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The Arab-Israeli Confrontation: A Historian's Analysis

C. ERNEST DAWN*

Insistence on non-negotiable positions by both sides has been the salient feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The essential point at issue remains today what it was in the beginning, the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine. On this question thus far, neither side has given any unambiguous indication of willingness to compromise. Such intransigence is paralleled by a military stalemate in which neither side has been able to force the other to accept a settlement. Finally, while the great powers have been deeply involved in the conflict from its inception, it has not been possible for the powers to impose a solution. These observations may seem obvious and commonplace, but in public discussion very frequently (and at crucial times) the policies of the governments have proceeded from their contraries. These misperceptions may not be the root cause of the Arab-Israeli impasse, but surely their correction is the first step in the search for a solution.

Belief that cause or solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict lies outside the two parties has been a major blinder. Zionists commonly thought that the source of their problems with the Arabs was Britain; Arabs have attributed the existence of Israel to the British or the Americans; Ernest Bevin, among many others, believed that the problem could have been solved by an American president who was willing to resist the Zionist conspiracy; it is commonly said that Israel was created by the United Nations. In fact, neither the United Nations nor the great powers have ever imposed, or been able to impose, their wills. The Partition Resolution of November 1947 was never implemented, and Israel became a state under traditional international custom. United Nations actions with respect to Israel and the Arab states, until very recently, have rarely touched basic political questions. No United Nations action that was not acceptable to both Arabs and Israelis has ever been implemented.

The inability of the United Nations or the great powers to impose a solution originates partly in rivalry between the two superpowers, but only partly. The United States and the Soviet Union have been

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in agreement at times, notably in 1947-49, but their agreement has not resulted in the imposition of any measures on either Arabs or Israelis. When the big two have been in agreement, both Arabs and Israelis have been able to muster enough support from other states to frustrate any outside action, whether through the United Nations or by individual states. The underlying reality is that both Arabs and Israelis have a long history of violent resistance to outside forces. In the 1920s and 30s, with international consent, the British and French imposed colonial rule on the Arabs, and the British used military force to secure the establishment of a Jewish community in Palestine. Since 1945, however, international conditions have made it difficult for the European powers to use military force in a major way. At the same time, both Arabs and Israelis have shown that they will give up their political goals only when forced into submission. Thus, the present stage in the Arab-Israeli conflict originated when the British, under violent attack from the Jews, unwilling to use force against the Arabs, and unable because of international conditions to use effective force against the Jews, withdrew and left succession to the Palestine mandate to be decided by war between the two communities. The British and the French attempted military action against the Arabs in 1956, but failed in the face of American and Soviet opposition. The Soviets, apparently, intended direct action against Israel during the 1973 war, but refrained when the United States showed opposition. The powers accordingly have had to limit themselves to providing assistance, financial and military, to the disputants. Both the Arab states and Israel have enjoyed such largess in sufficient degree that the basic balance between them has not been affected. And so the Arab-Israeli confrontation in essence has been left at the balance between the two sides.

It may be that the international constellation is changing to Israel's detriment. Certainly, the Arab states enjoy a comfortable majority in the United Nations. But it is most unlikely that General Assembly actions will have any more effect in the future than they have had in the past. It is easy to imagine the Security Council imposing sanctions on Israel save for the American veto, but the veto will be sufficient to prevent implementation. The European countries and Japan have recently become solidly pro-Arab, as France has been since 1967, but it is difficult to see how the new friends of the Arabs can have any more influence on the situation than France has had, which is no influence at all. Most of the states have limited capability of military intervention and it is doubtful if any have the will. Israel is, of course, thrown on the United States solely for military supply, and the NATO countries can be expected to deny the use of their facilities for an American resupply of Israel, but the United States can, if it wishes, make do without European cooperation.

The United States might change its policy, but it is doubtful that it can take action now which will have any immediate effect. Military action against Israel by the United States or by any other non-Arab state is almost inconceivable. American supply of Israel could be stopped while the Arabs continued to receive arms from abroad. In this situation, the pressures on the American government from pro-Israeli sources would be tremendous. If the government succeeded in withstanding the pressures, Israel could, and undoubtedly would, strike at the Arabs before the balance changed. If the Arabs should quickly destroy Israel in war, then the United States would be able to shed a few tears and make its peace with the Arabs. But such a decisive Arab victory is remote, and accordingly the American government would not likely be spared the pressures which the continuing Arab-Israeli confrontation generates.

