in the Arab world created by the Camp David accords. That is particularly true for Saudi Arabia—a small state forced to make an excruciating choice between Egypt on the one hand and the rejectionist states on the other. Thus, in searching for the elements of tranquillity in the Middle East, we must rigorously examine the Arab-Israeli relationship during this protracted post-Camp David period. The Camp David agreements were, in the eyes of the other states in the area, an Egyptian-Israeli arrangement worked out under American sponsorship, resulting in: *first*, a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian deal, which means to the other states that President Sadat has made a separate peace with Israel in disregard of his commitments to the rest of Arabia; and *second*, negotiations within a framework devised by the Americans for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, based on Prime Minister Begin's proposals for autonomy, that now seem destined to bog down in futility.

In my view the second part of the Camp David accords was from the beginning doomed to failure, since the other Arab states in the area had not participated in this development, nor did the accords contemplate bringing in the PLO as spokesmen for the Palestinians. To most Arabs in the area the offer of autonomy appeared as little more than a proposal for a five-year period in which the Palestinians might be given some authority in purely local affairs but would remain under the effective control of the Israeli army, which would retain responsibility for maintaining "internal order," with no promise of self-determination at the end of those five years. The accords even left unresolved Israeli territorial claims to the occupied areas.

Few people in the countries neighboring the West Bank were convinced that the electoral apparatus of the Camp David accords could produce a group of respected Palestinians capable of representing the interests of their people; it was, most of them felt, a futile exercise to try to create a group of interlocutors for the Palestinians apart from the PLO, who for so long have spoken in the Palestinian name. Thus, I could never understand the surprise in America when neither Jordan nor any of the other Arab states with the greatest stake in the settle-

ment was prepared to support these proposals.

Meanwhile, as the Sinai negotiations have proceeded, the Begin government has, by repeated statements, made clear that it regards the proposals for autonomy as offering little more than a regrouping of Israel's occupying forces, with some meager transfer of local responsibilities. And it has—by ostentatiously pursuing its settlements policy—given the clear impression that it would prefer to let the whole second half of the Camp David accords fail and disappear. The United States, for its part, has contributed to Arab disillusionment with the accords, first by making clear its determination not to talk to the PLO and, second, by ruling out the emergence ultimately of an independent Palestinian state.

Thus, events have given increasing credence to the widespread suspicion that Camp David will in the end amount to nothing more than the realization of a long-held tactical objective of Israel—to divide the Arab world and, by neutralizing Egypt, achieve a recasting of the military balance in the area that precludes a recurrence of future two-front wars. Under those circumstances Israel feels little pressure to try to find a solution to the Palestinian problem, or to any of the other substantive problems between the Arabs and Israel.

Quite understandably, the Arabs find the most persuasive confirmation of these suspicions in the attitude of the Israeli Government toward the occupied areas, and particularly in its settlements policy. Let us face the reality that so long as Israelis continue to establish settlements and the United States makes only feeble protests, no serious progress can be made in resolving the Palestinian problems.

I say this because the settlements issue cannot be divorced from the longer-range West Bank policy as declared by Israel's leaders. Prime Minister Begin has made clear repeatedly that he feels deeply committed to the retention of what he insists on referring to as Judea and Samaria, based in large part on title deeds reflecting a gift of real estate recorded in the Old Testament. The settlements are an expression of that claim. They constitute, as Israelis candidly say, the creation of "new facts." To the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab peoples they are further evidence of their contention that Israel is an expansionist state that has by military means substantially expanded its territory since its original establishment in 1948, all at the expense of the Arabs. Thus, the good faith of Israel's offer of autonomy is being seriously undermined by its continued preemption of Arab lands. Though I have not found it possible to develop any accurate statistics on the amount of land in the West Bank now claimed by the Israeli Government, for either settlements or security purposes, it amounts to a substantial part of the West Bank's farming and grazing lands. In addition, the settlements, with a total population of seven thousand, now use a third of the area's total irrigation water—in a place where water is always in short supply. As if its insistence on the continuance of new settlements were not enough, the Israeli Government has now voted to authorize Israelis to renew purchase of Arab lands. The West Bank has become, in the eyes of many Arabs, Israel's Soweto. Israel has done little to develop agriculture and industry in the area;



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both have remained stagnant or, in some sectors, declined. And though Palestinian per capita income has risen under occupation, that has resulted largely from the remittances by Palestinians working in Jordan and the Arab countries and from the wages of a third of the area's total work force, which now performs largely manual labor in Israel.

