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The Limits of Coercion in Bilateral Bargaining Situations: The Case of the American-Israeli Dyad

ABRAHAM BEN-ZVI

This work examines four case studies, from 1975 to 1983, in which pressure was exerted by the United States on Israel. The central finding that emerges is that all the American administrations involved found it exceedingly difficult to break away from certain well-defined parameters that severely restricted their freedom of action in pursuing a coercive policy toward Israel.

INTRODUCTION

Various facets of American-Israeli relations have in recent years become the subject of heated scholarly and journalistic debate. Yet we have still to see a systematic survey of the major factors that determine the success of pressure exerted by the superpower to influence its client's behavior.

This analysis will attempt to bridge this gap, and thus to shed light on at least some of the inherent, structural constraints under which the United States sought, during the past decade, to influence Israel's priorities, values, and risk calculations. In so

This article is a condensed and updated version of, and at the same time an elaboration of certain ideas contained in, a monograph originally prepared under the auspices of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University.

doing we shall employ several types of bargaining and crisis theories to show that even in the absence of the current types of international relations, the basic premises of crisis theory in a partially cooperative context (Holsti 1977, p. 179; Brecher 1979, p. 199). Indeed, if one proceeds beyond the distinction between crisis and noncrisis, one is led to consider crisis determinants even though the bargaining situation does not conform to the definition of a pure and unmitigated crisis (p. 294; Lauren 1979, p. 199). The bargaining process of asserting one's will, and exerting pressure in a bargaining situation, is a party to accept one's will (Snyder 1979, p. 294) therefore occasionally unfolds in an environment where some, at least, of the values, and goals of the party are shared.

Here we shall focus on the bargaining process and the ingredients play within the relationship. The American-Israeli dyad, which is characterized by important common interests between the two parties (Jervis 1979, p. 294). In applying the analytical components of crisis theory to the bargaining process, we seek to show that the bargaining relationship can be exercised not only through negotiation and persuasion, or through the use of force, but by more assertive and forceful means. We believe that this recognition will help to overcome the crude and simplistic dichotomy between negotiation and force that abound in the literature, and to develop a more comprehensive, multi-dimensional theory of bargaining and crisis (George and Smoke 1974, pp. 1-10).

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doing we shall employ several conceptual notions from the fields of bargaining and crisis theory. More specifically, we shall try to show that even in the absence of the military option, certain recurrent types of international interaction that are patterned on the basic premises of crisis theory can be identified in an essentially cooperative context defined by Holsti as "consensual" (Holsti 1977, p. 179; Brecher 1978, p. 6; Lauren 1979, pp. 198-200). Indeed, if one proceeds beyond the accepted dichotomy between crisis and noncrisis, one is bound to discover a wide cluster of crisis determinants even though the basic structure of the bargaining situation does not correspond to what is generally defined as a pure and unmitigated international crisis (Jervis 1979, p. 294; Lauren 1979, p. 199; Maoz 1982, p. 217). A coercive bargaining process of asserting firmness, making threats and warnings, and exerting pressure in various ways to influence the other party to accept one's will (Snyder and Diesing 1977, p. 195) can therefore occasionally unfold in an essentially accommodative environment where some, at least, of the background images, values, and goals of the parties are identical.

Here we shall focus on the role these conflictual and coercive ingredients play within the relatively benign context of a specific dyad, which is characterized by the convergence of "many important common interests between the sides" (Holsti 1977, p. 179; Jervis 1979, p. 294). In applying several, albeit not all, of the analytical components of crisis to the American-Israeli framework, we seek to show that influence in a consensual type of relationship can be exercised not only by techniques of accommodation and persuasion, or through the subtle offering of rewards, but by more assertive and forceful strategies as well. We hope that this recognition will help eliminate at least some of the crude and simplistic dichotomies and generalities that still abound in the literature, and will thus pave the way toward a more comprehensive, multifaceted, and context-dependent theory of bargaining and influence in international politics (George and Smoke 1974, pp. 510-512).