This holds true for the situation with the greatest imaginable impact on American policy, i.e., an Arab-Israeli war with total Arab oil boycott. Leaving aside the extremely improbable case of an immediate and decisive Arab victory, the war would result in another localized victory for Israel or a stalemate, but in either event both sides would need immediate resupply if hostilities were to be continued. In this situation, the Soviet Union would continue to supply the Arabs, and the latter through a total oil boycott would attempt to prevent the United States from resupplying Israel. The oil boycott might cause economic collapse in Europe and Japan and would cause great dislocation in the United States, but it would not have immediate impact on the ability of the United States to resupply Israel or, in the worst imaginable case, to engage the Soviet Union; nor would it lead to an immediate Arab victory, for the Arabs would need time for resupply and the formation of new units.

In this scenario, the Israelis would fight a slow, defensive war until they were exhausted as the Arabs gradually rebuilt their forces. The United States and the European countries would be in agony. It is difficult to imagine an American government withholding supplies from Israel in this case. Indeed, even France might be driven to act. One of the reasons the French government has been able to act as it has since 1967 is precisely that the United States has been supplying Israel, just as the United States government was able to avoid supplying Israel with military supplies from 1948 to 1966 precisely because other countries, notably France, were providing them. In any event, the relative strength of the Arabs and the Israelis, not the policies of the powers, continues to be the dominant element.

In fact, the NATO and the Warsaw Pact powers are in nominal agreement on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Both have accepted Security Council Resolution 242. Thus far, however, Israel will not accept any

implementation of the resolution except one which provides for territorial acquisitions, agreed security arrangements, and Arab recognition of Israel. The Arabs, refusing to accept any one of the Israeli desiderata, have called instead for the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of Israel to the frontiers defined in the General Armistice Agreements of 1949. In the face of Arab and Israeli determination, the powers have not been able to secure the execution of a Security Council resolution which received the votes of all permanent members of the Council.

The great powers' effective intervention in the Arab-Israeli conflict has been limited to the provision of financial assistance and military supplies to Israel and the Arab states. Neither combatant has suffered any major deficiency, i.e., in the four wars the troops on both sides which could be deployed have had sufficient arms and supplies. The issue has been decided each time by the greater effectiveness of Israeli troops. Israel has had, and probably will continue to have, the capability of defending Israel. At the same time, Israel has not been able to inflict a defeat on the Arabs which forces the latter to recognize Israel. Between the wars, the Arab states have been able to continue a state of belligerency and to rebuild their military forces. Every indication is that this balance will continue for some time. Outside intervention which imposes a solution on either side is also improbable. Thus, the Arab-Israeli confrontation will continue as before unless one or the other of the contestants changes its position on the basic issue.

Nominally, the Arab states and Israel are as far apart as ever on the basic issue—the existence of Israel. Recently, however, the Egyptian government has taken positions that may imply the abandonment of the old line. At the same time, Egypt still expresses fidelity to the Palestinian cause in terms which imply the traditional Arab attitude toward Israel. Indications of change are obvious, but their precise meaning remains uncertain.

Arabs speaking to Arabs until very recently were never ambiguous about Zionism and Israel. The Palestinian Arabs consistently asserted that the Palestine Mandate was illegal and that those Jews who settled in Palestine under the Mandate were unlawful trespassers. When the United Nations General Assembly was considering the Palestine case in 1947, the Palestinian Arab Higher Executive and the Arab governments rejected the UNSCOP minority recommendation of a federated state as well as the majority recommendation of partition. The official Arab demand was the immediate establishment of an Arab state in the whole of Palestine. In the Arab governments' proposal to UNSCOP, which was somewhat more moderate than the Higher Executive's position, only about one-third of the Jewish population was guaranteed citizenship in the proposed state:

only those Jews who had obtained Palestinian nationality were to become citizens of the new state; illegal Jewish immigrants (as defined by the Palestine government) were to be expelled, while the status of legal Jewish immigrants was to be determined by the future Palestinian government.