But if Israel continues to take actions inconsistent with its ultimate withdrawal from the occupied areas, what does it hope to achieve finally with respect to these areas? I have in the past put this question to several Israeli leaders, including on two occasions Mr. Begin himself, without receiving more than a dusty, rhetorical response.

Let us assume that the occupation continues indefinitely. What will be the consequences of this?

- Obviously, it will be extremely costly to Israel, and I shall say something in a moment about the Israeli financial situation.

- Violence is almost certain to intensify as the Palestinians are pushed by continued frustration, disillusion, and a sense of being forgotten and neglected into more and more frequent psychotic outbursts.

- Western nations, including the United States, will become increasingly aware of, and disturbed by, the continuance of a colonialist situation that seems quite out of phase with history. Discomfort will be felt particularly in the United States, since it is we who are subsidizing the continuance of such a policy—at very great cost. Such events as the visit of Dr. Jesse Jackson to the occupied areas can only be regarded as a foreshadowing of increased awareness of this situation on the part of the American people.

Yet, if an indefinite continuance of the occupation does not seem feasible, what are Israel's alternatives? One, of course, is outright annexation—which was called for, as I recall, in the platform of Prime Minister Begin's own party.

Annexation, however, even though it could be achieved without military force, would seem to be ruled out by demographic considerations. If the 1,275,000 Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip should be added to the more than 500,000 already in Israel, the total population of Israel would be more than a third Arab; given the fact that the Arab population is increasing at

almost exactly twice the rate of the Israeli population, the Arabs would within a relatively few years constitute 50 per cent of the population. That would certainly call into question the concept of a Jewish national home. The situation is rendered even more urgent by the fact that Israel is now losing population by net emigration.

But suppose, as at least some in the Israeli Government appear to hope, the present Israeli settlements policy will gradually persuade more and more Arabs to leave the West Bank. There is some basis for this belief; in the past year something like 22,000 Palestinians did depart. To the extent that the settlements policy preempts the best land and water facilities, it could, over time, hasten this emigration. The minister of agriculture, Mr. Ariel Sharon, who is in charge of the policy, told me two years ago that he expected there would be 2 million Israelis in the West Bank by the turn of the century. I asked him how this was possible demographically, and he replied that by the year 2000 the total Israeli population would rise to 4,200,000. When I pursued the question of what would happen to the Palestinians, who would be increasing at a much faster rate, he broke off the conversation.

Obviously, I am not suggesting that all—or even many—Israelis think tactically in terms of a creeping annexation. There is every variety of opinion in Israel and a growing element who are unhappy with Israel's retention of the occupied areas, which they find not only unwise but offensive to the ideals on which the nation was founded. So what emerges from a search for an Israeli policy toward the occupied areas is the discovery that there is really no policy at all, merely a profusion of vaguely defined hopes and ambitions compounded by a real fear that any solution of the problem would endanger Israeli security. Unhappily, the extraordinary factionalism that characterizes Israeli democracy—the great disparity in views deeply held and vigorously expressed—tends to reduce such policy in operative terms to its lowest common denominator, and its lowest common denominator means simply a continuance of the status quo in the vague hope that something good will come out of it.

