THE MIDDLE EAST

WHAT CHANCES FOR PEACE?

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This issue of *Triologue* is devoted to that vital area—the Middle East. Our primary focus has been the continuing Israeli/Arab conflict; yet, as shown in many of the contributions to this *Triologue*, the interaction between that conflict and broader issues—oil, North-South and East-West politics in the Gulf—is becoming more and more obvious.

Following the opening remarks of Joseph Sisco (who travelled extensively in the Middle East this summer and is the co-author of a 1981-due Trilateral Task Force report on the Middle East), we “gave the floor” to two important voices from the area itself, Shlomo Aveneri and Edward Said. Then, we sought a trilateral perspective, with contributions from three of the most respected experts from Japan, North America, and Europe: Saburo Okita, William Scranton, and Udo Steinbach. Finally, we asked a leading Egyptian intellectual and former diplomat, Abdel Hamid Abdel-Ghani, to reflect not only on current prospects in the wake of Camp David, but also on the impact of deep historical and religious factors, particularly the “revival of Islam,” on the Middle East conflict.

The tangle of problems involved in the Middle East—with their historical, political and religious roots—make it almost a “mission impossible” for an editor to construct a balanced issue on the subject. In addition, the prevailing volatility in the area makes it even more of a challenge to come up with an up-to-date issue. These summer months alone have seen the Knesset passage of the Jerusalem law, the proclaimed Syria-Libya merger, and resumption of the West Bank-Gaza autonomy talks. In order to encompass these latest developments and accommodate justified last-minute amplifications from our contributors, we decided to delay the release of this issue—a Summer/Fall 1980 *Triologue*—until the very first days of October. We thought we owed it to our readers to take into account these developments. Needless to say, this issue counts as only one of the four yearly *Triologue* issues to which our subscribers are entitled.

As always, the views expressed throughout this issue remain the sole responsibility of their authors. We make them available in the hope that they will contribute to informed discussion of the problems at hand.


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The Trilateral Commission was formed in 1973 by private citizens of Western Europe, Japan, and North America to foster closer cooperation among these three regions on common problems. It seeks to improve public understanding of such problems, to support proposals for handling them jointly, and to nurture habits and practices of working together among these regions. The Commission’s Co-chairmen are David Rockefeller (North America); Georges Berthoin (Europe); and Takeshi Watanabe (Japan).
Immediately following the Trilateral Commission's last plenary conference in London, in March 1980—where the Middle East had been a major topic of discussion (see Triologue #23)—the Commission formed a task force on "The Trilateral Countries and the Middle East."

Former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph Sisco—now Chancellor of American University in Washington, D.C.—will be the North American author of the task force report, which is due to be presented to the full Commission at its next plenary, in March 1981, in Washington, D.C. The other authors of this report, now in progress, are: Garret Fitzgerald, former Foreign Minister of Ireland, now leader of the Fine Gael Party in the Irish Parliament, and Arrigo Levi, columnist for La Stampa of Turin and The Times of London (principal drafters); and Hideo Kitahara, former Ambassador of Japan to France.

Dr. Sisco toured the Middle East during the summer, meeting with Syrian President Assad, Israeli Premier Begin, President Sadat of Egypt and other top officials in Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria. He had met earlier with King Hussein of Jordan during his recent Washington visit. In the following remarks for Triologue, Dr. Sisco commented upon his Middle East visit and outlined the chief trilateral concerns at the heart of the task force's work.

At the very least, progress in the Middle East peace process will have to wait for the American elections. I do not believe that the autonomy talks can make any significant progress between now and the end of the year. And in any case, the resumption of the autonomy talks is not the central feature of the situation between now and the end of the year. The area in general is marking time, and I found that to be true in the course of my recent trip in different ways in all of the countries that I visited. President Sadat is clearly expecting picked up activity with respect to the central role of the United States in the aftermath of the election, and that is reflected in his proposal for a summit get-together at that particular time. There is no basic change in the Jordanian position—they will not be drawn into any negotiations between now and the end of the year; however, they are very careful to leave the door open in light of what the future might hold. In Syria, there is an almost exclusive preoccupation with internal developments and survival, and therefore the peace process is not on the front burner. In Israel, what can be said is, essentially, that the political campaign in effect has started, and the period after our election and before an Israeli election will be a difficult period; but we should not preclude the possibility of progress during that particular period: In this connection, we are not clear as to when the Israeli election will be—some are talking in terms of May 1981, others are talking in terms of November 1981—and there is no
way in which the United States could accept writing off 1981, which in my judgment has to be a year of opportunity for the peace process.

I think it is a fundamental misconception to argue that a weaker Israeli, relative to the balance of power in the area, is one that will be more susceptible to making concessions, or—to put it more crudely—more apt to be pressured into anything. I don’t accept that as a fundamental assumption. Second, there is no way in which either side could seriously focus on the current and upcoming phase—namely, the Palestinian phase—if the major step of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty had not been taken. Thirdly, there is a broad recognition within Israel that the long-range security of Israel cannot be maintained and fully protected 1) in circumstances where the Egyptian-Israeli treaty is seen as a separate treaty and the last stage in the process; and 2) in a situation which requires, more importantly, the indefinite occupation by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza. I found a deeply held view within the Israeli body politic that the occupation has to come to an end; and a deep concern among many Israelis not only about the burden of continuing occupation, but also its impact on the democratic values of Israel. This is of critical importance.

Syria clearly feels that Camp David has weakened its negotiating position, and that, as a result of the ensuing change in the military balance, it has denied Syria the use-of-force option and has contributed to an isolation of Syria. One of the reasons for the recent public exchanges between Syria and Libya’s Colonel Qaddafi in recent days—including early steps toward a possible eventual merger between the two countries—is that they both share a sense of isolation, and a perception of unity is important primarily in relation to their own internal situations, which are the priority of both. The Syrian leadership is principally preoccupied with survival and with internal developments; Libya has some internal difficulties, and Qaddafi has Pan-Arabist aspirations of a Nasser-like character. Despite Syria’s searing criticism of Camp David, I found that nevertheless the leadership remains open to possibilities of progress in the long-run. Assad reaffirmed his continuing long-range interest in an overall comprehensive settlement, even though the Syrian route would be a Geneva-Conference route in which the Soviets and the Palestinians would participate.

Jordan, several years ago, felt that it had been ushered out of the negotiations as a result of the decision at the Arab summit at Rabat, where the PLO was designated as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. I detect a nuance of difference in the Jordanian position today: not that there is any fundamental change or that there is any immediate intention or desire to enter the peace process, but the Jordanians are in a much more marking-time, watchful posture, waiting to see what happens in the U.S. elections and what develops internally in Israel. They are interested in keeping the door open to the possibility of an ultimate territorial solution as it relates to the West Bank and to Gaza. Furthermore, in my judgment, they would eventually look seriously at a so-called “Jordanian option,” depending, of course, on how such a territorial option would actually be defined by a Labor government in Israel.*

In short, Syria remains severely critical of Camp David; Jordan is critical and stays out of the process; and yet both recognize that, in their own way, they have to keep the opportunity open to move from the first step, the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, on to a more comprehensive settlement. There is no need to dwell on such legalistic niceties as, will the next step be “within the framework of,” or “associated with,” or “related to,” the Camp David process. The bottom line, pragmatically speaking, is that the Egyptian-Israeli treaty was the indispensable first step and is there to stay. In that sense, there cannot be, and in my judgment will not be, a reversal of Camp David.

I believe that it ought to be possible to find a formula that will in the first instance attract Palestinian Arab participation from the West Bank leadership to an interim autonomy arrangement. The reason I say this is that Israel and Jordan have one thing in common—namely, that whatever Palestinian leadership they work with has to be one that ultimately they both can live with in the long run. Only time will tell whether, in the actual participatory process, one could come up with a delegation which would be limited to West Bank Palestinian Arabs or a mixture of elements from within the West Bank and from outside the West Bank. Obviously, nobody in the West Bank can run on a ticket that doesn’t take into account the PLO and the Palestinian movement itself. But the decision of the Palestinian Arabs on the West Bank to run or not run in any election envisaged in an agreement on autonomy will depend on the nature of that agreement and the kind of participation the agreement provides. Whether it is the kind of participation that represents a step forward for them, one that allows them to run their own affairs and also represents a further step away from the occupation in a pragmatic and in a legal sense—while recognizing that Israel will have and must have a continuing security role in the West Bank and Gaza—will be in the last analysis the

*See Shlomo Avineri’s essay, “Getting on with the Peace Process,” p. 7 of this issue.
determining factor in the decision of the Palestinian Arab leadership in the West Bank to participate.

My judgment is that, in the long run, the question of accommodation between the two sides on the matter of Jerusalem is possible. It is very premature to address that particular issue at this juncture. And the unfortunate aspect of the adoption of the Jerusalem Law by the Knesset in August is that it tended to abridge what amounted to the Camp David understanding that Jerusalem was very far down on the agenda and left open for future negotiations. The adoption of the law, officializing the annexation of East Jerusalem and officially making the city as a whole Israel’s capital, put the Jerusalem issue on the front burner, when it was clearly understood that, because of the very serious difficulties inherent in the problem of the Holy City—probably the toughest of all issues—it would be best left as an end-item. My hope is that it can be restored to end-item status for the time being.

Historically, there was a time when we did look at the Arab-Israeli dispute per se, focusing principally on the front-line states, and tended to seek to insulate the Gulf area from any spillover from the fundamental differences which existed and continue to exist between the Arabs on the one hand and the Israelis on the other. There are a number of developments that have increased the actual and the potential interaction in the future between the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula area on the one hand and the front-line area and Mediterranean Basin on the other.

One is the setback in Iran: Iran played an important stabilizing role in the Gulf—from a military point of view, and also because Iranian oil was made available, to the West and to a country like Israel, on a strictly commercial basis, without political strings attached. One of the reasons why we were able to achieve the second disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1975 was that the Shah had made a commitment to this effect. The setback in Iran is therefore an important aspect of the changes in the region. A second, and related, aspect is the interaction between the Khomeini leadership and the PLO movement. We should not exaggerate this, but the fact remains that a mutually supporting political relationship now exists, and it tends therefore to heighten the interaction between these two parts of the region. A third factor is the Soviet aggression in Afghanistan, because it brings into play the linchpin, namely Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has traditionally had two concerns: Soviet en-
want a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement, because we know a partial settlement will not bring peace to the area. That comprehensive settlement
— has to insure Israeli security on the one hand and satisfy the legitimate interests and aspirations of the Arab world on the other;
— it has to be a comprehensive settlement which minimizes the possibilities of internal upheaval in Saudi Arabia itself;
— it has to be a settlement that assures continuing access to the area’s oil resources for all of us;
— it has to be a settlement that constrains any Soviet expansionist attempt, and one that leads to the avoidance of a possible confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Now, I believe that you would find very little quarrel between the United States, Western Europe and Japan on these objectives. But we have to make it very clear, it seems to me, as we develop a joint report, that the interests of each of us are not identical, and that we are very apt to face over the next year or two different assessments and different approaches on the part of the three regions. For example, while all the Western powers recognize Israel’s existence and statehood, the U.S. commitment to Israel’s survival and security is more explicit and special, for a number of historical reasons. While the United States is dependent on Middle East oil, the dependency of Western Europe and Japan is even greater. While the West as a whole has a common interest in deterring, and if necessary physically preventing, USSR expansionism, only the United States has the strategic capacity to make this a practical reality. While Western Europe seeks a role in the diplomacy of the Middle East, only the United States is acceptable to both sides and carries the weight to bring about the mutual concessions. It is not in the interest of any of the Western partners to mask these differences, since it would lead to unrealistic assessments and perceptions, contribute to a confusion of roles, and could in the long run undermine the unity of our alliances on matters of common security which bind us. And therefore the closest possible consultation is going to be indispensable in the years ahead between our governments, at least as a minimum to avoid conditions which could adversely affect the relations between ourselves and our allies. In the Middle East generally our allies can be very helpful in assuming a greater military burden. If we are required to shift a number of our resources from Europe in order to maintain the military balance in the Gulf, the Europeans have a special responsibility to try to pick up as much of the “slack” as possible in the Western European theater. Moreover, in economic terms, if all of us are concerned as we are about maintaining and bulwarking Egypt, for example, and in particular the leadership of Sadat as well as the continuing economic viability of King Hussein’s Jordan, then it seems to me that these are areas where we could and must work together. In short there are a number of areas where we can jointly work, but we have to be very realistic about what our respective roles are, lest we cause further difficulties within the alliance. The roles of the United States, Western Europe and Japan must be complementary.*

*Dr. Sisco’s views here, expressed on his return from a visit to the Middle East, before the trip of his co-authors and before the drafting of the task force’s report to the Commission had begun, are—needless to say—entirely his own. They do not reflect joint work among the authors or anticipate the conclusions of their 1981 report. (Ed.)
It is obvious that the Palestinian autonomy talks envisaged in the Camp David peace process have been stalled, and the recent announcement of their resumption does not appear to promise an acceptable outcome. This however should come as no surprise. For the Camp David agreements have been a half-way house, intended to carry President Sadat's initiative to its limits, while on some very basic issues no agreement could be reached between Egypt and the Likud government in Israel. The price tag on the spectacular success of Camp David—the first peace treaty ever reached between the Jewish State and one of its neighbors—was that the thorny issue of the future of the Palestinians should be left open.