In addition to this search for linkages between the seemingly irreconcilable notions of alliance politics and crisis bargaining, the analysis of the structural limits of coercive diplomacy in a given consensual dyad should yield greater insight into the nature of American-Israeli relations and the prospects of future American coercive measures.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concepts that will serve as our principal analytical tools (although in a revised form that takes into account the specific nature of the American-Israeli dyad) are deterrence and coercion. These are the two basic, complementary dimensions that must be integrated into any systematic strategy which seeks to influence behavior. As we shall soon see, it was the premises of these bargaining techniques, as modified according to the special features of this bilateral setting, that constituted part of the conceptual infrastructure for the architects of American Middle East policy in their recurrent efforts to influence Israel's behavior.

Unlike the strategy of deterrence, which seeks to convince an opponent not to *initiate* any harmful actions at all (Schelling 1966, pp. 78-79), coercion deals with action that is taking place or already has (George, Hall, and Simons 1971, p. 24; Lauren 1979, p. 192). To effectively pursue a posture based upon the premises of bargaining theory, the initiator of these complementary strategies must create in the mind of the belligerent the expectation of costs that are grave enough to influence his will and thus erode his motivation to persist. However, the closer to the belligerent's core values and interests the challenger moves, the firmer the belligerent will hold onto his initial posture (George, Hall, and Simons 1971, pp. 26-27; Snyder and Diesing 1977, p. 244; Jervis 1979, p. 306; Lauren 1979, p. 193). On these occasions, one can expect defiant, recalcitrant behavior to persist even in the face of strong pressures (Lebow 1984, pp. 182, 185), so that the coerced party will manifest greater resolve than the coercing (or deterring) party.

In addition to its structure, a successful inducement upon an optimal mix of inducements. Such a settlement by reducing with what is demanded pp. 25-26; Snyder and Coercive diplomacy in genuine concessions that secures one's essence (1971, p. 25).

We present here four cases in which decision makers attempted to influence behavior based on the premises of coercion. These cases are: (1) the Israeli decision in the spring of 1967 on the Middle East of the United States' decision of June 1967 to send fighter-bombers to Israel; (2) the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in Beirut; and (4) the Israeli administration during the 1982. The focus will be on coercive diplomacy the American and the inherent and counteracted.

THE LIMITS OF COERCION IN THE US-ISRAELI DYAD

During the last decade, the United States has sought to constrain America's military power over its small allies, including Israel. The nature of the contemporary international structure points out, the emergence of a bipolar nuclear system has altered the relations between the superpowers. The competitive

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In addition to its need to influence the adversary's value structure, a successful coercive or deterrence strategy depends upon an optimal mix, or trade-off, between threats and positive inducements. Such a combination may significantly encourage a settlement by reducing the opponent's disinclination to comply with what is demanded of him (George, Hall, and Simons 1971, pp. 25-26; Snyder and Diesing 1977, p. 207; Jervis 1979, p. 305). Coercive diplomacy in any given situation "may be facilitated by genuine concessions to an opponent as part of a quid pro quo that secures one's essential demands" (George, Hall, and Simons 1971, p. 25).

We present here four case studies in which American policy makers attempted to implement a systematic posture of pressure based on the premises of either deterrence or coercion. These cases are: (1) the reassessment of American policy toward Israel in the spring of 1975; (2) the joint superpower statement on the Middle East of 1 October 1977; (3) the Reagan administration's decision of June-July 1981 to suspend delivery of four F-6 fighter-bombers to Israel in the wake of the Israeli raid on the Iraqi nuclear reactor and the Israeli air raid on PLO headquarters in Beirut; and (4) the punitive measures taken by the same administration during and in the wake of the Lebanon War of 1982. The focus will be on the patterns of deterrence and coercive diplomacy the Americans used, the efficacy of these efforts, and the inherent and recurrent constraints the Americans encountered.

THE LIMITS OF COERCIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE US-ISRAEL DYAD: AN OVERVIEW

During the last decade, two sets of factors converged to severely constrain America's margin of maneuverability toward several small allies, including Israel. The first set reflects the general nature of the contemporary international system. As Keohane points out, the emergence of a loose, yet highly competitive, bipolar nuclear system has presented new opportunities for small powers. The competition for allies on the one hand, and the

constraints imposed on the superpowers by the balance of terror on the other, have enabled small allies to acquire a degree of influence "out of proportion to their size" (Keohane 1971, p. 162). Indeed, under the threatening shadow of the nuclear umbrella and the pervasive fear of a direct superpower confrontation, the small allies frequently enjoy a wide latitude of choice while the nominally strong powers find it very difficult to translate some of their power resources into effective influence (Keohane 1971, p. 162; Baldwin 1979, pp. 164-167; Bar-Siman-Tov 1980, pp. 203, 207).