Yet nothing good can come out of the continuance of a situation that has already dragged on far too long and can only become more dan-

gerous. What in the end is most likely to bring this home to the Israelis is the shocking deterioration of their economy. Israel's economic situation is unique in the world; no other nation's economy even vaguely resembles it. No other country has a net budget that is almost as high as its GNP, or an external debt that is roughly equal to its GNP. Israel's external debt per capita is the highest in the world, while its balance of payments deficit for this year will amount to \$4.5 billion. No other country commits 40 per cent or more of its GNP to defense. This illustrates the point that territorial expansion has not led to security. Indeed, the expansion of its territory as a result of the 1967 war only increased the defense drain; between 1967 and last year Israel's defense costs increased over thirty-nine times. Today, the cost of its defense manpower alone will consume 10 per cent of the national budget.

Obviously, Israel's extraordinary rate of national expenditure has been at the cost of its economic development; ever since the 1973 war the economy has been nearly stagnant, growing at only infinitesimal rates, while the Israeli people are the most highly taxed in the world. It is hardly surprising under these circumstances that, in spite of the government's vigorous efforts to promote immigration, more people have been leaving the country during the past three or four years than have been entering it.

Today, Israel is able to continue on its present course only because of continued vast subsidies from the United States. Distasteful as this must be to Israelis, the nation has become a ward—a kind of welfare dependent—on America. At the present time the United States is providing annual subsidies out of the public sector amounting to the equivalent of \$7.50 per day for every man, woman, and child in Israel, and the amount of the subsidy will necessarily be greatly increased by the American payment of the costs of Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. In addition, of course, there are the huge sums paid every year to Israel out of the admirable generosity of the American Jewish community, for which there is no precedent in history.

It is, I think, a sense of this dependence—necessarily irksome to a proud and brilliant people—that makes the Israelis so resistant to American suggestions. The result is a pattern of relations humiliating to both sides. Though the United States now routinely condemns actions that clearly reduce the possibility of a West Bank agreement—the announcement of new Israeli settlements, the Israeli use of American equipment in its retaliatory raids against Lebanon, and the announcement of such measures as renewed permission for Israelis to buy West Bank land—such American protests are brushed off just as routinely. Israelis have been conditioned for so long to the conviction that America will continue its support for Israel, even though the Israeli Government cavalierly disregards American advice and American interests, that they accept this extraordinary ritual dance as quite normal.

Israel's foreign minister, General Dayan, made this clear when he praised the Carter administration as Israel's great friend, pointing out that, even though there had been some harsh exchanges, the Carter administra-

tion had never once made a threat to slow down the outpouring of economic and military aid to Israel.

Obviously, this is not a healthy aspect of the relations between our two countries. As long as it persists, Israel will lose even more respect for America than is now the case. That such respect is at a low ebb was demonstrated by a recent incident reported by the *New York Times* involving a late-evening exchange between Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizman and a U.S. assistant secretary of state, in which General Weizman vigorously made two points. The first was that America was a "loser" and the second was that America was "weak." Though I could not agree with the general's first comment, that America is a "loser" (in this context he might do well to recall the American airlift), I can well understand his view that America is "weak." Never before in my recollection has a major nation so docilely accepted from a small state it was supporting the repeated rejection of its advice, even though the large state's own national interests were prejudiced by such rejection.

I say all this not to be critical of Israel—a nation for which I have great sympathy and admiration—but to suggest that the Israeli Government is living in a "never-never land" if it thinks that the present state of affairs can continue indefinitely. If the neutralization of Egypt has changed the balance of military power in the area, the world oil crisis has changed the political balance. Prior to 1973 it was possible for the United States to pursue a policy of *complaisance* toward Israel, with only marginal concern for its own interests. Since the rise of OPEC as a major factor in world affairs, and particularly since the Western nations' new awareness of their dependence on the policies and actions of the Arab oil-producing states, America's interests have become vitally and directly involved in a speedy settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Already the splitting of the Arab world by Camp David has created tensions and complications in our relations, not merely with Saudi Arabia but with the other oil-producing states as well. This has been given increased importance by the disappearance of Iran as a totally reliable oil supplier.

I think, therefore, that the time has come for a new understanding between the United States and Israel. I am too old a hand to be unaware of domestic political realities, and I know that no significant initiatives can be expected from our government until after our presidential elections. (We pay heavily for the expanding period preempted by our quadrennial electoral orgy.) Such delay is unfortunate, for a continuance of the present situation will progressively complicate our relations in the area. In any event, the new administration that emerges, whether under President Carter or someone else, will make a tragic mistake if it does not face up to the new realities.