Officially, there has been no change in the Palestinian position since 1947. The Palestine National Charter as adopted by the Palestine National Council in 1964 (art. 7) provides "Jews of Palestinian origin will be considered Palestinians provided they wish to live peacefully and loyally in Palestine."¹ "Jews of Palestinian origin" must be interpreted in the light of the consistently held Palestinian position that Jewish immigration since the Balfour Declaration is illegal. Moreover, the provision was replaced in the Charter as amended in 1968 (art. 6), by "Jews who were normally resident in Palestine up to the beginning of the Zionist invasion are Palestinians."² The same session of the National Council also reiterated the Palestinian view of the mandate in a resolution which reads, "The Council affirms, moreover, that the aggression against the Arab nation, and the territories of that nation, began with the Zionist invasion of Palestine in 1917, and that, as a consequence, 'the elimination of the consequences of the aggression' must signify the elimination of all such consequences since the beginning of the Zionist invasion and not merely since the 1967 war."³

A change in Palestinian discussion of the future of Palestine occurred in 1969. The largest and most important resistance organization, Fateh, gained the leading position in the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the other guerilla groups were admitted. Under Fateh leadership, the Palestine National Council adopted two resolutions, on February 4 and September 6, which set the Palestinian goal as the establishment of "a free and democratic society in Palestine for all Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians, and Jews," as the creation of "a Palestinian democratic state . . . , free of all forms of religious and social discrimination."⁴ The Zionist state, of course, would be eradicated. Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine began to include the new vision of Palestine in their publications and in the statements of their leaders. Nevertheless, the new slogan had to be handled gingerly.

1. 44 ORIENTE MODERNO 527 (1964).

2. INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES, INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTS ON PALESTINE 393 (1968).

3. *Id.* at 403.

4. *Id.* at 589, 779 (1969 ed.).

Of special delicacy was the question of which Jews in Palestine were to be considered Palestinians. Most statements issued since 1969 have passed over the question in silence. But each of the three organizations declared that all Jews living in Palestine who would renounce Zionism would be citizens of the new state. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the three organizations, but it is also certain that the new concept is still opposed by many. The Arab Higher Committee, a survival from the old days, denounced the idea of including the Jews in the future Palestine. An effort by the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine to obtain approval from the Palestine National Council resulted in the Council's referral of the question to the Executive Committee in June 1970. There it remains, and the Charter of 1968 stands.

Clearly, the new leadership of the PLO has been unable to win enthusiastic support for its conception of the Palestinian state. The PLO leadership does feel able to espouse the idea, even to portray it as official policy, as Yasir Arafat did when speaking to the United Nations General Assembly on November 13, 1974. Arafat also gave as official PLO policy the inclusion of "all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination." Arafat was speaking to the Palestinian Arabs as well as the General Assembly. The Arabic newspaper which is perhaps the most widely read by Palestinians in Lebanon published the full text of Arafat's speech and devoted its report of the speech precisely to his description of the democratic state. It may be significant that the report of the speech did not include the passage concerning "all Jews now living in Palestine," but the passage was included in the text of the speech.

The new slogan of a democratic Palestine with equality for Jews has not been accompanied by any systematic thought about the problems. References to the democratic state are embedded in lengthy discourses composed of long denunciations of Zionism, imperialism, and the United States, and of fervent affirmations that the new Palestine will be Arab in culture and, ultimately, a part of the unified Arab state. The Palestinian Arabs who proclaim their brotherhood with the Palestinian Jews have shown no sign that they have taken cognizance of the problems and tragedies which have been the rule in the modern age in states in Europe, Asia, and Africa that have attempted state-building with populations rent by ethnic, religious, or communal divisions.