For, in reality, Camp David was a two-tier system of agreements—the first tier dealing with bilateral Israeli-Egyptian relations, and the second (the so-called "Framework"), setting out the general contours of future negotiations on the Palestinian issue.

The first tier has been a resounding success and is being carried out to the letter by both sides. It succeeded in working out what to most observers would have looked utterly utopian only a few years ago: a full-fledged peace between Israel and Egypt. The government of Menachem Begin has committed itself to full Israeli withdrawal from Egyptian territory in Sinai, back to the old international border. Against his earlier pronouncements, and in the teeth of considerable internal opposition even within his own party, Begin has consented to pay a heavy price for peace with Egypt: Israel has already given up the oil fields in Sinai, evacuated Mt. Sinai and St. Catherine's monastery and withdrawn from much of the peninsula. The rest of Sinai—a narrow strip running from Rafiah in the North to Sharm-el-Sheikh in the South—will be returned to Egypt in 1982. This strip will include the flourishing Jewish settlements in Northeast Sinai (the Rafiah-Yamit salient) as well as the strategically important airfields Israel has constructed in Eastern Sinai since 1967.

In return for getting back all of Sinai, Egypt became the first Arab country to acknowledge Israel's legitimacy and establish normal relations with it. It was this breaking of the Arab taboo on Israel which caused the more extremist Arab countries to break off their relations with Egypt. It was not any specific detail of the Camp David agreement which caused this Arab rupture with Egypt, but Sadat's acceptance of Israel's legitimacy and sovereignty. And just as Israel has been meticulous in carrying out its withdrawal in Sinai up till now and there is no doubt it will go on with the rest of its withdrawal according to schedule—so Egypt has lived up to its commitments about normalization. The two countries have exchanged ambassadors, travel between them has been made possible by land, sea and air routes, and the beginnings of commercial and cultural relations have been worked out. The Israelis may be griping, with some
justice, that this was done by the Egyptians with reluctance and little enthusiasm; but then one should not underestimate the trauma Egyptian public opinion has suffered by having almost twenty Arab ambassadors recalled from Cairo in return for the arrival of one Israeli ambassador. Similarly, too many Israelis, in their perennial and until now unrequited yearning for peace, have mistaken the highly overstated rhetoric of Sadat’s visit for love and friendship, and were consequently taken aback at discovering that normalization means just that—the absence of war, and not warm loving-kindness and blissful mutual admiration. This may have soured the taste for peace for some Israelis, yet it could be expected. In any case, it is easier and less cumbersome today for an Israeli so wishing to travel to Egypt than it is for an American or Western European to travel to the Soviet Union or to China. Taking all this into account, the bilateral aspects of the Camp David accords are working.

The second tier of the agreements, dealing with the Palestinian issue, is much more problematic. Here it was quite clear at the time of the signing of the agreements and the peace treaty that the positions of both parties are irreconcilable, and the language of “autonomy” was a useful formula to express the dire fact that both sides merely agreed to disagree and not let the Palestinian issue stand in the way of their achieving a bilateral agreement. For the bilateral agreement has been a tremendous achievement for both governments: To Begin, who has always been branded as an extremist, it gave the opportunity for appearing as the peacemaker; to Sadat, it achieved by peaceful means what he and his predecessors have failed to achieve by force of arms for more than 13 years—to regain all Egyptian lost territory.

A Bilateral Understanding

Therefore it was of enormous political advantage for both leaders to achieve a bilateral understanding even at the cost of leaving the Palestinian issue wide open. For the Egyptians, autonomy should be a transitory period of five years, during which Israeli presence in the West Bank and Gaza would be gradually phased out, so that at the end of this period the future of these areas could be then negotiated on the basis of the right of the Palestinian population to self-determination. For the government of Menachem Begin, autonomy means no more than allowing the Palestinian population to run its own municipal affairs, with continued Israeli military presence, with an increase in Jewish settlements, and with Israel responsible for internal security in these areas; after the five-year transition period, Israel—as the Prime Minister has announced—would claim sovereignty over the area. Each leader is very adept in showing that the Camp David agreements contain enough phrases to justify his interpretations. Furthermore, Sadat regards autonomy to refer to East Jerusalem as well; to Begin, East Jerusalem, having been formally incorporated into Israel proper back in 1967, is outside the autonomy talks. In other words: For Egypt, autonomy means a way of gradually dislodging Israel from the West Bank and Gaza; for Begin, it is a vehicle for legitimizing continued Israeli presence. While Sadat does not insist that the West Bank and Gaza form a separate Palestinian state and would prefer a Jordanian connection, for Begin, giving up the West Bank and Gaza to anyone—even to Hussein, not only to the PLO—is out of the question.

Both leaders knew at Camp David that these were their respective positions, and for observers acquainted with their political philosophies, the present stalemate in the autonomy talks is no surprise. Whether the Americans, and especially Jimmy Carter, realized that this would be the case, is another question. There is strong evidence to suggest that American policymakers, probably taken in by the moderate rhetoric of both Sadat and Begin, believed that their positions would ultimately be reconcilable with each other; they thus underestimated both Sadat’s commitment to the Palestinian cause as well as Begin’s commitment to the view that Judea, Samaria and Gaza would remain forever under Jewish rule.

Where do we go from there? It does not seem likely that the autonomy talks can bear fruit. Barring an unexpected turn of events, it is highly improbable that a breakthrough in the talks can be achieved and the circle squared. As a holding operation, having the talks go on is surely recommended. But for those wishing to continue in the peace process, other avenues have to be pursued.

It was this failure of the autonomy talks which again brought up the idea of trying to solve the Palestinian problem by setting up an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. For the purpose of our discussion here, it is immaterial whether the PLO would view such a solution as a final settlement, satisfying its demands for national recognition, or whether it would accept such a solution merely as a stepping stone in its continuous war against Israel, having the ultimate disappearance of Israel as its final aim. Personally, I tend to believe that the second alternative is still the official policy of the PLO—but I am not going to argue this here. My argument would be that a West Bank/Gaza state should not be viewed as an adequate solution for the Palestinian question for a number of reasons which have nothing to do with the subjective intentions, overt or covert, of the PLO leadership, but refer to serious objective problems which are independent of anyone’s personal wishes and which make such a solution into a non-solution. It appears to me that a West Bank/Gaza Palestinian state is not an adequate solution on any count for the following reasons:
The number of Palestinians amounts nowadays to more than three million. Less than 900,000 of them reside in the West Bank and Gaza; hence the establishment of such a state would still leave most of the Palestinians outside the national entity supposed to be their homeland.

Any solution to the Palestinian problem which would let most of the refugees who are now in the camps continue to linger there cannot be regarded as satisfactory. There are at present about 250,000 refugees in the camps in Lebanon, about 100,000 in Syria. They are the hotbed of frustration and PLO terrorism. If a West Bank/Gaza state were to be established tomorrow, these refugees could not be settled there, because the West Bank is a very small area, with a highly dense population, and has been in the last 30 years an area of emigration; and more than half of Gaza’s population is made up of refugees in camps, who obviously would themselves have to be settled elsewhere. If a West Bank/Gaza state could not settle these refugees and they were to continue to vegetate in their camps, how could terrorism and subversion be ended? To the refugees in the camps, a West Bank/Gaza state is not a solution.

More than half of the population of the East Bank of Jordan today is made up of Palestinians, and they, just as their brethren on the West Bank, are entitled to participate in the Palestinian entity. The establishment of a West Bank/Gaza state would leave this East Bank population outside the confines of the Palestinian entity—or, alternatively, create a strong irredentist atmosphere which would certainly not help stabilize the area but could introduce another element of friction and destabilization.

It is not true that a West Bank/Gaza state would necessarily be a Soviet base, but it is highly likely that such a new, weak, unstable state, unable to solve the Palestinian refugee problem, under constant harassment from the Arab Rejection Front, would be easy prey for instability, frequent coups and possible Soviet penetration. In any case, this would again be a destabilizing factor.

An Israeli readiness to evacuate the West Bank and Gaza will have to be tied to an agreement about demilitarization of these areas: The real dangers for Israel from Arab military concentration very near to Israeli population centers is highly obvious, and such a demilitarization would also be necessary in order to sell an extensive withdrawal to a highly skeptical Israeli public, still reeling under the combined memory of the holocaust and the ever-recurring voices coming from the Arab world, and especially the Palestinians, calling for the dismantling of the Jewish state. If the West Bank and Gaza were to constitute an independent state, it is highly unlikely that such a state would agree to demilitarize its whole territory. This would be asking too much—and if it were to be accepted on the Palestinian side, it would immediately and naturally become the very focus for internal agitation for the abrogation of such an undertaking. Asking a new state, born out of despair and hope and expressing the national will of the Palestinians, not to have an army because this is what the Israelis want—this is both improbable and perhaps even indecent.

This leads me to the other alternative which I think should be taken up—the Jordanian option. Whether this is an option which the present government of Israel is capable of undertaking, or whether only a Labor government would be able to do so, is besides the point. First of all, a Jordanian option—i.e. a solution that would view both the West Bank and the East Bank as the context within which the Palestinian problem has to be solved—can overcome the objections raised earlier about the inadvisability of the West Bank/Gaza independent option:

A joint West Bank-East Bank would include most Palestinians in the world within its borders.

The East Bank is about ten times larger than the West Bank, much less densely populated and with enormous reserves of potentially fertile soil. The refugees from Lebanon, Syria and even the Gaza Strip could be resettled on the East Bank without great difficulty. (A lot of capital and irrigation would be needed, but it is not a non-solution as is trying to settle them in the overpopulated West Bank.) Neither is settling the refugees on the East Bank sending them into exile—Transjordan has always been part of historical Palestine, both in the Jewish as well as the Arab tradition; most of its present population is Palestinian. Thus, the resettled refugees would be living not only among their Arab brethren and sisters, but also among their Palestinian next-of-kin.

The Jordanian political structure would certainly be more able to deal with subversion and terrorism, be it Soviet or Rejection-Front inspired. The Jordanian polity, for all its apparent precariousness, is a highly stable structure, and the way King Hussein overcame the extremist Palestinian onslaught in 1970 is a testimony to the viability of that structure.

A state comprising both Banks of the Jordan River should not find it difficult or humiliating to demilitarize those of its areas adjacent to Israel, i.e. the West Bank. This would make up less than 10 percent of its total area, and a similar arrangement has been worked out with Egypt about the Sinai frontier.
Last but not least, Jordan today is as much of a Palestinian state as could be imagined and this is a factor sometimes overlooked by many Western observers. Since 1970, King Hussein has launched a highly visible and successful process of "Palestinizing" Jordan while publicly committing himself to the Rabat decisions. At the time of this writing, the Prime Minister of Jordan is a Palestinian, and so are many key ministers and high officials; the Jordanian Ambassador to the U.N. is a Palestinian; the army, greatly increased since 1967 and based on a draft system, is made up mostly of Palestinians and many of them are now in high commanding positions. Moreover, since 1967, King Hussein has maintained for 13 years of Israeli occupation much of his standing on the West Bank. All West Bank inhabitants are Jordanian nationals, and the Jordanian government allows them to keep their Jordanian passports; in the last months, even Gaza residents, who had never been under Jordanian rule before 1967, can apply for Jordanian passports; the Jordanian government continues to pay the salary of all public officials on the West Bank (who thus get a double salary, since they are also paid by the Israeli military administration); subsidies are continuously being paid to West Bank mayors and influential leaders, and a very tight system of controls counteracts the PLO influence among the population; because of the Open Bridges policy, both Banks function as one economic entity and the Jordanian Dinar is legal tender on the West Bank.

It is thus clear that, contrary to widespread opinion in the West, Hussein has not severed his relations with the West Bank, nor have its inhabitants given up their Jordanian connection. It is a powerful political and economic fact that has to be taken into account.

Under such circumstances, the Jordanian option may be a viable way out of the present impasse; it could give Israel the security it needs and legitimately requires; it can offer the Palestinians an end to Israeli occupation and the ability to determine their own future, as they are legitimately entitled to. But it obviously is not an easy solution, and even under the more favorable conditions of a Labor government in Israel, it would be a mistake to imagine that a solution on those lines could be worked out easily—mainly, but not only, because of Jerusalem.

Therefore, Jerusalem should be the last item on the agenda of any negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Any attempt to start these negotiations with Jerusalem is not only doomed to fail, but will also frustrate any attempt to reach an agreement on other aspects of the conflict as well. If the rapprochement between the two Germanies had started with negotiations on Berlin, the whole Ostpolitik would have failed, and therefore both sides prudently left it to the end: As a matter of fact, they eventually agreed to leave it in abeyance, so as not to upset the achievements of the normalization which have been worked out.