The American efforts to influence Israel were further constrained by more specific factors involving what is usually referred to as the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel. As such, they reflect "a widespread fund of goodwill toward Israel that is not restricted to the Jewish community," and an equally strong and persistent commitment to Israel's continued national existence, integrity, and security (Reich 1977, p. 365; Safran 1978, p. 572).

During the period under scrutiny, this basic sympathy was reflected in numerous public opinion surveys. Polls taken from June 1967 to August 1982 showed that whereas sympathy for the Arab nations did not surpass 16 percent, support for Israel fluctuated between 44 percent and 56 percent (Novik, forthcoming). Similarly, throughout the 1970s at least three out of four Americans polled held a positive image of Israel.

In this sense, the continued success of pro-Israel forces in promoting favorable policies and legislation can be attributed primarily to these persistent, widely shared positive feelings toward Israel in the American public rather than to purely organizational factors. To the extent that American Jews have been able to advance their interest in Israel, their success has depended on the sympathy or at least lack of opposition by their coalition partners and the public at large, and on the willing or reluctant disposition of the policy makers to go along with the propositions advanced by them and their supporters. Furthermore, in the absence of any convincing indicators of general Arab readiness for greater flexibility and pragmatism in the

Arab-Israeli sphere, it is unmitigated pressure on camp to hold to its non-

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of pro-Israel forces in tion can be attributed red positive feelings to- her than to purely or- t American Jews have el, their success has de- x of opposition by their e, and on the willing or rs to go along with the nd their supporters. ncing indicators of gen- y and pragmatism in the

Arab-Israeli sphere, it is widely felt that an American course of unmitigated pressure on Israel could only encourage the Arab camp to hold to its noncompromising line (Safran 1978, p. 572).

The most effective institutional representative of this pervasive complex of beliefs, which has constituted the main resistance to repeated executive efforts to redefine the limits of coercive diplomacy toward Israel, has been the US Congress. The Symington-Javits resolution of 28 June 1967, which had 63 sponsors; the Ribicoff-Scott statement of 25 April 1969, with 68 signatories; the Case-Tydings declaration of 25 February 1970, which had 70 signatories; Senator Scott's initiative of 15 October 1971, with its 78 sponsors; and the letter to President Ford that was sent in May 1975 by 76 senators—these are but a few instances of the sort of legislative activity that reflects widespread and durable support for Israel in the Senate (Reich 1977, p. 374).

Clearly, therefore, the American posture toward Israel has not unfolded in a political, social, and psychological vacuum. In attempting to implement a strategy incorporating coercive and deterring elements, various administrations have had to cope with structural constraints—systematic and global as well as bilateral—that have not infrequently compelled them to scale down, obfuscate, or altogether abandon certain courses of action.

THE REASSESSMENT OF AMERICAN POLICY TOWARD ISRAEL: MARCH-SEPTEMBER 1975

The strategy of reassessment, which clouded American-Israeli relations during the spring and most of the summer of 1975, unfolded within a partially consensual context. Indeed, some of the components of the American approach essentially coincided with at least some of the short-term strategic objectives of the Rabin government in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Secretary of State Kissinger was convinced that in order to defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was necessary to proceed gradually. He believed that the introduction of "comprehensive formulas" for settling the entire Middle East predicament "with a single stroke" could only harden opposing positions and thus

aggravate an already tense situation. It was essential, according to this perception, to segment controversial issues into individual elements that could be negotiated separately, while obfuscating or side-stepping some of the knottiest issues (Ben-Zvi 1978, p. 115; Kissinger 1982, pp. 778-799). What Kissinger envisioned, then, was a prolonged process of mutually satisfying interactions that was bound to culminate in an overall settlement.