The PLO's program of a democratic Palestinian state thus offers a very fragile foundation for a peaceful permanent settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The program requires the renunciation of the Zionist ideal and the merging of the Israeli Jews in an Arab national

state. Even so, the capacity of the present PLO leadership to give effect to the program is in doubt, since many Palestinians evidently remain faithful to the old view that the Jews are interlopers in Palestine. And even if the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis should accept the principle, it is difficult to see how the two communities could make a better go of it than the numerous states which have failed to weld hostile minorities into harmonious wholes.

Reconciliation between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews is obviously not at hand. Nevertheless, the PLO's adoption of the democratic state is one faint step toward possible ultimate reconciliation. It may be that in the long run reconciliation is impossible and that the conflict will continue until one side or the other achieves a decisive military victory. In any event, the confrontation will continue for some time.

Ultimately, the Palestinians are only one element in the Arab side of the conflict. Much depends on the policies of the Arab states. The official position of the Arab governments has never varied. Palestine is, in their view, an inalienable part of the Arab fatherland, and Israel is an intruder. The government of Egypt, in seeking "to liquidate the consequences of the aggression," as the attempt to restore the situation before the 1967 war is called, has embarked on a slightly different course. Egypt accepted Security Council Resolution 242 and set about achieving its implementation through the United Nations. Israel insisted on a formal peace treaty which included frontier changes and security arrangements. Egypt insisted on full Israeli withdrawal to the General Armistice Agreements (1949) frontiers and no major or unilateral demilitarization of Egyptian territory. In return, Egypt offered a declaration of non-belligerency, recognition of Israel, and, upon solution of the refugee problem, free passage through Suez and the Tiran Straits. The Egyptian offer was a radical departure without parallel in the past. But the ability of the Egyptian government to give effect to the policy was questionable. The offer was made to representatives of the United Nations and of foreign governments.

The Egyptians, however, spoke differently in Arabic. Presidents Nasser and Sadat might occasionally speak of "peace," "treaty," and "recognition of Israel" in interviews with American journalists, but the Arab public learned of them only through anti-Nasserist accounts originating in Tunis and Beirut. Egyptian statements in the Arabic media spoke only of securing complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories and of the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.

Since the 1973 war, Egyptian statesmen have spoken to the Arabs in more detail concerning Resolution 242. Both President

Sadat and Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi, in statements published in the Arabic press, have spoken of "peace," "signing a peace treaty with Israel," and "terminating the state of war" (so the English "belligerency" is rendered in Arabic).⁵ It is difficult to interpret the statements as meaning anything other than recognition of and co-existence with Israel, and so Arab critics of Egypt have insisted. At the same time, Egypt makes the peace dependent upon the recovery of Palestinian rights which will be defined by the Palestinians alone. The Egyptian government proclaims that it will sign a peace treaty and live in peace with Israel, that Egypt has no wish to destroy Israel, and that there is no risk to Israel in withdrawal from the occupied territories. The Egyptian government also says that peace is dependent on the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, which only the Palestinians will define.

Egypt's concern for Palestinian as well as Egyptian rights indicates the degree to which Arab nationalist sentiment has become effective in Egyptian politics. It was not always so. Arabism originated in the lands to the east of Suez, and for long its goal was the unification of this territory into a national state. Arabs did not regard Egypt as Arab, and the Egyptians had begun to think of themselves as Egyptians long before Arabism challenged Ottomanism anywhere. For years, the Egyptian leaders ignored Arab nationalism.

Arab nationalism became effective in Egypt as a result of ties of sentiment and a calculation of Egypt's own special, non-Arab interest. Calculated special interest was the more important. Arabs and Egyptians shared a common Arabic and Islamic culture and the emotion of an injured self-view that arose from a common perception of themselves in relation to the modern West. Consequently, Islamic and Arab revivalism gradually spread in Egypt and became an element in internal politics by the late 1930s. But most of the Egyptian leadership had little sentimental attachment to Arabism and a great deal of reluctance to shoulder its burdens, notably those arising from the Palestinian cause. If Egypt had held back, the Arabs would have been unified by Hashimite Iraq and thus allied to Egypt's enemy, Britain. Egypt therefore committed itself to Arab nationalism in pursuit of the great Egyptian national goal, the expulsion of Britain from Egypt and the Sudan. As a result of the defeat in the Palestine War of 1948-49, the Egyptian leadership was embittered at the other Arab states, and the virtues of a return to the true Egyptian policy were freely debated. Egypt was willing to consider *de facto* peace with

5. For the major Egyptian statements since 1974, see, e.g., Sadat to NEWSWEEK in al-Akhbar, Mar. 18, 1974; Sadat to TIME in al-Ahram, Jan. 22, 1975; Sadat to the Washington Post, in al-Ahram, Feb. 18, 1975; Sadat to the Palestinian National Council, in al-Ahram, June 9, 1974; Fahmi, in al-Ahram, Dec. 14, 1974 and Feb. 19, 1975.