What would such a strategy mean if translated into the context of Israeli-Jordanian negotiations? Probably this: that it is highly improbable that the first step in an Israeli-Jordanian negotiation would be a full peace agreement. Initially, the procedure to be pursued would probably have to be a search for an interim agreement, moving on only later to the more thorny issues.

Let us consider the following scenario: A government in Israel that is ready to entertain the Jordanian option—i.e., most likely a Labor government—comes to power in the country. It would try to bring the Jordanians into the negotiations. This can be done even within the framework of the Camp David agreements, where the Jordanians are specifically mentioned as partners for negotiations about the future of the Palestinians. A Labor government would try to identify possible issues of agreement with Jordan, and then set apart issues on which there is, at present, no agreement. On two issues—Jerusalem and the strategically important area of the Jordan River Valley—there is no agreement even between a Labor government and Jordan, and these issues would be left to later stages of the negotiations. The first step would be to negotiate the transfer to Jordan of the West Bank (minus East Jerusalem and the largely uninhabited Jordan Valley) and the Gaza strip. Jordan would assume full civilian control in these areas, but they would remain demilitarized. In return for this, Jordan would not sign a peace treaty, since this would be very difficult for it to do, with East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley still under Israeli control. But in return for getting 95 percent of the area and 90 percent of the Palestinian Arabs now under Israeli control, Jordan would sign some sort of end-of-hostilities agreement, without having to jeopardize its claim to East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. Joint committees to implement the agreement would be set up, but not yet full diplomatic relations—since this would have to be left for the final peace treaty. The issues relating to the status of East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley would then be worked out in a period of three to five years.

Utopian? Much less so than an attempt to dislodge Israel unilaterally from the West Bank and establish there a Palestinian state against the will of Israel. It is
obvious that Hussein would not be able to get involved in such a scenario if he did not get at least some tacit consent from the more moderate elements within the PLO. If such elements exist, and if they are truly interested only in liberating their brethren from Israeli occupation and not bent on the destruction of Israel, surely some of them would think that a scenario as spelled out here should be of some attraction to them. It would also be a test—admittedly a severe one—for the existence, or lack of it, of a moderate wing within the PLO.

The same applies to the West Bank/Gaza population today: Faced with the prospect of continued Israeli occupation and more Jewish settlements, they naturally prefer the PLO. But if they were given the choice of either cooperating in a Jordanian solution or continuing under Israeli occupation, I cannot see any serious leader who would prefer the Israelis. Even if his first choice were to be the PLO, Jordan is after all an Arab state within which so many Palestinians are politically active and economically prosperous. Of course this is a compromise—but so also is the Israeli willingness, implied in this scenario, to give up the heartland of Judea and Samaria. Anyone calling for compromise from Israel—especially if he is Israeli himself—cannot but suggest that the other side will have to compromise as well.

Will this be acceptable to Hussein? At present, the Israeli government has not made him an offer on such lines, and the American government seems to be veering more towards a Palestinian than a Jordanian solution. Nor can Hussein respond favorably to a solution made by the political opposition in Israel, so long as Labor is out of power.

But such an offer has never in the past been made to Hussein. Before Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in 1977, any peace agreement between Jordan and Israel would have made Hussein into the first Arab ruler to break the Arab taboo on Israel. It called for all the courage and cunning of Sadat and the power of Egypt to be the first to jump into these freezing waters. It would have been difficult for Hussein to play this game and survive. Now he has to join in a peace process, not totally isolate himself by being the first one to initiate it.

Similarly, what Israel did—unofficially—offer to Hussein before 1977 was a version of this scenario, the Allon Plan*, as a basis for permanent peace: What we are talking about today is, to use the code-words of the Middle East conflict, offering the Allon Plan to Hussein as an interim agreement. It is a completely different context, for while it does not offer Israel formal peace with Jordan in the first stage, neither does it force Hussein publicly to cede territory to Israel in such an agreement.

The scenario envisaged here is a limited one. It does not offer answers to all problems, but it tries to work out a schema about the next step. And it is the next step that matters to all of us in the area who are troubled by the present stalemate.

*Under the Allon Plan—named after Israel’s former Foreign Minister Yigal Allon—Israel would retain a line of strategic West Bank outposts along the Jordan River even after withdrawal from the populated areas. (Ed.)
he Palestinian autonomy talks between Israel, Egypt, and the U.S. were to have produced a result by May 26, 1980. In April, President Carter brought Anwar Sadat and Menachem Begin to Washington in order to impress on them and their constituencies that progress had to be made by the agreed-upon deadline. One surmised that if nothing as spectacular as the Camp David agreement was being proposed at this time, it was very worthwhile politically for the President to appear in public with the two men, keep the talks going, preserve the appearance of serious deliberations in course. A climactic summit could always be made to happen later on, as now it appears a summit will occur after the elections in November. Israeli spokesmen in the meantime have been unyielding on important points: no Palestinian self-determination, no Israeli withdrawal, no change in an increasingly aggressive settlements policy, no Palestinian control over anything as important as water resources or security, or foreign policy, or immigration, or East Jerusalem. To this series of provocations, Egypt has responded by breaking off the talks for a time, and agreeing to resume them in a transparent effort to help with the President’s reelection. Undeterred by world opinion and international law, Israel for its part formally annexed East Jerusalem on July 22, and a few days later announced four new illegal settlements. Repression on the West Bank and Gaza continued, as did the bombardment of South Lebanon. In the cycle of violent fanaticism and unsurprising resistance to it in Hebron in early May, as well as the subsequent maiming of two Palestinian mayors by Israeli extremists, and the deportations of three other leading Palestinians, the sheer mass of questions separating, and ironically uniting, Israelis and Palestinians is starkly conveyed.

Yet one asks, how is it that Palestinian autonomy talks include no Palestinians? Is it not manifestly odd, and does it not require some explanation, that the party whose “autonomy” is being discussed is not present? Why, since a supposedly comprehensive peace is being sought, should a major component in the conflict—the exiled Palestinian community of nearly three million people who do not now happen to reside on the West Bank and Gaza—be so deliberately left out? And why does anyone expect Palestinians to be encouraged by a “peace process” that not only excludes them but seems actively designed to give them less under “autonomy” than they now have under an illegal occupation?

No answers to these questions can possibly be obtained today in the terms afforded one by American public discourse on the Middle East. 1980 is a presidential campaign year, and this year—more even than preceding years—has been especially depressing in what the various candidates have said about the Middle East. Every one of them salutes Israel and Israeli accomplishments with reckless abandon: Israel is not only “our staunch ally”; it is also a “bastion of democracy,” and a
state beleaguered by terrorism, Communism and anti-Americanism. Unilateral Israeli moves such as the annexation of East Jerusalem, the setting up of more and more settlements, the routine collective punishments of entire communities on the West Bank and Gaza, the merciless bombing of civilians in and the gradual depopulation of South Lebanon, are either ignored or warmly supported by candidates eager to show what each has "done for Israel." Not only does this indecent scramble for Jewish votes indefinitely postpone any serious coming-to-grips with what goes on in the Middle East—it actively eliminates history and reality from American thinking about a region of the world that has become uniquely important to American interests.

The immediate prognosis for any sort of fair settlement on the ground is not good. In August there was a well-publicized move in the Knesset to begin the formal annexation of the Golan Heights, much as Jerusalem had been annexed. On May 23, 1980, Ha'aretz, a leading Israeli daily, quoted Knesset Member Aharon Yariv as saying that "there are opinions to exploit a situation of war in order to expel 700,000 or 800,000 Arabs from the Occupied Territories. Such opinions are common. Persons are speaking about this and means for this have been prepared." Given what appears to be a period of political emptiness in the U.S., Israeli military men obviously plan to take advantage of the lull in order to create new faits accomplis. The attack on Palestinian positions in South Lebanon on August 19 and 20 was part of this policy, as is the ominous possibility of similar attacks coordinated with southward forays on the Palestinians made by the Maronite Phalangist militias. (Parenthetically, it is worth mentioning that Israeli designs on Lebanon go back for many years, as the recently published Moshe Sharett Diaries* attest with extraordinary vividness: As early as 1954 and 1955, according to Sharett, people like Moshe Dayan were speaking of cajoling a Maronite in the South—"he need only be a Major"—into proclaiming himself the savior of Christians; then he would be convinced to secede from the country, and openly become an Israeli agent. All this has come true of course in the case of Major Saad Haddad.)** Syria's situation, internally and regionally, is highly volatile, and the risks of all-out war—perceived as in Israel's interest at this point—are therefore considerable.

Yet the U.S. today persists in taking Israel's side in questions of war and peace, and persists also in speaking portentously of a peace process: On the other hand, the entire international community has achieved consensus on the ingredients for a Middle East peace, in which neither Israel nor the U.S. has shown any real interest. Yet Israel still gets a huge slice of the U.S. foreign aid budget (43 percent of it in the coming year), at the same time that its economy and its relations with its neighbors and much of the world are at an all-time low. The Arab and Islamic worlds recognize the PLO of course, and have recently expressed strong impatience with an unconvincing American policy of expecting unlimited oil supplies, political support and willing alignment from these states, while giving them very little in return: In this connection Prince Fahd's recent declaration on Jerusalem and on the necessity of a jihad are to be taken with some seriousness, I believe. All in all then, the official U.S. position, aided and abetted by an uncritical media and an uninformed public, is in strong discord both with Palestinian hopes and with manifest international backing for these hopes (as reflected for instance in the July 29, 1980 U.N. General Assembly Special Session, on the Question of Palestine, and the subsequent resolution produced during the Session affirming Palestinian rights).

Yet Diaspora Jews and Israelis at present would concede, I think, that the Palestinians have suffered unjustly at the hands of Zionism. There is agreement therefore that the Palestinian claim should last be addressed with some seriousness, although very few Jews or Israelis (members of the Peace Now movement included) have found it possible to speak consistently and equitably of Palestinian rights. Thus it is no less true that most Jews are fearful of what such a subject might portend; the risk for the Jewish people of a competing Palestinian nationalism whose history is in its own way as severe in its traumas and sufferings as that of Jews, cannot therefore be lightly put aside or even approached. Conversely, however, Palestinians endure an existence of dispersion and exile. Many of them live under astringent Israeli control, inside Israel as well as in the Occupied Territories. Many too bear the living scars of frequent bombardments, mass expulsions, systematic humiliation. Every Palestinian represents a concrete history of loss—of a society, a country, a national identity. Armed struggle has seemed the only logical course to guard against the threat of complete extermination.

The Palestinians and the Israelis are therefore two asymmetrical communities of fear, one now dominating, and yet fearful of, the other. Add to this the effects of internal political struggles, plus superpower and regional disputes, and the situation appears hopelessly intractable.

The whole structure, method, and aim of the autonomy talks unfortunately symbolize, without in any way ameliorating, this abysmal state of affairs. Little in the present negotiations tries to break the deadlock, or

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* Moshe Sharett was Israel's first Foreign Minister (1948-56).
**See Livia Rokach, Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diaries (Belmont, Mass.: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Aug. 1980), p. 28.
dissolve the fear, or end the domination. The Palestinians cannot even be present as equals in the autonomy talks, except in terms that limit them still further, which of course they have rejected: for it is proposed that they be stripped of their history as the longtime majority resident in Palestine, stripped also of a large fraction of their number, and of almost all of their real political existence and of an astounding international legitimacy, to say nothing of 80 percent of their land. The Israelis retain all their advantages—military occupation and unilateral rule over the Palestinians chief among them—thus confirming and intensifying their fear of the future. For short-sighted reasons of his own, President Sadat has gone along with this, even as internal opposition to his regime grows more significant every month and as even he has begun to chafe at relentless Israeli intransigence. Worst of all, the U.S. has placed its redoubtable power around the whole business, sealing off the grim drama of prolonged stalemate and impasse with what has come officially (and, alas, self-delusively) to be known as “the spirit of Camp David.” Even when U.S. policy is openly proclaimed to be against Israeli occupation practices, President Carter has been unable to sustain his policy for any length of time or to any effective end: In March a positive U.S. vote in the U.N. Security Council was disavowed apologetically a day later (at a time when the U.S. government was unwilling to concede even a hint of an acknowledgement of past interference in the internal affairs of Iran), while the U.N. resolution on May 8 calling on Israel to take back the three Palestinian leaders just deported drew forth a craven U.S. abstention.

It has now been 60 years since Britain’s Lord Balfour spoke imperially of not being willing “even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of Palestine.” Four million Palestinians have little to be grateful for if today Egypt, Israel, and the U.S. go through the form not of actually consulting the present Arab inhabitants of Palestine (forgetting about the three million refugees who have already been denied residence there by Israel), but perhaps of getting ready to consult them on such momentous matters as sanitation.