At the same time, at least some components of the regional outlook of Israel's policy elite were patterned closely on Kissingerian premises. Specifically, Prime Minister Rabin believed that it was necessary for Israel to postpone discussion of a comprehensive settlement until the energy shortage had been alleviated, to procrastinate on difficult issues (such as the West Bank) that were bound to create friction in American-Israeli relations, and to concentrate instead on the relatively less problematic southern front.

In addition to their shared predilection for an incremental approach, both Rabin and Kissinger wanted to see American influence in the area increased at the expense of the Soviet Union. Indeed, Rabin hoped that an agreement with Egypt would not only reduce pressures for a comprehensive settlement, but would help the United States to strengthen its regional position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and in this sense he was fully committed to one of the central tenets of Kissinger's Middle East diplomacy. (Rabin also hoped that the conclusion of an Israeli-Egyptian agreement would drive a wedge between Egypt and Syria, thus reducing the overall threat to Israel.)

However, notwithstanding that Rabin's main conceptions were virtually identical to those that Kissinger had tirelessly preached to the Israeli leaders on many occasions over the previous year, the initial American attempt to mediate an Egyptian-Israeli accord was futile, thus precipitating the reassessment strategy.

Central among the origins of this controversy was the disagreement about the nature of the Egyptian compensation to Israel following its partial withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula. Kissinger looked upon an early conclusion of any Egyptian-Israeli

accord negotiated by the provisions, as an impediment to regional and global objectives. Improvement in American relations with Israel, on the other hand, was a necessary condition for the Israeli-Egyptian agreement. "The agreement was a measure." Indeed, through a formal Egyptian state of belligerence as a precondition for the Gidi passes. (Although willing to accept certain conditions, these remained local negotiations.)

At any rate, for all Kissinger's last-ditch efforts, the hitherto unwilling to enter

The coercive drive in the wake of this debacle was several punitive measures as limited sanctions. Spurred by consideration of future "froze" Israel's request for F-15 combat aircraft, and the United States' interest in the Lancer Lance surface-to-surface missile, the 1975 Secretary of Defense would be "reluctant" to deal with Israel as long as the terms of the agreement. He noted, however, that the delivery of equipment as a precondition would be completed by 1982, p. 187). Another element most entirely meant to seal the deal was "pressure on Israel," was the condition intended to raise the stakes at the Peace Conference as a precondition for the approach (Safran 1978, p. 54).

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accord negotiated by the United States, regardless of its particular provisions, as an impetus for accomplishing a wide range of both regional and global objectives, including, of course, a further improvement in American-Egyptian relations. Israel's policy elite, on the other hand, was much more cautious. Focusing narrowly on the Israeli-Egyptian dyad, it remained adamant in its demand that the agreement be "a step toward peace in some practical measure." Indeed, throughout the negotiations Israel insisted on a formal Egyptian statement proclaiming an end to the state of belligerence as a precondition for its withdrawal from the Mitla and Gidi passes. (Although Israel's policy makers were apparently willing to accept certain "functional equivalents" of nonbelligerence, these remained loose abstractions in the course of the negotiations.)

At any rate, for all his eloquence and persuasive skill, Kissinger's last-ditch effort to induce Israel to accept positions it was hitherto unwilling to endorse did not bear fruit.

The coercive drive that the United States launched in the wake of this debacle was termed "reassessment." It comprised several punitive measures, in the form of implicit threats as well as limited sanctions. Specifically, in addition to the suspension of consideration of future economic assistance, the administration "froze" Israel's request for new and sophisticated weapons such as F-15 combat aircraft, and delayed the delivery of already committed Lance surface-to-surface missiles. Concurrently, on 31 March 1975 Secretary of Defense Schlesinger announced that the United States would be "reluctant" to enter into new arms commitments with Israel as long as the reassessment policy remained in effect. He noted, however, that the delivery to Israel of substantial quantities of equipment as contracted for in previous agreements would be completed by 1 April 1975 (Sheehan 1975, p. 115; Pollock 1982, p. 187). Another element of this strategy, which "was almost entirely meant to serve the purpose of putting psychological pressure on Israel," was the deliberate dissemination of information intended to raise the specter of reconvening the Geneva Peace Conference as a possible alternative to the step-by-step approach (Safran 1978, p. 549).