What should be American policy toward the Arab-Israeli dispute? In my view we must recognize that the so-called step-by-step diplomacy that we have pursued since the 1973 war has been based on a faulty premise. The operative assumption underlying that diplomacy—or, perhaps, the rationalization for pursuing it—has been

that, by attacking at the periphery of a sensitive problem and producing a series of small gains, we could achieve sufficient momentum to enable us to deal effectively with the hard, substantive issues.

Sinai I was not really a part of this tactical approach, since that was, in essence, a kind of battlefield arrangement, an effort to pull apart two contending armies to avoid the resumption of fighting. But Sinai II was of a different order, and the Camp David accords will, in my judgment, end up as a rough equivalent of Sinai III.

What these diplomatic efforts have demonstrated is that, rather than gaining momentum by concentrating on peripheral issues, we have exhausted our bargaining leverage in marginal gains. Meanwhile, we have provided Israel with the argument that nothing more should be asked of it, since it had made its full quota of concessions, and we have hardened the position of the remaining—and disaffected—Arab states against any solution of the substantive issue.

Sinai II and Sinai III have been enormously costly in financial terms. In a sense they represent the largest real estate transaction in history, for we have spent huge amounts to buy parcels of the desert from the Israelis and then paid the Egyptians large sums to accept it. But our greatest cost may not have been our financial contribution but political concessions that I find quite inappropriate.

In a late-night session toward the conclusion of Sinai II, Secretary Kissinger agreed that the United States would not negotiate with the PLO, and after President Carter assumed office *he* made the decision—after some consideration—to honor that commitment. As he rephrased the commitment, we would not negotiate with the PLO, at least until they had modified their protocols to eliminate the pledge to destroy Israel and had agreed to accept U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. In my view we cannot afford to let this extraordinary position get in the way of our practical diplomacy. We have too great a stake in the issue. I find it quite inappropriate for a great nation to accede to the wishes of a much smaller nation that it not even talk to a group whose participation is, in the long run, indispensable to a settlement.

Moreover, if we are to continue to try to bring about a settlement, our government must do whatever is necessary to assure that Israel ceases its settlements policy, a policy that, in the view of American authorities, is illegal. We are acting in a manner unbecoming a great nation when we continually condone conduct that is not merely offensive but undercuts progress toward an objective that vitally concerns our national interest. This should also be made quite clear: The American national interest is not in all respects congruent with the policies of the Israeli Government. That is essential to a healthy relationship. Up to this point any suggestion that the United States might react to Israel's obduracy—in disregard not only of our interests but its own—has been met by loud protestations that we must not put pressure on Israel. That is a misleading formulation. The issue for the United States is not one of putting pressure on anybody; it is how we can best spend our resources, financial and political, to advance our national interests. It

seems self-evident that we should not spend our political capital and American taxpayers' money to support policies that are contrary to our interests and—in this case—contrary to the long-range interests of Israel as well.

Once we have engaged in frank discussion—and I am not employing that word as it is used in diplomatic communiqués, but as it is meant in the real world when applied to normal human converse—we shall have cleared the air. Then we can, and indeed must, direct our diplomatic efforts at trying, in a realistic way, to deal with these recalcitrant and complex issues that lie at the center of the Arab-Israeli problem: primarily the issue of the Palestinians and, ultimately, of Jerusalem.

That means, in the first instance, being prepared not only to talk directly with the PLO but to say to them that the United States will support an arrangement providing self-determination to the peoples of the occupied areas, provided they in return are prepared, as a part of the final arrangement, to recognize the legitimate rights of the people of Israel to territorial integrity within the pre-1967 borders, subject to such minor rectifications as may be negotiated, *and* are prepared to agree to necessary measures of restraint to reinforce Israeli security. That will mean that we Americans are returning to the principle of self-determination we have long espoused yet have recently qualified by excluding the idea of a Palestinian state. Only when we frankly offer support for self-determination can we hope to gain the support of other Arab states in the area that have themselves accepted Resolution 242; only then can we expect the peoples now living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to respond in a manner that will enable the more moderate leaders of the PLO to agree to participate in a serious diplomatic effort.