Where then are Palestinian rights? Why, each Palestinian asks himself or herself, is it so hard for the U.S., whose administration has declared itself in support of human rights in principle and in practice, to grant even the theoretical possibility that Palestinians are entitled to the same basic human rights to which people are entitled everywhere else (in theory at least) on earth? What is so monstrous, so unthinkable, so prohibitive in the fact that Palestinians, having been turned out of their homes and their lands, having for 30 years endured an existence of suffering and exile, having also resisted this fate and having affirmed their national identity in so brave and unmistakable a way, now claim for themselves the independent sovereign national existence which every known moral precept gives them the right to? What is so difficult to accept in the idea that Palestinians should, like all other people, be free of the travail of deportations, curfews, exile, bombardment, and general misery? To these questions virtually no one in the modern industrial West has begun to supply answers.

Yet, as I said above, the nub of the conflict is the impasse between two intertwined communities of fear. During the past few months, however, despite the worsening West Bank and Gaza situation, there have been a miniscule number of encouraging signs of change in Israel, in Europe, in the American Jewish community, among Palestinians. There is for the first time an active, visible peace community in Israel, with important ties to sectors of the American Jewish world. Austria, Spain, Great Britain, France, Greece, among other European countries, have begun in earnest to reckon with the PLO. The Third World, as well as the non-aligned and Islamic countries, support clearly-stated Palestinian ideas about self-determination. A considerable number of statements by responsible Palestinians have indicated willingness to end armed struggle with Israel in return for an independent sovereign Palestinian state. As recently as May 8 PLO chairman Yassir Arafat told Anthony Lewis of the New York Times that he wanted a final negotiated settlement.

I would submit therefore that the important question is whether the best hope for the future lies with the rigidity, discrepancies, and inequities represented by the autonomy talks, or with an alternative, largely United Nations framework for reconciliation and peace that is now beginning to emerge with hopeful resolve among Palestinians, Israelis as well as people in the U.S., Europe, and the non-aligned world who can look past the status quo toward a reasonable, peaceful settlement. These two alternatives represent two outlooks, two styles. On the one hand is the polarizing, confrontational style, in which you stop the historical process of people’s development at a stage that is most near at hand. You give in to fears of the past. You say, in effect, there is an Israeli state, a powerful army, an intransigent government and, in the U.S., an electorate that can always be roused to unquestioning support of Israel: Then you ask, why should one tamper with that? You ignore the world’s opinion, except for what official Israel and South Africa have to say. You shut yourself away from other voices, voices of hope, reconciliation, and understanding. You say anachronistically that the Palestinians are not fit to represent themselves, and therefore must be represented by powers who know better. You do nothing to convince the media, or the various political candidates that there are any other ways to proceed. You simply deny Palestinian rights even while pretending that all people have rights.
This style, I have said, has lowered the standard of public discussion. It has hindered the U.S. from perceiving that such a vision of reality is neither true to its interests, nor to the way the world is going. It is the style that in effect produced the Iranian revolution; it is probably what will produce similar revolutions in Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan, among other places. Above all, I believe, it is a style that betrays certain fundamental traits in American culture and in the history of the American people. For after all, there is in the U.S. a great native tradition of fairness, compassion, openness to change. Why must this be sacrificed to the policy of governments that close themselves to the real experiences of people, that resort to fossilized nay-saying when they meet resistance, that seem to believe that peace is arranged by proxies and patrons, and enforced unilaterally by Phantom jets, new military bases, and rapid deployment forces?

On the other hand, there is a style more in keeping with a world sick of war and of superpower posturing, invasions, and geopolitical strategies. This style is focused upon principles and ends, rather than on gimmicks and quick-fix formulas. It asks communities to define their aims with an eye towards final, negotiated settlements, and it asks further that such settlements be based on justice, self-respect, and human rights for all, not just for members of certain ethnic groups, religions, nationalities. With reference to Israel and the Palestinians, the priority in this mode of trying to settle the conflict would have to be getting Israel for the first time in its history to recognize Palestinian rights unequivocally. Israelis and Palestinians are two communities that will neither go away nor leave each other alone. What better way of beginning to come to terms with each other than to open one community to the other’s history, actuality, and aspirations?

But for such mutual recognitions there can be no limiting preconditions: No one can demand of the other anything in advance except the serious wish a) to end hostility and b) to make certain that no human rights are infringed or abrogated. This procedure seems to me to be unquestionably the alternative for today and tomorrow.

Where then does one go from here, now that the autonomy talks seem to have embarked on a phase of almost pure ritual? In the first place, anyone seriously concerned with the Middle East is under immediate obligation to seek to change the present context: Confrontation, hostility, “us” versus “them”—forms of seeing the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel that are encouraged by Americans with far less excuse than the parties themselves have—must be converted to exchange, dialogue, reconciliation. The European Community and the United Nations have already played a considerable role in providing a forum that is less debased and less subject to ignorance or bigotry than the domestic American scene, although there are plenty of opportunities in this country also for stimulating new discussion. Like-minded people should courageously seek one another out.

Secondly, we need to hammer it home that the present collision course, in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world, serves the interest of only a tiny minority of the world’s people. A new world order is struggling to be born; now that the old bankrupt games are being revived after Afghanistan and Iran, the imperative for some more generous political outlook on life to emerge is very great.

Thirdly, we should always be conscious of the fact that nothing exists in a vacuum: Every action by every group or individual is part of a whole history. The sooner we try consciously to be aware of our own and others’ history, the sooner we appreciate the urgent need for a common framework of political intercourse; then we will not so much need war, or hostility, or blistering. The U.S. government, often singularly afraid of these realities, should be on notice that potentially effective things like peace talks had better be lined up with human concerns for real peace, not left in the form of fantastic charades. For if one does not require it of the U.S. government to face the reality of both the Palestinian and Jewish peoples, and if this government is permitted to continue making patronizing and irrelevant pronouncements on behalf of people who have not even been consulted, one might as well say that war for several more generations is what the peace talks are really about.

Is there no hope for compassion or for simple common sense? Is there no way of making U.S. policy depend on the fact that there is a Palestinian people which, like all other people, is entitled to its own representatives, to a state of its own, to a life free from endless war and exile? For as the scenario of stiffening polarization and increasing hostility gradually takes unshakable hold of the Middle East, visions of peace and understanding human community will seem more and more remote. And thereafter, no one will benefit—not even those stubborn enough to claim victory after the holocaust.
A former member of the Trilateral Commission, Saburo Okita was Foreign Minister of Japan from November 1979 to July 1980. He now serves in the new Japanese government as Special Government Representative for External Economic Relations. In the following interview, conducted at the end of July for *Dialogue* by Charles Morrison, Scholar-in-Residence at the Japan Center for International Exchange, Dr. Okita reviews Japan’s policies with regard to the Middle East as well as his country’s broader efforts to move “to a new stage of sharing the responsibilities of the free world.”

Does Japan have a policy on the Middle East and, if so, what are the principal elements of that policy?

We have expressed our policy forthrightly. The principal elements are these:

First, we believe that it is essential that peace in the Middle East should be just, lasting and comprehensive. Thus, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel should be a first step toward a comprehensive peace, not just a bilateral agreement.

Second, such a peace should be achieved through the early and complete implementation of Resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations Security Council and the recognition of and respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including the right of self-determination, under the United Nations Charter. Japan holds the view that the right of establishing an independent state is included in the concept of the right of self-determination.

Third, all possible avenues to peace should be explored, taking into account the aspirations of the peoples concerned in the Middle East, including the Palestinians, and the legitimate security requirements of the countries in the region.

Fourth, Japan is prepared to cooperate for the attainment of the common aim of peace, while continuing her independent policy. We strongly desire the parties concerned to continue and step up their efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement.
Just as this issue of Trialogue had gone to press, His Royal Highness Prince Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, who was visiting New York, granted Trialogue editor François Sauzey an interview from which the following remarks are excerpted.

We thought it a unique opportunity to hear again, directly, some of the long-standing positions of Saudi Arabia on several questions discussed throughout this issue of Trialogue, and to solicit His Highness’s comments on the then six-day old war between Iraq and Iran. Hence this last-minute supplement to what constitutes already a diverse “bouquet” of points of view on the Middle East today. (Ed.)

The Iraqi-Iranian War and the Security of the Gulf

Our position is that the security of the Gulf area is strictly an issue that has to be faced by the countries of the area. It becomes a lively issue now because there happens to be a conflict between two Gulf countries. Yet, although this conflict must obviously be viewed as a threat to the stability of the region, that threat can only be compounded if we pursue the logic that outside forces should be called in to maintain the security of the region. If there is any international effort that can be of help, it must come from the countries of the region. This is why we place so much hope in the mediation effort initiated by the Islamic countries to get the parties involved to negotiate and bring a solution to the conflict.

Besides, an analysis of the present conflict makes it clear that the threat is not against the Gulf. Neither side has threatened the Gulf; neither side, even within the context of the conflict they are now in, has an interest in disrupting the region of the Gulf as a whole. That further reinforces the argument that, if there is any special responsibility to safeguard and protect the region, it is the responsibility of the countries of the region, not of outside forces. Current speculations in this regard lead, we fear, to over-reactions; because there is a conflict between two countries of the area, people begin to talk about creating naval task forces or what have you—clearly a wrong approach in the final analysis.

If there is anything to be done, it is to find ways and means to bring about an early settlement of the conflict between Iraq and Iran. We do not want this conflict to expand; bringing other forces in would only expand it. This is why we hope the international community will want to reinforce current efforts by the Islamic leadership rather than take a role that separates itself from these initiatives.
As far as Iraq itself is concerned, here is a country which is important to the region. It has had a role to play in the past; it presently has the capabilities to play an important role and it must play such a role in the future. That role can only be a healthy one—Iraq is a country that has stakes in the region; it is only natural that it should be active there (just as it is natural that the countries of the region should feel it a duty to cooperate with each other for the stability and progress of the region). We see no threat whatsoever from the contribution of Iraq in the region: We would see threats if other countries that have no stake in the region came into play. On the subject of Iraq’s claims, we see that the Iraqi announce proposal for settlement speaks about Shatt al Arab and the three islands*: These are not problems that cannot be resolved through negotiation between Iraq and Iran. The islands, of course, are the direct responsibility of the [United Arab] Emirates—they are supported in their claim by all the Arab countries, only Iraq.

The Camp David Peace Process: Temporarily Blocked or Basically Flawed?

Undoubtedly the current peace process is basically flawed—and the deadlock it has now reached could have been foreseen from the start. It is flawed because it avoids the basic issues: It avoids dealing directly with the Palestinian problem; within the Palestinian problem, it avoids dealing directly with the issue of Jerusalem, therefore preventing a priori any possible solution. You will recall that the previous, so-called “step-by-step” process started from this same logic that has brought about the current deadlock: a logic which assumes that, by going around the real issues and solving peripheral problems, one would presumably create more confidence among the parties concerned and therefore open the way for more significant compromises. In its time, that process reached a deadlock. Subsequently, when the Camp David process was initiated, one of the first countries to encourage it was Saudi Arabia—we announced that we hoped a limited meeting such as this might perhaps create breakthroughs; but we were also fearful that we could not do so, because the Palestinians were not represented. The agenda for the meeting did not make it clear that the first order of priority was to resolve the Palestinian issue. The danger was, therefore, that it would—as we ask—and this is what happened: Instead of pointing to a comprehensive solution, the process suddenly trickled down to a mere bilateral settlement between Egypt and Israel; instead of seeking self-determination for

*Shatt al Arab is the disputed estuary on the border of Iran and Iraq where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers meet before emptying into the Gulf. Lesser Tumb, Great Tumb, and Abu Musa are three small islands in the Strait of Hormuz which were occupied by Iran in 1971. (Ed.)
to change—and here, I think the international community has made its position clear, on both self-determination and withdrawal. Initiatives now have to be taken to bring about Israel’s acceptance of these principles. The best way to do so is through the United Nations; and if the Israelis do not agree, there must be sanctions against them. I cannot think of any other peaceful way to solve the problem.

Of Jihad—and “Internationalization”:
Jerusalem, Epitome of a Conflict

Saudi Arabia did not call for a “holy war” [in response to the August 1980 Israeli vote making integral Jerusalem the capital of Israel]; we called for jihad. Jihad does not mean war. It means “struggle”—a struggle, in the present case, against Israel’s actions not only in conquering Arab territories but also in trying to incorporate them; a struggle to safeguard the rightful lands of the Moslem countries.

As far as “internationalization” is concerned, my question is: internationalization of what? Today, the concept of internationalization implies somehow that you internationalize East Jerusalem—why just one side, and not both? In any case, it represents a compromise added to an earlier compromise: Jerusalem was divided in the first place as a result of a compromise; internationalizing East Jerusalem now would mean increasing that compromise—clearly, it would be wrong. If we attach so much importance to the issue of Jerusalem, it is because it epitomizes what we see as the Zionist threat in the region: Israel is Israel—not just any state, but a Zionist state, i.e. an exclusive state for Jewish people. If, in addition to establishing such an exclusive state on land inhabited by other people of different faiths (not only Moslems, but also Christians), you want to make Jerusalem—which has so much value to Moslems and Christians—the capital of this state, the danger becomes ominous. So much so that compromises of “internationalization” appear suddenly irrelevant. . . . In our view, Arab jurisdiction over Jerusalem is the only way to guarantee freedom of worship; whereas Zionist jurisdiction is by definition exclusive, Arab jurisdiction (you have after all Arab Jews and Arab Christians and Arab Moslems) is by definition international.