In an attempt to lend credence to this threat, Kissinger summoned to Washington several leading members of the foreign policy establishment (including Dean Rusk, George Ball, David Rockefeller, William Scranton, Douglas Dillon, and Averell Harriman) for discussions on the matter. The composition of this group guaranteed a priori that the "Geneva scenario," which called for the reconvening of the Geneva forum and the concurrent formulation of an American plan for a comprehensive peace based upon Israel's 1967 borders with minor modifications, would emerge as the most favorable option (Quandt 1977, pp. 269-270).

Nevertheless, by May 1975 it had become clear to the administration that the use of purely coercive methods could not in itself induce Israel to significantly modify its bargaining position. Moreover, in pursuing its coercive posture, the administration could not remain totally oblivious to a number of domestic factors, and particularly to the predilections of the overwhelming majority of the US Senate, which ultimately severely narrowed its margin of maneuverability. The most powerful indication of domestic discontent, one that played a major role in affecting Washington's perceptions, was conveyed to the administration on 21 May 1975. Incensed by what they perceived as "too much pressure on Israel," seventy-six senators responded favorably to an AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) initiative and sent a strongly worded letter to the president urging him to be "responsive to Israel's economic and military needs" (Quandt 1977, p. 270). Maintaining that "a strong Israel constitutes a most reliable barrier to domination of the area by outside forces," the senators further insisted that "given the recent flow of Soviet weaponry to the Arab States, it is imperative that we do not permit the military balance to shift against Israel" (quoted in Sheehan 1975, p. 145). And of course, the decisive action the Senate took in May 1975 to constrain the Ford administration did not unfold in a social vacuum. Indeed, the views expressed by the Senate majority fully coincided with the findings of several public opinion surveys, which consistently reported the existence of a large and solid base of popular support for Israel in the United

States.

For example, a few weeks after the fact that "a solid majority of the current Israeli government favors a peace settlement," a Gallup poll showed a lopsided 66 to 24 percent preference for US assistance in the way of economic aid to foreign Americans. A few weeks later, a Gallup Bridge Survey asked about the "tense atmosphere between the United States and Israel," and the existing background of the Arab-Israeli crisis. *Report* 1975, p. 180;

In another survey, 73 percent of Americans, whereas 33 percent of Arab states were more sympathetic to the Arab crisis in the Middle East. In August 1975, the judgments of the American public (17 percent) thought that a majority, 53 percent of Americans (Novik, forthcoming).

Thus it was clear that the necessary base of domestic support for US diplomacy. Ford administration continued inflexible to soften their stance. The positive inducement to the president and his administration reluctant to compromise on concessions to Egypt. The administration prepared—in the way of policy to precipitate a wide assortment of actions regarding Egypt.

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For example, a Harris poll taken in mid-April 1975—that is, a few weeks after the reassessment policy was launched—found that "a solid majority of the American people felt that the current Israeli government was reasonable and wanted to work for a peace settlement." This poll further disclosed that "a rather lopsided 66 to 24 percent majority favors sending Israel what it needs in the way of military hardware"—at a time when military assistance to foreign countries was generally opposed by most Americans. A few months later, in the summer of 1975, the Cambridge Survey asked a national sample of respondents to juxtapose between the Israelis and the Arabs in terms of their preexisting background images and found similar results (*Cambridge Report* 1975, p. 180; *Near East Report* 1975, p. 62).

In another survey from the same period, Caddell found that whereas 33 percent of those interviewed maintained that the Arab states were more responsible than Israel "for the continuing crisis in the Middle East," only 10 percent pinned the blame on Israel. In August 1975, Yankelovich found even more negative judgments of the Arabs: less than one-fifth of those interviewed (17 percent) thought the Arabs were interested in peace, while a majority, 53 percent, said that "they were out to destroy Israel" (Novik, forthcoming).