To adopt this line of policy obviously is to place on us the practical burden of finding the ways and means to assure the security of Israel. But if we combine a number of measures, this should not be beyond human ingenuity. Among other measures are the demilitarization of a new Palestinian state for at least an agreed term of years while relationships develop; the presence, possibly, of American military in the area; elaborate technical arrangements for surveillance that will insure Israel against the possibility of surprise attack; and so on. Moreover, once peace is in sight, we should be prepared to provide Israel with economic and military assistance at even a higher level than that now maintained.

In the current state of the military art there is no such thing as a totally secure border between hostile states; in fact, there never has been one. "Secure borders" can be achieved only by the development of peaceful relations on both sides. The time-honored cliché is, of course, our border with Canada.

In order to avoid the accusation that in recommending that we talk with the PLO I am, in effect, condoning their brutal terrorism, let me make quite clear that, like all who are committed to the humane principles of the West, I find terrorism repulsive—whether that terrorism is a bomb in a Jerusalem market or in the King David

Hotel. But if one cannot condone terrorism, one can at least identify its roots, and historically terrorism has been a psychotic response to a military occupation. Thus, the way to end terrorism is to remove the cause. The longer the conditions that produce such a response are permitted to continue, the more difficult will be its eradication, for it is dangerous to let a whole generation grow up conditioned to terrorism as a way of life.

I have dwelt at great length on the Arab-Israeli struggle as a principal element in the complex politics of the Middle East because I feel a deep sense of urgency that we get on with an Arab-Israeli settlement and thus eliminate that single most important cause of political instability. We should have learned enough in the last thirty years to recognize that, in our bipolar struggle still continuing with the Soviets, Moscow's great opportunity for mischief is the exploitation of situations of discontent that arise from other causes. To allow discontent to persist in what is clearly the strategic center of the world today would be an

irresponsible rejection of reality. We face many tasks in the Middle East, of which the final settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is merely the most important. We must also assure the military security of the Persian Gulf, which means not only increasing our naval presence in the Indian Ocean but greatly beefing up our capacity for quick response. If we have learned one thing from our experience with Iran, it is the fatuity of the Nixon doctrine, the idea that America can, by stuffing arms into a relatively backward country, create a strong nation that will act as our champion in a key area. That was fantasy, as experience has shown. We can assure the protection of the Persian Gulf only if we ourselves develop adequate capabilities to defend our interests as well as build the political relationships in the area that an attentive diplomacy should make possible.

The course of conduct I have suggested here will involve difficult political decisions. But we should not fail to take them. We no longer have the luxury of indecision. The dangers are too great and time is not on our side. WV

Neither the United States nor the Soviet Union can make the final choices for the Middle East

The Mideast: Impressive Achievements and Sober Hopes

Hermann Frederick Eilts

Twice in these past twelve months portentous change has shaken the Middle East. First, the demise of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran and its replacement by a fundamentalist, theocratic regime; and second, on an entirely separate plane, the successful negotiation of a contractual peace between Egypt and Israel. These have truly been sensational changes in terms of their strategic significance. Though unrelated and dissimilar in their respective thrusts, each is revolu-

tionary. Each in its own way has profoundly altered the balance of forces in that turbulent area. And not surprisingly, each has required American, European, Soviet, and other leaders to reassess some of the basic premises upon which their policies toward the Middle East have for years been predicated. Within the area, as well as outside it, each has evoked sharply mixed reactions—hope, concern, apprehension, and dissension, depending upon the point of view of the beholders.

Definitive judgments on the longer-term impact of these developments may be premature, but a few general and personal observations may be in order.

The United States Government is viewed by many, both inside and outside the area, as bearing responsibility for these two disparate developments. Both are con-

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