Europe and the Middle East:
“Immense” Prospects for Cooperation

The latest European initiative [see the Venice, 1980 European Community statement on the Mid-East] is very positive: It is clear on the basic principles of a solution—self-determination for the Palestinians and Israeli withdrawal—and it thus falls in line with the overwhelming positions of the international community. What is lacking, again, is implementation: How do you translate the formulation into concrete realization. The Europeans have undoubtedly the capacity to contribute greatly to implementation. A good example of what can be done is, of course, what was done in the case of Rhodesia. A solution was eventually arrived at not through a traditional process of arguing with the parties on principles—trying to convince an Israeli administration with arguments on principles will not work. Rather, a settlement was reached in Rhodesia because the process was based on self-determination and direct vote for the people, and when the Rhodesian government opposed this process of settlement, international sanctions were taken against it. This is the only way to go about resolving Middle East problems.

The Euro-Arab Dialogue is extremely important—not just as a concept, but on the merits of existing prospects for cooperation between the two regions: Here are two regions that have played a determining role in world history, and the areas of cooperation are truly immense—not only because of the central, strategic position of both regions, but also because of the sheer capabilities of the regions for cooperation in a host of fields—whether economic, political, social, cultural. . . . We hope these tremendous promises will mature into productive cooperation. One of the basic stumbling blocks that prevented it in the past was the position of Europe with regard to the Palestinian problem, and the Europeans’ previous insistence on avoiding “sensitive” political issues and concentrating on other issues. There is now a realization—on both sides—that the real problems have to be confronted directly, and that cooperation, even on such sensitive areas, is possible and necessary to bring about a solution. This is very important and very helpful.

The “Revival” of Islam

The revival of Islam is not an invention of the present day. It may be getting only now the attention of the media—and mainly for negative, not positive, reasons. But Islam has been a beacon for the development of all Moslem countries. The freedom of all the Moslem countries from imperial domination was achieved through the already-mentioned jihad and the cohesive force of Islam—be it in North Africa, in Asia or in the Middle East. It is that beacon of cohesion and civilization which has allowed us to regain our independence and to look toward the future with the hope of developing our capacities and resources to become again a contributing factor in the international community. This “revival” is therefore a continuous process—one which, we hope, will be discovered and analyzed in its proper light, lest we fall again into the traditional misconceptions that have damaged in the past the relations between Moslem countries and the Christian world.

It is also important to clearly distinguish between Moslem revival and extremism. Who would consider, say, the Baader-Meinhoff group as “a Christian group” just because its members are Christians? Similarly, we may find extremists among the Moslems, but they represent in no way the norm. The norm is made of a cultural and religious background that is healthy and contributes to stability and progress—at home and in the international community at large.
Has Japan been reluctant to state its positions on the Middle East?

No, we have not. We have been stating our policies more and more explicitly. In April, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a booklet, *Japan and the Question of Palestine*, which outlines what we have been saying in the United Nations and elsewhere. Unfortunately, some of our positions have not been well-known to the outside world, partly because of a lack of public relations and education on our part.

What is Japan's position regarding the PLO?

To broaden the peace process, we believe participation by the Palestinians is very important. We consider the PLO as representing Palestinians, but not necessarily the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. We would like to see the PLO participate in the peace process and sit at the same table with the Israelis. Incidentally, the PLO established an office in Tokyo, and we maintain a helpful and constructive dialogue with the PLO through this office and our contacts through our embassies abroad.

There has been some criticism that Japan tends to place higher priority on more narrowly defined economic interests at the expense of broader, global economic and political interests and principles, e.g., in the Iranian hostage question. Do you think this is fair criticism?

I believe the last several months represent a kind of turning point in the general character of Japanese diplomacy. In the past, most of the major diplomatic issues for Japan were bilateral in nature—U.S.-Japan, China-Japan, Soviet Union-Japan, Korea-Japan, etc. But now, we are involved much more in multilateral diplomatic issues, perhaps in global issues.

This was in a sense necessitated by the Iranian hostage problem and also by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We faced very difficult policy choices between Iran and the U.S., for example. While we did not want to injure our very fundamental relationship with the U.S., we wanted to continue a friendly relationship with Iran. This was not only because of oil. Iranian oil accounted for about 10 percent of our total imports in recent months and it was completely suspended two months ago.

On April 11, I held a foreign press conference to avoid misinterpretation of Japan's position. In fact, one of the reporters then raised the question of whether Japan valued oil more than other relations and commitments. My answer was that although Iranian oil is vital to our economy, if there are bigger, more important causes, we will value those causes more highly. This was interpreted by the press as saying that if the U.S.-Japan relationship is jeopardized, we will take this U.S.-Japan relationship as more important than just getting oil. The Prime Minister was in Hokkaido at the time, and he fully supported my remark.

We have shifted our policy emphasis somewhat away from so-called economic diplomacy to economic plus political diplomacy. We have more or less decided that when necessary, we should sacrifice economic considerations for the sake of larger issues and larger causes.

I said at the joint press conference in Venice that in a way all seven nations are in the same gondola when it comes to the broader, basic issues. We value highly the free democratic institutions we share with North American and European countries. Our public recognizes this more and more. Also, we feel that our global responsibilities must increase because of our expanded GNP, which now accounts for nearly 10 percent of total world economic output. As a matter of fact, in 1978, Japan's GNP was about equal to that of France, Britain, and Italy combined. So naturally, we have more responsibilities in international affairs.

How do you see that responsibility being manifested?

For example, in the cases of Afghanistan and Iran. In these contexts, we took the initiative in approaching Europe to discuss global issues. There are some similarities between Japan and Western European countries. Like Japan, they are not superpowers, but do have vital interests in the maintenance of global peace. Of course, we share free democratic institutions. So I expect more frequent dialogues with European countries, not just on economic, bilateral European-Japanese economic issues, but on political and global issues. And I think the European countries appreciate this change in the Japanese approach.

How did Japan respond to the statement of the European Communities (E.C.) on the Middle East last month?

Two days after the announcement, as the foreign minister, I announced our support for the E.C. statement.
Do you think there may be a division between Japanese and European approaches to the Middle East on one hand and the American approach on the other, or is there general political cooperation among the trilateral countries?

I think general cooperation among the trilateral countries is absolutely necessary, and I believe this is recognized by the Europeans as well. The U.S. is the only country which can effectively influence Israeli policy. Incidentally, I visited Jordan two months ago and met with the King, the Crown Prince and other leaders. They were deeply concerned about the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Also, there is a very dangerous situation created by the bill being discussed in the Knesset regarding Jerusalem. This is running against the Camp David process and endangering peace. Such steps should be stopped or suspended as quickly as possible. Otherwise, they will strengthen radical elements among the Arab countries. We generally feel that Israel is taking too stiff a stance and that this endangers future negotiations.

What do you believe are Soviet intentions in the Middle East?

So far, the Soviets do not have much influence. Of course, they supply arms to some of those countries, but that does not necessarily mean those countries are pro-Soviet. The presence of the Soviets in Afghanistan is a new factor, and they are already very close to the Gulf area. But I do not think there will be an immediate moving out on the part of the Soviet Union.

We take a strong position opposed to the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan because this upsets general peace and stability in the region and is a violation of international law. We agreed on this at the summit meeting.

Japan, of course, boycotted the Olympics. For Germany and Japan, this involved a considerable sacrifice in terms of domestic public opinion.

Japan has increased its foreign assistance to Pakistan, hasn't it?

Yes, we increased our aid to Pakistan two and a half times this year. Also we increased our aid to Turkey from $70 million to $100 million. This shows that Japan is moving to a new stage of sharing the responsibilities of the so-called free world. We are also increasing very substantially our aid to Thailand. We are giving $100 million to aid Indochinese refugees, partly through the UNHCR and partly through bilateral, direct aid to Thailand for refugee relief. This is apart from our general aid to Thailand.

Do you think there is any political role Japan can play in the settlement of the Kampuchean crisis?

I think that eventually Japan should play some role. The time may not have arrived yet.

You are now the Government Representative for External Economic Relations. What will be your principal tasks in this position?

I don’t really know yet. But by far the most burning current issue is the question of government procurement practices involving NNT. I think we will come to a reasonable agreement on this topic. I expect to be involved heavily in North-South problems, too. Also I will be attending the Canberra meeting on Pacific Basin cooperation in September.

Will Japan’s interest in expanded Pacific cooperation continue in the post-Ohira era?

I think so. My interest continues as does that of our new Foreign Minister, Mr. Ito. We see this as a long-term process, and we should not be in a hurry to create some formal structure. But we should try to deal with the issues of common concern among the Pacific Basin countries, gradually building up an infrastructure of cooperation or an administrative framework. We should avoid bureaucracy. And we should avoid hasty approaches which may create some suspicion.

Should our European friends feel a little left out by Pacific Basin cooperation?

No, indeed. The British and the French have shown their interest in this concept. They have their own regional arrangements, such as the European Communities and the Lomé Convention. And we are saying that Pacific Basin cooperation should be open and outward-looking, not an inward-looking form of regionalism.
new slogan has been recently introduced into the Middle East debate: the European-American "division of labor." With the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the continuing uncertainties over Iran and the apparent stalemate in the Egyptian-Israeli negotiation on autonomy for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the feeling has become widespread among Europeans that the European Community (E.C.) should adopt a more active role in connection with the major problems of the region, first and foremost the Arab-Israeli conflict.

This uneasiness is nourished by two developments which have come to the fore since the outburst of the Iranian crisis and the growing disillusionment with the results of Camp David. First, the originally favorable conditions for American influence in the region have generally been reversed; today, Washington is hardly in a position to create a durable stability and a political climate adequate for the protection of overwhelming Western interests in the region, particularly with respect to oil supply. Furthermore, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has led to differing assessments of what the Western stance should be. While the Western Europeans are quite aware of the threat which the Soviet global strategy poses, they tend to be careful not to adopt a totally one-sided East-West attitude when analyzing and reacting to crises in the Third World. The Europeans claim to have a better understanding of what the problem is; they contend that European and Western interests would be better served by emphasizing non-strategic, local and regional factors and seeking common ground there.

Second, the Arab perception of the role Europe could and must play in the Middle East has evolved considerably in the last three years. This is because of a number of factors, ranging from failures of American approaches to the problems of the region to a reassessment of a common cultural heritage—concomitant with the revitalization of Islam and the reaction to "over-Americanization" since World War II. In the region's increasingly complex situation, interest in the European option has grown considerably. For Arab leaders, the role Europe can play is as manifold as it is vague; for those who lean towards a policy of non-alignment, Western Europe is seen as a partner which could give this policy an international point of reference without creating new dependencies. On the other hand, disappointment over the American approach to the Middle East crisis gives rise to expectations that Europe will help pave the way to an alternative, more sensible Middle Eastern policy; and that through appropriate resolutions Europe will, if not solve the crisis, at least apply moral pressure on Israel and, if necessary, urge Washington to try a whole range of other options. And for those Arab leaders who feel the pressure and the demands of social-revolutionary Islamism, Europe stands for that form of Westernization which makes social and economic progress and change possible without forcing them to give up their own principles and values.

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While new impulses have been given to European-Middle Eastern relations, the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern policy of Western Europe—on both bilateral and multilateral (E.C.) levels—already has a long tradition. Historically, the countries of the Mediterranean southern shore and of the Middle East have held an important place in the policies of at least those European countries which border on the Mediterranean Sea. Yet what amounted to a coordinated European Middle East policy only began with the formulation of a position paper on the Arab-Israeli conflict approved by the E.C. foreign ministers in May 1971. The paper contained comprehensive and detailed ideas on the solution of the Israeli-Arab problem which were never again found in official European deliberations. Because of the paper’s pro-Arab slant, it was rejected by Israel and treated with reserve by the U.S. This basic model for evaluating the situation was also used in the more declaratory European Middle East policy which followed.