Israel in 1949-50 and to give its silent approval to a Jordanian-Israeli settlement as long as the settlement contained provisions that Egypt believed would contribute to the termination of the British presence in the Nile valley. When Jordan concluded a draft treaty which ignored Egypt's interest, Egypt used the Palestinian cause to frustrate the Jordanian-Israeli treaty. Therewith, any thought of leaving Arabism was abandoned.⁶

With Egypt's commitment to Arab nationalism, sentiment appears to have become more effective than considerations of traditional interest. The senior statesmen of the 1940s were perhaps the last of the traditional Egyptian nationalists. When they were turned out in 1952, their places were taken by military officers, bureaucrats, and opposition elements whose personal commitment to Arabism was much more intense. The military coup in July 1952 was followed immediately by a much greater emphasis on Arab Nationalism. In the bitter internal struggle which lasted until 1954, no contender for power could appear to be soft on Zionism. Under President Nasser, Egypt's leadership of Arab nationalism became a goal in itself, while the original connection with traditional Egyptian aspirations had ceased to have objective existence. Indeed, the war of 1967 originated in Nasser's reaction to a serious threat to Egypt's leadership of the Arabs, ten years after the British had been expelled completely from Egypt and the Sudan.

No firm forecast can be made concerning the degree to which an Egyptian government can pursue an Egyptian interest in the face of charges that it is betraying the Arab cause. Since 1967, the view that Egypt's interests and Arab nationalism are not always in harmony seems to have been winning adherents in Egypt. Since early 1974, Egyptian statesmen have spoken to Egyptians and Arabs about Egyptian policy in a way that for years had been unheard of. Nevertheless, more than once in the past, clamor over Palestine or Israel has led Egyptian governments into action that they believed unwise. Consequently, the Egyptian government still verbally conditions its acts on the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

The outcome depends on how the Palestinians define their rights. This, in turn, is conditioned by who speaks for the Palestinians. So far as Egypt and the Arab countries officially are concerned, the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole spokesman of the Palestinians. Thus, the goal of Egyptian and Arab policy is the PLO's

6. Dawn, *Pan-Arabism and the Failure of Israeli-Jordanian Peace Negotiations, 1950* in *ISLAM AND ITS CULTURAL DIVERGENCE: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF GUSTAVE E. VON GRUNEBaum* 27 (G.L. Tikku ed. 1971).

stated goal— the dismantling of the Zionist state and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state. The Egyptians leave the definition of the goal to the Palestinians, but the Egyptian government has not refrained from advising the Palestinians on the means. There is general agreement that the elimination of the Zionist state and apparatus is not achievable in a short time, but specific methods have been subject to continuous discussion and debate.

Egypt appears to have been suggesting that the restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people rests on the Palestinians, not Egypt. Since 1967, there has been an implicit shift in the relative duties of the Palestinians and the Arab states. The liberation of Palestine remains an Arab national duty, but, in contrast to 1957-66 when Egypt kept the Palestinians in check and emphasized the decisive role of the regular armies, since 1968, Egypt has assigned a major role to the Palestinian resistance. Egypt also seems to be shifting to the Palestinians final responsibility for the satisfaction of Palestinian claims. In response to Arab criticism of Egyptian policy, Egyptian statesmen have been saying that there is no conflict between Egypt's use of diplomacy to recover its occupied territories and the ultimate recovery of Palestinian rights. The Palestinians, the Egyptians say, are free to continue the struggle whatever the Arab states do. At the same time, Egypt insists that it alone has the right to choose the means of liberating Egyptian territory. Implicitly, the Egyptians retain the right to choose the means by which they will support the Palestinians.