Thus it was clear that the administration lacked the necessary base of domestic support for the effective pursuit of coercive diplomacy. Ford and Kissinger were also confronted with Egypt's continued inflexible approach, and thus decided, in August 1975, to soften their stance toward Israel by incorporating significant positive inducements into their coercive strategy. Whereas the president and his powerful secretary of state had hitherto been reluctant to comprehensively compensate Israel for the unilateral concessions to Egypt it was called upon to make, they were now prepared—in the wake of the initial failure of their reassessment policy to precipitate change in the Israeli position—to offer Israel a wide assortment of incentives to abandon most of its demands regarding Egypt.

Specifically, the architects of American diplomacy now agreed to provide Israel with large-scale economic and military aid (totaling approximately \$1.5 billion in military credits, plus about half as much in economic aid for the fiscal year 1975/76) as well as advanced weapons. In addition, several far-reaching guarantees of a strategic-political nature were incorporated into a US-Israeli Memorandum of Agreement that was initialed on 1 September 1975 as part of the second Sinai agreement. In accordance with this memorandum, the administration undertook to consult with Israel in the event of any threat to it from "a world power"; to supply oil to Israel "if the oil Israel needs to meet all of its normal requirements for domestic consumption is unavailable for purchase"; to continue to maintain Israel's defensive strength through the supply of advanced types of equipment such as the F-16 aircraft; to continue to adhere to its policy of nonrecognition of the PLO as long as it did not recognize Israel's right to exist and did not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338; and "to consult fully and seek to concert its position and strategy at the Geneva peace conference on this issue with the government of Israel" (Sheehan 1975, pp. 254-257; Touval 1982, p. 271).

Thus provided with the carrot of multiple incentives, Jerusalem's policy elite ultimately decided to set aside its reservations. On 1 September 1975, Israel signed the second Sinai agreement. This final accord was essentially identical to the draft Israel had rejected in March. It fell considerably short of Israel's initial expectations and was still largely asymmetrical as far as the Egyptian-Israeli dyad was concerned; the Israeli withdrawal from the Mitla and Gidi passes and from the oil fields of Abu Rudeis was not reciprocated by any explicit Egyptian commitment to terminate the state of belligerence. But it was the American compensation to Israel that provided the impetus for modifying Rabin's position. True, Rabin still hoped that, notwithstanding its shortcomings, the agreement would drive a wedge between Cairo and Damascus. But Israel's prime minister was ultimately induced to sign an agreement in which the mediator—rather than the opponent—offered the necessary compensation for Israel's territorial concessions to Egypt.

In conclusion, it was threats, together with induced against the back sanctions, that led to the can diplomatic drive of

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In conclusion, it was this combination of implicit and explicit threats, together with a complex of positive inducements introduced against the backdrop of inadequate domestic support for sanctions, that led to the ultimate success of the renewed American diplomatic drive of the summer of 1975.

THE AMERICAN-SOVIET STATEMENT OF 1 OCTOBER 1977

Contrary to Ford and Kissinger's propensity to manipulate the international balance of power and thus to seek containment through negotiations (Hoffman 1983, pp. 16, 33), the Carter policy-making machine attempted to decouple superpower rivalry from local and regional issues (Gaddis 1982, pp. 282–283; Sandler 1984, p. 64). On occasion it was even disposed to solicit Soviet cooperation in the quest for stability in such volatile, conflict-ridden areas as the Middle East. Indeed, whereas Kissinger's Middle East diplomacy was practically (though not formally) designed "to expel the Soviets from the region," President Carter was prepared to deemphasize superpower competition and thus seek Soviet cooperation in jointly formulating a settlement (Spiegel 1980–81, p. 6; Hoffmann 1983, p. 63).

Convinced that long-standing tensions could be quickly alleviated through a vigorous diplomatic effort, the Carter administration believed that comprehensive peace was a viable, highly valuable policy option. Thus it embarked, in January 1977, upon a systematic diplomatic effort to quickly reconvene the Geneva forum for the purpose of negotiating multilateral peace (Vance 1983, p. 163).

The Carter presidency's notion of confronting head-on all the major controversial issues in Geneva resulted in a threefold formula for a settlement. While some of the elements in this framework (particularly those involving the need to reach a "positive peace") clearly reflected the consensual nature of the American-Israeli dyad, it was in the Palestinian sphere (as well as on the related issue of permanent boundaries) that the emergence of incompatible positions precipitated the coercive American drive of