In contrast, the E.C.’s “Global Mediterranean Policy,” also drafted in the early 1970s, has had greater impact. This framework dealt with only some of the countries of the Middle East and concentrated on economic cooperation. But it did create structural ties with an entire neighboring region on the basis of equality for all parties and of evenhandedness toward Israel and the Arab Mediterranean countries (including Jordan). The Arab oil embargo on Western Europe in the wake of the fourth Arab-Israeli war (October 1973) forced the Europeans to substantiate their position regarding the Middle East conflict. The declaration of the Nine of November 6, 1973, and the ensuing preparation for the Euro-Arab Dialogue showed the ambivalent situation of the Europeans. Representing a compromise of the different positions of the governments of the E.C. member states, the declaration admittedly could not satisfy Arab expectations; but at the time, it demonstrated that Western Europe was capable of formulating a policy of its own. On the other hand, in the mid-1970s the United States seemed unable to reckon with European attempts to solve basic political and economic problems with Middle Eastern states without American participation. Voided of any important issues (oil supplies, the Palestinian problem), the Euro-Arab Dialogue fell short of achieving the kind of results which could have been regarded as opening up an alternative framework for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the other hand, it has become more and more clear since then that Western Europe, by exposing the essential elements of a solution of the conflict, could no longer restrict itself to economic cooperation with the parties concerned, and that sooner or later, it would be called to play an active political role—with or without the consent of the United States. The European bias toward the Arab side over the last six or seven years can be traced in a dozen statements and in a series of European initiatives. The progressive refinement of the definition of the rights of the Palestinians and their role in the future process of negotiation (see the June 1980 E.C. statement in Venice), the reluctant approval of the Camp David approach and the emphasis on the need for a comprehensive solution, the unqualified condemnation of the Israeli settlement policy and the offer to take part in the setting up of international guarantees if and when a solution is found—all these are positions of the Nine which do not differ significantly from those of the United States, but whose adoption could introduce a new quality into the ongoing peace process. To present what have become, for the most part, traditional positions—as French President Giscard d’Estaing did during his visit to a number of Gulf states in March 1980—can satisfy, at least to some extent, Arab expectations; in addition, of course, it gives rise to new ones.

There is no doubt that the Europeans are aware that their contribution to an Arab-Israeli peace settlement will remain limited. This is not only due to the fact that every European declaration or initiative is but the result of a compromise—often hard to reach—among the Nine. Realistically, the Europeans also recognize that, in practice, they have no leverage to implement their resolutions if the parties concerned oppose them or if these resolutions run against the interests or policy of the United States in the region. The Nine are thus facing a fourfold problem: to define their role in the conflict in a clear manner; to come to a compromise in their policies which is more than just the smallest common denominator of the national policies of each E.C. member state; to become credible to both parties in the conflict; and to coordinate their efforts with the United States.

Realistically, at present the European contribution can hardly go beyond trying to help break the stalemate into which the Arab-Israeli peace efforts have run since the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. In this context, the E.C. puts strong emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian question for any future solution. Therefore, although verbally supporting the Camp David agreements, the Nine urge at the same time that the scope of Camp David be enlarged to a comprehensive endeavor, and that the rights of the Palestinians be given due consideration—including PLO “association” with the peace process—as recently advocated in the Venice declaration of the heads of state and government of the E.C. While it is clear that official European declarations have to take into consideration Washington’s reactions—which are still not very favorable to European initiatives in the Middle East—there have been numerous activities behind the scenes which reveal where some of the Europeans tend to “fall” with respect to the Palestinian question. Thus, most of the E.C. governments seem to support an “amendment” to Security Council
Resolution 242 (still considered the basic framework for a settlement): In addition to the two central elements of the Resolution—Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and the recognition of the right to exist of all states in the Middle East—the amendment would recognize the Palestinians as a people in their own right, entitled to self-determination, as the third pillar of the Resolution. It is hoped that, with the approval of the U.S. and Israel, this could help to bring about negotiations between the two sides.

Besides efforts on the official or semi-official level, significant unofficial moves were made towards the Palestinians in general and the PLO in particular. Quite a number of European politicians have met PLO representatives in order, on the one hand, to explore the extent to which this organization is ready to accept a compromise settlement and, on the other hand, to back them against their more radical opponents in the PLO. The meeting between Yassir Arafat and Willy Brandt (in his capacity as president of the International Socialist Movement) in July 1979 has been, so far, the most spectacular event in this context.

Still, the E.C. has hardly succeeded in gaining credibility as a major political factor in the politics of the Middle Eastern conflict. Israel is suspicious that the Europeans might yield to Arab pressure—because they are so heavily dependent on Middle Eastern oil—and adopt a one-sidedly pro-Arab attitude. The Arabs, for their part, are not satisfied by the still cautious approach of the E.C., especially on the question of the Palestinian state and the participation of the PLO; in this respect, they blame the Europeans for what they see as their continuing deference to U.S. positions. The Israelis’ concern has been aggravated by other developments—particularly the French posture, which they see as an indication that political opportunism in the hope of economic benefits might drive at least some of the Europeans to simply ignore the interests of Israel. Israelis saw a confirmation of their concern in the fact that President Giscard d’Estaing, when he visited Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in March 1980, refused to state explicitly in successive communiqués the need for secure borders and the recognition of all states in the region as an essential element of an overall settlement.

On the other hand, given the decision-making structure within the European Community, a Middle Eastern policy that would envisage a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict without stressing the right of each state in the region to exist and without taking into account the security of Israel would have little chance of seeing the light of day. The Federal Republic of Germany, among others, while insisting on the right to self-determination, has made it clear again and again that, as long as the PLO refuses to recognize officially the right of Israel to exist as a state, full PLO participation in the peace process will remain out of the question. Thus, the Israeli argument that the pro-Arab and pro-Palestinian slant of the European governments is entirely attributable to their dependence on Arab oil is more a reflection of the present Israeli government’s lack of flexibility in adapting to changing international conditions than the result of sober analysis of the elements and driving forces behind these changes.

It cannot be ignored, on the one hand, that there is a change of attitude of some Western European states with regard to Israel and the Palestinian issue (particularly in the case of the Federal Republic), and that this has something to do with the increased economic importance the Arab states have for Western Europe. But this is neither a new historical phenomenon (for interests have played a crucial role in states’ external relations throughout history) nor does it apply to Western Europe exclusively (but partly to the U.S. as well). On the other hand—and more importantly—it has become obvious that there is a dramatic decline in the moral respect which has been conferred on Israel in the past. The longer the occupation of the West Bank lasts, the more Israel disregards international law and international bodies, the more dubious its practices for maintaining law and order in the occupied territories—the more it is losing sympathy among policymakers and public opinion outside the country. And this is particularly true for the European states on which the existence and the survival of Israel has imposed—more than for the U.S. and more than for the Third World countries—a primarily moral obligation. Here simply lies the political significance of the European declarations and the kind of “pressure” Europe can exert on Israel. An Israel with its moral reputation declining and becoming a “normal” state, depending largely on foreign aid, sooner or later could find itself confronted with an international situation in which the Arab states have most of the assets in terms of interests in their hands, with only a few left to Israel.

When it comes to European-Arab relations, the declarations of the Nine on the Middle East conflict are only part of the game and only one aspect of the contribution the Europeans can make to further intra-Arab relations and stability—the precondition of a rational and sober Arab attitude towards Israel and the solution of the conflict. There is, first, the broadening of Euro-Arab economic relationships. The West Europeans will have to recognize the long-term interests of the oil-producing states, which are no longer willing to deliver oil in exchange for foreign currencies along with a simultaneous worsening of the terms of trade. Rather, these states expect technology transfers and the construction of a broad production base which will permit them to
Beyond improved commercial policies, a broader framework for Euro-Arab relations should be created by resuming the Euro-Arab Dialogue. This time, however, its scope should be expanded to include political issues, and its level perhaps raised from the ambassadors to the foreign ministers. This would not only remain one of the structural starting points for the multiplicity of economic and political relations among the Arabs and between these and a group of Western states. It, moreover, would provide the West with a forum for introducing its own political essentials into the discussion. A declaration covering Israeli sovereignty and security in return for recognition of Palestinian rights to autonomy could be part of the objective.

Finally, the concept of a more active European policy towards the Arab world is based on the cultural and historical proximity of both sides over the past more than one thousand years—an affinity which is repeatedly stressed by the Arabs. This means that Western Europe must come to understand the contemporary spiritual and religious philosophy of the Islamic Middle East.

It appears from all this that Europe has a role to play in the Middle East. It is this multiplicity of contacts and bases for cooperation, running parallel to the Arab desire to steer a political course which makes them as independent from the two superpowers as possible, that makes the voice of the Europeans heard in the Arab world, even if the words are not always what the Arabs want to hear. The fact that both sides, Israel as well as the Arab states, are not completely satisfied with the posture adopted so far by the Europeans is more to the credit of the European policy than it is proof that the European role is only marginal or even disturbing.

The question of increased European military presence in the region has been raised repeatedly in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In the past, the military role of the Europeans has remained rather limited, in spite of French efforts to encourage both its European partners and the states in the region to adopt a policy directed at reducing the presence of the superpowers in the area. After Afghanistan, obviously, the concept of a non-aligned policy in the Gulf area as a way to avoid being involved in a major superpower confrontation has gained new momentum. Some initial steps have been cautiously encouraged by the Europeans, although such a policy has its limitations given the threat created by the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

The discussion of the question leads back to the problem of the “division of labor” raised initially. For all the initiatives undertaken by the West Europeans must not be viewed as only being in the interests of the Europeans or as satisfying the expectations of the regional states; they should be able to be made compatible with the interests of the U.S. in a way advantageous to the West as a whole. This, however, can only be accomplished if there is success in developing a comprehensive political framework for Western-Middle East relations on which both European and American initiatives can be adequately based. In this context, a European contribution to the Western military presence in the Gulf region to counterbalance the—possibly increasing—Soviet power there should not be excluded.

In the present circumstances, it is important that “The West” be no longer represented by the United States alone in the Middle East, and it should be made clear that Washington does not act as unilaterally as it did in the past. In this context, the non-military initiatives which have been discussed could come into play. The economic burdens and political risks which the Europeans must shoulder if they are to pursue a more active Middle East policy ought to be seen as a contribution to the overall Western effort. Likewise, the European policy of dialogue and alternative options ought to be viewed as part and parcel of a comprehensive Western approach. European Middle East policy, therefore, should be regarded as one way of projecting Western influence into the region and of making a contribution to the attenuation of the anti-American syndrome. The unavoidable American presence in the region is conceivably easier to mediate politically if, simultaneously, other Western options can be exercised.

The potential and scope of a European Middle East policy, although still restricted by a variety of political factors, has increased in the second half of the 1970s. This European potential combines with a situation in which the scope of negotiations on the Israeli-Arab problem is narrowing rather than broadening, in which the destabilization of the Middle East with the developments in Iran and Afghanistan has taken on new dimensions, and in which—in view of the unprecedented challenge to the West in the Middle East—the helplessness of the Western governments is just as intolerable as the way the unsolved Palestinian problem denies responsible initiatives. The Europeans see themselves forced to take action by this constellation of problems. There is no talk of introducing alternatives to the present American course, although
some European governments might have reservations about the American approach. And the suspicion that the Europeans might exploit the difficulties the U.S. is facing for their own economic or political benefit is unfounded. It simply should be seen that, by bringing some additional elements into the picture, the Europeans can pull political strings where Washington's hands are tied—even if it be only temporarily.
It was on December 9, 1968, that former Pennsylvania Governor William W. Scranton, having just crossed the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan River, made his famous call for a “more even-handed” U.S. policy in the Middle East. Then a special envoy of President-elect Richard Nixon, Governor Scranton was on the last leg of a fact-finding trip to the Middle East which had taken him to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel for extensive talks with their respective leaders. In subsequent years, he was to return frequently to Middle East affairs—particularly as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (1976-77). In the summer of 1977, out of government service, he met with a senior PLO official in London.

In a wide-ranging conversation last July with Triadogue editor François Saugey and Charles Heck, the Trilateral Commission’s North American Secretary, Governor Scranton—a member of the Commission’s Executive Committee—reviewed the situation in the Middle East and some of the stumbling blocks on the road to a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

What I suggested in 1968 was that, for America’s effectiveness in the Middle East, especially to bring about a just and secure peace, it was vital to develop stronger relationships with a number of Arab countries in the region. To some degree, this has now happened—especially in the case of Egypt, with which our association is now very close.

In 1968, the Soviet Union had primary influence with several countries in the area, close ties with Egypt, Sudan, Syria and Iraq. Israel was and should be our foremost ally and concern in the region, but, among her neighbors, our only friends were Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan. To be sure, Soviet influence in the Middle East today cannot be ignored, particularly the very rapid buildup of their military presence and strength, in Southern Yemen and Ethiopia, for example. Yet, their influence with the countries immediately adjacent to Israel is not as strong as was the case in 1968. . . . The outstanding change is Egypt.

Thus, with close relationships with some Arab countries America has helped the peace process. The question remains—can this process continue?

President Sadat’s Achievement

The drama of President Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem was fantastic: At least one major Arab leader was unmistakably demonstrating his willingness to put his life on the line for peace!
By going to Jerusalem his enduring accomplishment was to remove two long-lived shibboleths as major obstacles in Mideast negotiations. One was the Israelis' chronic complaint that no Arab leader would negotiate with them. I heard that repeated many times at the United Nations. The Israeli representative, a remarkably able man, kept questioning the Arabs, "If you are really sincere about peace, why won't you talk with us?" Finally, an Arab leader—Sadat—did just that. I don't believe the Israelis thought that would ever happen.