The Egyptians may be implicitly advising the Palestinians to try diplomacy as well as the war of liberation. The PLO has in fact retreated from its original insistence on a single path to liberation. Despite the vehement denunciation of Resolution 242 and all attempts to base a solution upon it, the PLO finally, in January 1971, very cautiously acknowledged the Arab governments' right to use diplomacy as a legitimate means of "eliminating the consequences of the 1967 aggression."⁷ Of greater importance is Egypt's success in inducing the PLO to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state in a part of Palestine before its total liberation. When the idea was first suggested in late 1967, interestingly enough in the Cairo journal *al-Musawwar*,⁸ Palestinian and Arab reaction was generally intensely hostile on the grounds that to do so would mean the acceptance of partition and of Israel. When some Palestinian leaders and organizations began to consider the idea in 1970, Fateh and, in February 1971, the Palestinian National Council, rejected the scheme. Finally, in

7. RECORD OF THE ARAB WORLD 282 (1971).

8. The debate in this journal has been republished in AHAMD BAHA AL-DIN, IQTIRAH DAWLAH FILASTIN (Proposal for a Palestinian State, 1968).

June 1974, the PLO, by resolution of the National Council, approved the establishment of a Palestinian government in a part of liberated Palestine, but only as a stage in the struggle to liberate the whole of Palestine. So the PLO, giving its approval to actions which it had for long denounced as betrayals of Arabism, has accepted Egyptian methods which fall short of total resistance and national struggle. Besides inducing the PLO to accept Egyptian methods, Egypt has given a few direct suggestions. President Sadat's recent statement "we know with certainty that neither party to the contest has the ability to impose a solution by force"⁹ was directed at Israel, but it covers Egypt and the Palestinians as well. Finally, Egyptian spokesmen, including President Nasser, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, President Sadat, and, most recently, Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmi (December 13, 1974), have suggested that Palestinian rights are set forth in the 1947 Partition Resolution and the 1948 resolution on refugees, and that a permanent peace with Israel may be based on these resolutions.

Israeli and Arab aims remain miles apart. It is extremely unlikely that Egypt, Jordan, or Syria will cede by treaty any of the occupied territory to Israel. It may be possible, however, to devise security arrangements and a special regime for Jerusalem which will induce Israel to relinquish all the occupied territories. But even with the best of arrangements for military security and with complete satisfaction of all religious interests in Jerusalem, Israel will still insist on tangible signs of Arab respect for the existence and territorial integrity of Israel. This point remains the great obstacle. The Egyptian government has made final settlement dependent on satisfaction of Palestinians. The official Palestinian objective is the absorption of Israel in a Palestinian state. There would seem to be no room for negotiation and compromise.

Nevertheless, the situation is more promising than it has ever been, except perhaps in 1949-50. The Egyptian government is clearly willing to recognize Israel and to conclude a treaty. For all practical purposes, Egypt has told the Arabs that peace with Israel should be concluded on the basis of the 1947 Partition Resolution and the 1948 resolution concerning refugees. This is obviously unacceptable to Israel, but, unlike the PLO's position, it is negotiable, Israel undoubtedly will never agree to modification of the 1949 frontiers, but some agreement might be reached regarding the refugees, though even this will be extremely difficult. The chief obstacle will be the Palestinians. One can imagine Egypt signing a peace treaty with Israel as a part of a settlement which includes transforming the PLO into the govern-

9. See *al-Ahram*, Jan. 22, 1975.

ment of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank. The PLO has come to the stage that it will accept the charge, but not as a part of a peaceful settlement with Israel. One way out might be the transfer of the West Bank and Gaza to the PLO through the Geneva Conference or other international agency. At the same time, Egypt and Israel would sign a formal peace treaty. Israel would then be at peace with Egypt, and it would be left to Israel and the new Palestinian state to decide their future relations. In the initial stage, at least, the Palestinian government would be committed to a war of liberation and undoubtedly would strive to discharge its obligation.