Second, Sadat contributed greatly by diluting the ingrained belief of most Israelis that, no matter what Arabs may say, their objective and desire is to "drive the Jews into the sea." That fear still exists for some Israelis, particularly as to the PLO, but in the light of Sadat's extraordinary gesture, it can no longer include all Arabs without qualification. I doubt that most Americans realize what a big step forward these two achievements represent for future Mideast negotiations.

Strong Governments as a Precondition to Peace

Right now, the situation in the West Bank is about as bad as it could be, short of war. The tension has risen almost to the breaking point, and I am very worried. That and the Lebanese problem are both so acute at the moment that it is hard to suggest, in the present circumstances, what might be done to dampen down the emotions and broaden the scope of the peace process.

This points to a crucial factor which many Americans tend to overlook: In order to make progress toward a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, strong governments are essential: a strong American government, both internally and externally; a strong Israeli government; and a considerable degree of strength within the Arab leadership. The Saudis, for example, must be very sure of themselves, as must King Hussein of Jordan. Sadat, for Egypt, appears to have this strength and confidence, and he has done an extraordinary job as a result. But the current impasse in the West Bank is a major problem; for Sadat further steps toward peace are not possible until an arrangement on West Bank autonomy is achieved.

Syria is always a concern, now because of President Assad's serious internal difficulties. Last but not least, Iraq appears at the present time to be moderating its external policies somewhat, but its internal situation is one of tension and strife.

On the whole, therefore, it is a tough time to work out further steps forward; with the exception of Sadat's, no government has confidence enough to take risks for peace.

A Case in Point: Lebanon

Take the case of Lebanon—not that it is the only problem in the region, of course, but when Lebanon is in turmoil, the Mideast pot boils. Since the resignation of former Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann, there appears to be nobody left in the Israeli cabinet to put a damper on bellicosity in the event of a major outbreak in southern Lebanon. The Syrians, primarily because of their own internal problems, have quietly abandoned their position of authority in Lebanon; the Christians are having their share of internal conflict and fighting. The situation is ripe for another outbreak of violence and terrorism.

Under these conditions—precarious governments, exacerbated tensions—it is hard to visualize how anything constructive can be achieved. Not that we shouldn't try—we should always try—but the required political strength is simply not there. In the case of Israel we may have to wait until the next elections to find it.

As with the West Bank, the continuing crisis in Lebanon illustrates once again that strong governments, popularly supported, are needed for making the concessions necessary to achieve agreements and bring peace to the area.

I think the King of Jordan feels inhibited from joining the peace process at this time for essentially two reasons: First, I believe he feels that over the past few years American policy has not taken a consistent course; he does not know what will endure in what we say we will do or in what we are doing—hence, no assistance to the American effort. Second, he has his own Palestinian problem: He could not join a negotiation which currently involves only Egypt and Israel, unless and until he is certain his relationships with the PLO are secure. I do not believe he now has any such assurance. The King is a courageous man; he has demonstrated his courage many times. But I don't think even he could commit to this negotiation under the present circumstances. Remember that in the past he has had to reckon forcibly with the Palestinians in Jordan. While that situation has improved, it remains a potential tinderbox.

Two aspects of the Israeli settlement process in the occupied territories are of special concern: first, the settlements are perceived outside Israel, particularly by the Arabs, as a crass effort for territorial aggrandizement—a way to guarantee that Israel will keep forever territories now under Israeli control. Second, if the process continues and intensifies, I fear the Israelis will soon find themselves locked into a situation where no turning back is possible: They will have so many settlements, so many Israelis in the areas in question, that they will no longer have the option of making any accommodation concerning those territories. In that event all efforts for a
Mideast peace agreement go by the board!

On the other hand, Israel needs some kind of security arrangement on the West Bank, at least for a period of time. In 1968, for example, when Yigal Allon put forward the "Allon Plan," I thought it had many sensible features and that, for a transitional period, it would give the Israelis the sort of security guarantees which they need.

Just one look at the map is enough to understand why the Israelis feel insecure: just north of Tel Aviv—the narrow neck of Israeli territory from the Mediterranean to the West Bank border—only 13 miles of flat land, so prone to raids or attempts at conquest. This is why guarantees of security, involving some form of Israeli military presence on the West Bank, will be necessary. Just what that arrangement should be, and for how long, remains of course to be negotiated.

And most emotional of all—Jerusalem the Golden!

Now the Israeli government has struck at the very heart of the Jerusalem conflict by the Knesset's act of amalgamation—igniting the fire of every Middle East emotion.

Progress toward peace falls behind the escalating obstacles. Is it ever thus in the Middle East?

It is simplistic to talk about the PLO in general—it is composed of several different groups, with many degrees and variations of viewpoints, ranging from George Habash's extremist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to others who would like to see a peace settlement on a basis which, from the U.S. standpoint, is not wholly impractical. The two PLO officials with whom I have talked in the past happened to be of the latter variety. They were genuinely interested, at the time, in making headway toward a resolution of the problem and proved to be relatively moderate in their thinking. But then again, note the outcome of the PLO meeting in Damascus, in June this year, and one wonders if there ever can be a solution . . .

The Soviet Union aids and abets the PLO, whose leaders, in turn, consult closely with the Soviets—partly because they cannot do so with us. However, this does not mean that a firm "alliance" between the PLO and the Soviets is assured forever: I doubt very much that a durable "alliance" is likely between Moslems and Communists . . .

Should the U.S., then, reverse its traditional policy and engage in direct contact with the PLO? At the moment, no. First of all, only a very popular U.S. government could undertake such a policy. Contact now would so infuriate the Israelis that any process of negotiation—even the Sadat/Begin negotiations—would likely be aborted. Secondly, indirect approaches keep us informed as to what possibilities there are for moderating PLO attitudes. Direct contacts with the PLO needlessly exacerbate the situation. They are not necessary at least until such time as there is a real opportunity to solve one of the major issues of the Middle East crisis, the West Bank for instance.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has underlined in a dramatic fashion a growing concern shared by a number of countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia: Is the U.S. determined and ready to stand up to the Soviet Union in the Middle East and on the subcontinent? I read George Kennan's famous commentary in the New York Times on Washington's reaction to the Afghan crisis. I have very great respect for this profound man, his experience and knowledge of the Soviet Union; yet, my immediate reaction was that some distinctions should be made in this case. I would agree with Kennan's basic argument if applied to Europe, for instance, because our strength in Europe, although not necessarily as great as we might wish, is far greater than is the case in the Middle East or the Asian subcontinent. Even in the Far East, where our military strength also needs beefing-up, we are nevertheless stronger than in the Indian Ocean area.

But in the case of Afghanistan, I do not believe that the only interest of the Soviets was to replace a slipping puppet government by a more reliable sycophant. We are simply too weak in the subcontinent area and the Middle East to be certain the Soviets would never take advantage of that weakness. I am not suggesting they are likely to do so tomorrow morning, nor that they wouldn't

*George F. Kennan, "Washington's Reaction to the Afghan Crisis: "Was This Really Mature Statesmanship?"", The New York Times, February 1, 1980. Stressing "specific factors such as geographic proximity, ethnic affinity of peoples on both sides of the border, and political instability in what is, after all, a border country of the Soviet Union," Ambassador Kennan sees a serious "distortion in our assessment of the Soviet motivation." Noting that "a war atmosphere has been created" in Washington and that "we have been prodigal with strident public warnings to the Russians," he then asks in particular: "Can this really be sound procedure? Warnings of this nature are implicit accusations as well as commitments. We are speaking here of a neighboring area of the Soviet Union, not of the United States. Aside from the question of whether we could really back up these pronouncements if our hand were to be called, is it really wise—is it not in fact a practice pregnant with possibilities for resentment and for misreading of signals—to go warning people publicly not to do things they have never evinced any intention of doing?" (Ed.)
be wary of the risks involved; but it is by no means out of the realm of possibility. It is very tempting for them. Hence the very real concern of nations such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, both very close to "the action."

In short, I think it is essential that we build our strength and presence very substantially in the Asian subcontinent area and the Middle East—not just for oil and other economic interests, but also for effectiveness in bringing about a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

In the Middle East, just as in other parts of the world, it is very important that America work closely with our allies in a common effort. The problem, at the present time, is that our allies have serious doubts about the United States; until those doubts are allayed, working together is difficult. Part of the problem is personality. Part is the European and Japanese need for Middle East oil. Part is the traditional American impatience—our insistence on finding ready solutions, and the way our mood swings so easily from pessimistic nadirs to euphoric zeniths. An example is the latest uproar over the statement on the Mideast by the countries of the European Community: At first, Americans were convinced by headlines that the Europeans were going off by themselves to "make a deal with the PLO." When we finally engaged in real dialogue with them, they understood what the dangers were if they went too far. In the end this statement turned out to be relatively mild. The outcome was not totally salubrious, but it did not approach the disastrous results which had been so loudly proclaimed at first.

We live in a new era, a different world with which we still must learn to live. This new world need not be worse than what preceded it; it could be a good deal better. The emergence of the Third World—so often described in ominous terms—could turn out to be a great plus for America and the free world. The coming of age of newly more prosperous areas, far from being negative, provides us with considerable opportunities economically and politically. It opens up vast potential markets for our technological development, it brings the free world closer together, and it makes possible dramatic improvements in the living conditions of areas which have been plagued with problems.

Also our allies in the developed world—Western Europe and Japan—have become very strong economically and financially. If we can learn to work together with them, this, too, will afford us greater economic opportunities; and among other advantages such cooperation can make our diplomacy more effective—in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In short, great opportunities are there to be seized, provided we learn to practice a new, more balanced kind of cooperation required by a changed world where the old, somewhat simpler pattern of relationships is no longer feasible.
Although presented as direct speech, the following text is a very free synthesis of over six hours of conversation, last August in New York, with a leading Egyptian writer, Abdel Hamid Abdel-Ghani. It deals mostly with history, religion, and the complex, eminently “cultural” dimension of Middle Eastern affairs—some of the flavor of which we hope to have preserved in our rendering of our distinguished guest’s main points.

Abdel Hamid Abdel-Ghani is Chief Editor of Akhbar El-Yom, a leading Cairo weekly newspaper. He served as a diplomat in the Egyptian Mission to the United Nations from 1949 to 1961, and subsequently joined the U.N. Secretariat (1961-74)—where, among a variety of other responsibilities, he established and headed the U.N. Division on Outer Space. He then returned to the Egyptian Mission with the rank of Ambassador (1974-76), before assuming his current position in Cairo.

hen Khomeini’s revolution in Iran shook the world in 1979, all of a sudden everyone in the West started speaking of a revival of Islam. This is, of course, complete nonsense: In reality, the Islamic revival began in the early nineteenth century. In Egypt, it began as an intellectual and political movement led by the great Sayyid Jamal ad-Din, “al-Afghani.” Afghani went from his native Afghanistan to India; having failed in his attempts to arouse the Moslems of India against the British presence, he moved on to Egypt, where his movement began to flourish, particularly among the intellectuals and the educated young—leading, in time, to what became the Arabi revolution, against the Khedive and the foreigners in Egypt. That revolution was to trigger the occupation of Egypt by the British who came to protect the power of the Khedive—an occupation first described as “temporary,” which was to last 80 years.

Later, Afghani was to move on to Turkey; to Iran, where he started the political/religious movement of today’s ayatollahs; then to Russia, where he sought to unite the Moslems against the tsars. Everywhere, al-Afghani’s “message” to the Moslems was, essentially, that only by returning to the fundamental principles of Islam would they find a way out of their problems and get rid of the Europeans occupying their countries. This accounts for the early appeal and strength of his movement (although it was to become more moderate under his immediate successor in Egypt, who introduced
some degree of cooperation with the British and the Khedive).

In Saudi Arabia, it was the even earlier Wahabi movement (at the close of the eighteenth century, under Abdel-Wahab) that signaled this revival of Islam. In reaction against the complete distortion of Islam under the Turkish rule, when Turkey dominated the Moslem world, the movement preached a return to the true principles of Islam (including such Islamic fundamentals as social justice and, yes! democracy: only, not a Western-styled, mass-oriented brand of democracy, but one that emphasized consultation with the leaders of the various population groups, clans, tribes, etc. . . . ) This movement—like Afghanif's and other similar movements in Libya, in India and elsewhere—was part of that same Islamic revival, after Islam had been dormant for at least six centuries.

Closer to us, the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt is also part of that revival. To be sure, there are, to this day, important differences among such revivalist groups: For the more "progressive" Afghani and his followers, for instance, the Moslems should take from modern science, modern economics and political thinking, whatever can be of use that does not contradict Islam, whereas the more "reactionary" Moslem Brotherhood wants the doors closed between us and Western ideas (except, to a degree, in the purely technological fields). Yet, in the end, their unanimous call is to return to the fundamental principles of Islam. It is disconcerting to see that it took last year's revolution in Iran to draw the world's attention to a phenomenon of revival such as this, which matured well over a century ago.