Our scenario projects a series of steps, each of which is enormously difficult, and culminates in a solution which leaves Israel and the Palestinian state in nominal war with actual hostilities likely. Such an outcome is not likely to be viewed with favor in Israel. To achieve this settlement, Israel would give up Israeli-occupied territory in exchange for an Egyptian pledge of peace while the Palestinians continued the war. In view of past Arab-Israeli relations, Israelis cannot but think that at some time in the future the Egyptian government would once again take up the cause of the Palestinians. In short, from the Israeli point of view, there would be no essential change. But Israel has won no more than this by four military victories and is unlikely to win more through future military victories. Our projected outcome has one advantage over the past and present. Israel would have an opportunity to develop peaceful relations with Egypt, and perhaps other Arab countries. Under these conditions, Israel and the Palestinian state might learn to live with each other. It may be that the potential would not be realized, but it is nearly certain that if the confrontation continues no peaceful relations will ever develop. A happy outcome is uncertain, perhaps improbable, but the potential gain is enormous. An unhappy outcome, however, might be much more likely. The question is, how bad, from the Israeli point of view, would the worst case be? Can anyone argue after the 1973 war that the Bar-Lev line was more advantageous to Israel than UNEF had been in 1967? It may be possible to provide a security system which would be adequate replacement for continued Israeli occupation.

If a peaceful settlement between the Arab states and Israel is achievable, it is achievable only in stages. The first stage must be the bringing of Israel and Egypt into an agreement over Israeli-occupied Egyptian territory. The crucial task will be the creation of security arrangements which will satisfy Israel sufficiently to permit Israeli withdrawal. It is difficult to imagine how this can be achieved except in steps extending over a period of experiment and testing. If the effort succeeds, however, it would then be possible to tackle the tremendous political problems which remain.

The new "interim peace agreement" between Egypt and Israel,¹⁰ which was signed on September 4, 1975, after the foregoing part of this article was written, is a major step in our first stage, an agreement between Egypt and Israel with respect to Israeli-occupied Egyptian territory. It is not a complete settlement of this issue, and even less the final settlement of the political issues. The new agreement represents, as Foreign Minister Fahmi explained when negotiations were in the initial stage, a part of the process of military disengagement; the overall political settlement must come later, after total Israeli withdrawal from Arab territory and the restoration of Palestinian rights.¹¹ The new agreement's provision for the opening of the Suez Canal to Israeli non-military cargoes (Art. VII) and the pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force or military blockade (Art. II) might be interpreted as implying a formal peace treaty, but these provisions, like the purely technical military arrangements which are the only other provisions, are conditional. The agreement has a definite term. Although it is to "remain in force until superseded by a new agreement" (Art. IX), it provides for annual extension of the UNEF mandate (Art. V), which implies annual reconsideration, and it has been widely reported that there is a private understanding that the agreement will endure for three years. The agreement explicitly "is not a final peace agreement" (Art. VIII [1]), but a step toward that end (Arts. I, VIII). Implicitly, the agreement lapses if no progress is made in realizing its goal. The new agreement is thus even less a peace treaty than the General Armistice Agreement of 1949. What the new agreement creates is a security arrangement and a period of experiment and testing which will enable each side to judge the intentions of the other and the willingness or desire of its constituency to take a further step toward peace.

Nothing will be settled overnight. The Egyptian government, at least, has decided that peace with Israel is not unthinkable. At the same time, the Egyptian government has spoken with extreme caution and ambiguity lest it go farther than Arab nationalist sentiment in Egypt will tolerate. In the past, Egyptian governments have taken action against their better judgment when Palestinian Arabs have sounded the call. Leadership among the Palestinians has passed to those who will risk speaking to Arabs about a Palestine in which all Jews now in the land will live in equality, but the Palestinian leadership totally rejects a Jewish entity in Palestine and even its conception of the future Palestine is not assured of majority support. Recon-

10. The text of the agreement appears elsewhere in this issue, and is also found in the N.Y. Times, Sept. 2, 1975, at 16, col. 1.

11. See Fahmi's statement in al-Ahram, Feb. 19, 1975.

ciliation between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs can develop only over the long run, and until it is achieved no Arab government can feel secure in office.