Previously, in Egypt, the issue of Arab unity has remained confined to small circles of politicians and intellectuals who were thinking in purely secular terms; it took the Moslem Brotherhood to make it touch the minds and hearts of the people. The Moslem Brotherhood movement had been at work in Egypt and a number of other Moslem countries—Syria, Pakistan, Jordan, Sudan. In order to find a solid basis for Arab solidarity, they seized on the Palestinian question. There had been no reaction in Egypt to the 1917 passage of the Balfour Declaration, and when the Zionist movement became active, reactions were limited to a handful of Egyptians knowledgeable about the Arab countries and the Palestinian question. It is by taking up the issue of Palestine from a religious viewpoint, in terms of Moslems vs. Jews, that the Brotherhood—through its sermons in the mosques, its religious pamphlets, its newspapers—aroused that popular expression of solidarity, to be later enshrined in the Arab League.

Another striking expression of the impact of that religious feeling on the Middle East conflict was the creation of the Islamic Conference in 1969, immediately following the burning of the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Ever since Kemal Ataturk had abolished the Caliphate in 1924, leaving the Moslems without a religious leader, there had been repeated attempts to establish an Islamic umbrella organization—all in vain. Even the Israeli/Arab wars had not spurred this kind of solidarity: It took the burning of the mosque, coming only two years after the occupation of Jerusalem, to prompt the establishment of the Islamic Conference which is so often in the news today in the wake of Iran and Afghanistan.

Between these two developments—the Cairo, 1945 demonstration and the creation of the Islamic Conference in the aftermath of the 1967, "six-day" war—extends the "Nasser era," a period when political factors became predominant and the religious factors almost disappeared. For one thing, Nasser himself suppressed the Moslem Brotherhood—some of its members were hanged, many others were jailed, some until after Nasser's death. In addition, Nasser knew he had to use a political language, not a religious one, with such external partners as Nehru, Tito, or the Soviet leaders. He therefore systematically emphasized the political aspects of the Middle East problem; it was no longer a matter of "Moslems" vs. "Jews," but a struggle against "the Zionist movement," an "extension of the cold war" with the "forces of progress" in the Arab world having to face a political movement formerly connected with the old colonial powers of Europe, and now with U.S. global designs in the Middle East.*

*When Egypt and Syria merged in 1958 into the new United Arab Republic—I was at the time a member of the Egyptian delegation at the United Nations—the Syrians had been speaking at the U.N. of the
But the 1967 defeat changed all that. The deep sense of humiliation of the people encouraged them to return to religion—particularly the young. Increasingly, the defeat came to be attributed, among the masses, to a slackening of religious fervor and adherence to Islam. In a purely political struggle, the fight was unequal, the Moslem Brotherhood argued; if we keep dealing with the question of Palestine without a strong religious feeling and enthusiasm, the result will not be as favorable to us as it could be. Hence the post-1967 revival of religiosity after the Nasser, "political" era.

At the United Nations, you find invariably that, on issues relating to the Middle East, the Moslem countries vote almost as one. An Egyptian study of Moslem voting at the U.N. shows that their degree of solidarity varies between 70 percent and 100 percent. The policies of these governments may differ on such issues as the future of Palestine or the "internationalization" of Jerusalem: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, for instance, are in favor of internationalization, while Jordan and Saudi Arabia are against it; Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Sudan, Libya, and others support the establishment of a Palestinian state, whereas we in Egypt favor "autonomy" for the Palestinian people but think a "state" should be incorporated within Jordan. But when the time comes to vote on such issues, we all vote as one people, as one block. The reason for this unanimity, in my view, is that the governments cannot but follow the people's lead on matters related to religion: no government—whatever its official position is on, say, Jerusalem—can afford to appear less "extreme" than the next Moslem government when the issue is raised before the world public opinion in a forum such as the United Nations. Public opinion in Egypt would not tolerate a weak government stand with regard to anything that has to do with religion. This is another interesting reflection of the impact of religious trends in the Moslem world upon contemporary Middle East politics.

You will recall that one of the early decisions of the new Iranian revolutionary leadership was to give strong support to the Palestinians, and the Palestine Liberation Organization in particular. Yassir Arafat was received in Teheran as a head of state, with considerable ceremony and enthusiasm; the Israeli embassy was taken over by the Iranian rulers and given to the PLO as its new headquarters in Teheran. Yet, one can doubt whether this new "connection" will have any real practical effects in the future—for essentially two reasons. The first, and less important one, is that the Iranian revolution was an uprising by the Shiite Moslems: The Shiites—an overwhelming majority in Iran—are known in the history of Islam as the "activists" among Moslems; but many differences remain between them and the majority of the Moslem world, the Sunnis; it is doubtful that the Iranian revolution can be truly welcomed by the Sunnis—i.e. among the Palestinians, and in Syria, in Saudi Arabia, in Egypt (where there are no Shiites) and throughout most of the Moslem world, where Sunnis clearly dominate.

Second, and much more importantly, there has always been a conflict between the Pan-Islamists and the Pan-Arabs, and from the beginning the Palestinian problem has always been dealt with as an Arab problem, not a Moslem problem. For the Pan-Islamists, like Khomeini, the Moslems, whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs, should unite; for the Pan-Arabs, the Arabs, whether Moslems or Christians, should unite. Historically, the Pan-Islamists have always accused the Pan-Arabist movement of having been started by Lebanese Christians. In point of fact, the first to start speaking of Arab unity and the Arab nation in the modern age were a handful of Christians from Lebanon (in the second half of the nineteenth century). Similarly, the founder of the Baath Party, Michel Aflak, is a Christian—with followers and disciples in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc. . . . They are the ones who introduced modern Arab nationalism as the vital link between people of different religions in the area. This alone sets them apart from the Pan-Islamists, who speak of Moslem unity and have traditionally been at odds with Arab nationalism.

I doubt that the resurgence of Pan-Islamism can have as strong an impact upon Middle East politics and the question of Palestine as Arab nationalism has traditionally had: The feelings of the Moslems of, say, Senegal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Turkistan towards the question of Palestine could never be as strong as those of an Egyptian, a Syrian, an Iraqi, or a Saudi; Islamic "nationalism" differs in nature from Arab nationalism, which was and remains the deepest motivation, the strongest factor in Middle Eastern affairs. However, if the revival of religious feelings has not replaced Arab nationalism, it has definitely strengthened it and is likely to continue to do so.

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"Jews" and of the "Jewish occupation of Palestine"; after they merged, they were under strict instructions to speak instead of the "Zionist movement." Nasser himself, in a series of articles in the British press, kept stressing that he was "not a religious fanatic" and was "not against the Jews."
nobody thought Camp David would lead to such a break among Arabs; President Sadat himself expressed on several occasions his “great astonishment” that Saudi Arabia—followed as usual by most Gulf states—joined in the boycott of Egypt decided in Baghdad after the peace treaty with Israel. Yet, I still believe that Camp David marks a transitional period, and that in spite of the treaty between Egypt and Israel, the Arabs will soon come to the conclusion that Sadat made no mistake in going to Israel, in negotiating with Israelis, in signing a treaty with them. The initial shock in the Arab world has now passed, and many Arabs have begun to realize that Sadat did a service to the Arab cause: He made the Arab viewpoint reach the man in the street, in America and in Europe; and he showed—to Israel and to the world—that the largest Arab neighbor of Israel wants peace, and not only peace but also cooperation. True, the peace talks seem now to be at a standstill—and whether the Israelis can in the future become less intransigent, more forthcoming, under a new government remains to be seen. But as far as the Arab world is concerned, I do not think the present rift with Egypt will last forever; I would not be surprised in the least if, within a year or two, the Arab people as a whole stood united again as they were under Nasser.

In Egypt itself, with only very few exceptions (among the intellectuals) the people as a whole welcomed with a formidable enthusiasm to Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem in 1977. Significantly, it is only much later that the Moslem Brotherhood began to criticize publicly the Jerusalem visit (and the Camp David agreement): At the time, anyone opposing the trip was considered a traitor, so great were the blessings the people expected from peace. Almost three years later, the people realized that the prosperity they had expected was nowhere to be found. The return of the Sinai land and oil fields was an important benefit for the country, but the masses of Egypt did not feel the practical effect of it. Despite increased economic assistance from the United States—Europe’s assistance stays modest and Japan’s negligible—the people did not see any concrete result after all: Inflation has risen dramatically, and the country’s economic problems (housing, transportation, communications . . . ) remain intractable. As a result, the Egyptians have begun to question the price of peace. Today’s situation in Egypt is best summarized as follows: Sadat wants peace; the intellectuals oppose broader relations with the Israelis; the Egyptian people want no more war, but doubt that sacrificing the country’s relations with the rest of the Arab world is an acceptable price to pay. Such is Egypt’s profound dilemma at the present.

The issue of Jerusalem is a particularly sensitive one for the Israelis and for the Arabs—it goes to the heart of deep religious feelings on both sides. At present, the Israelis seem to be practically unanimous in insisting that Jerusalem remain a unified city and the capital of Israel; on the Arab side this issue is, for fundamental religious reasons, even more vital to all Moslems than, say, the question of statehood for the Palestinians. In my view, a drastic change in the Israeli position will be required if we are to solve this problem—and I think that, under a new leadership in Israel, such a change would be quite possible in the future. In the first place, at the time of the partition of Palestine, Israel agreed that Jerusalem should be internationalized: The 1947 U.N. resolution provided for a division of Palestine into three parts: a Jewish state, an Arab state, and an international area: Jerusalem. At the time, the Israeli leaders—people such as Ben Gurion and Golda Meir—strongly supported that resolution; the only exception was Menachem Begin. Subsequently, Israel’s position stiffened considerably—in particular with the advent of a hard-line, more religiously minded generation of leaders. But I would not exclude at all the possibility that a new generation will come and, if there is progress towards a broader peace with Israel’s neighbors, ultimately agree to some arrangement making Jerusalem an international area, open to Moslems, Jews and Christians alike.

In Egypt itself, the Moslem Brotherhood is no longer the strongest standard bearer of Islamic fundamentalism: It was decimated under Nasser, and most of its former leaders who escaped prison or execution dispersed in other Arab and Moslem countries. Rather, the spearhead of today’s Islamic revival is to be found among the young, university students and graduates above all—an unusually large group in Egypt—who cannot make an adequate living, and whose expectations are dashed by the country’s economic woes. (Now, more than half of the people seen in the mosques are young people—a dramatic change with the past, when attendance at the mosque was mostly from the older age groups.) Quite naturally, economic distress and the growing gap between rich and poor throughout the Middle East are an important factor in making a number of people turn to religion as a last resort: The skilled workers, for instance, are not eager to put their energies into an Islamic movement—although they do not oppose such a movement. On the other hand, the peasants in the villages, whose economic conditions have not improved like those of most factory workers, have shown some interest in Islamic “revival” movements. But the most fanatical, those who see an Islamic revolution as the only hope, are to be found primarily in the universities. And I believe these are the people who will have a growing role in the
affairs of Egypt and the other Arab countries within the next ten or twenty years.

These trends obviously pose a serious problem for governments in the Arab world. The least these governments can do is to pay some kind of lip service to young Moslem movements. However, I doubt that Arab leaders—whether in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Syria—could go beyond this lip service: They are only too well aware of the fact that encouraging such movements could make their own situation very precarious. They know that, unless they keep some control over these movements, their potential strength can make them very dangerous. Saudi Arabia, for example, did encourage its fundamentalists—until the recent incidents in Mecca and Medina, which came as so many belated reminders of the threat of such movements if they are uncontrolled. This is true of most Arab countries: Governments seek either to suppress these movements (see Syria’s ongoing violent war against the Moslem Brotherhood) or to keep them in check (see Sadat’s May 1980 order to dissolve all illegal Moslem groups in Egypt’s colleges and universities). In any case, all governments throughout the Arab world are aware that these fundamentalist movements, if allowed to escape government control, will become a source of great danger to their regimes in a not very distant future.

A closing note. This issue of Trialogue goes to press just when long mounting tensions between Iraq and Iran are escalating into open military conflict involving land and air combat between the two Gulf nations. This conflict seems to offer yet another glimpse into the “dialectics” of Arab nationalism and Pan-Islamism, and the ambiguous relationship between a number of Arab governments and their religious movements—a central theme in Dr. Abdel-Ghani’s remarks to Trialogue last August: On one level, Pan-Islamic revival “strengthens Arab nationalism.” On another, they both “remain at odds,” as shown by this new war in the Gulf—a conflict which a New York Times analyst describes as “pitting a secular Iraq with its vision of Pan-Arab leadership against an Iran with its newly dominant religious government seeking a Pan-Islamic union stretching beyond the Arab world,”* while other observers stress Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s “war of survival” against the contagion of Shiite fervor in his country ** and draw parallels between Hussein’s and Nasser’s brands of Arab nationalism. (Ed.)
