

ISRAEL : SEARCH FOR SECURITY

I. Policy Determinants

a) Toward other key actors and issue of negotiated settlement -

1. Internal political stalemate between Likud bloc and Labor party resulting in National Unity Government where each faction blocks foreign policy initiatives of the other.

2. Public opinion divided on key issues of peace settlement and security such as policy toward West Bank and Gaza, negotiations with the Palestinians, comprehensive peace conference, relations with Egypt.

3. Continued dependence on the United States for economic and military aid.

4. Large Arab population under Israel control growing increasingly militant with widening rift between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel and increasing tensions between Jewish West Bank settlers and Arab occupied resident population.

b) Changes in above determinants in next five years and effects on peace prospects -

1. NUG likely to complete its four year term of office because of recognition by both Likud and Labor that new election would produce another electoral stalemate; if new elections within five years results likely to be similar to those of last election, i.e. domination of Knesset by Likud and Labor, but neither able to form a majority, thus a new NUG, and continued stalemate in foreign and security issues.

2. Continued division in public opinion with intensification of militant nationalist positions . Advocates of compromise in foreign policy likely to remain divided and incapable of organizing as an effective political bloc. Result, domination of foreign and security policy decisions by hard-liners.

3. Continued dependence on U.S. assistance without change in positions of American president means that there will be little interference by the U.S. in Israel's foreign policy decisions. Rather, U.S. support (military and economic) will tend to reenforce positions of hardliners.

4. Growing trend toward "Belfastization" of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel likely to reenforce positions of hardliners on both sides and to undermine efforts toward compromises in a peace settlement.

c) Maintenance of a tenuous status quo is conceivable although the trend is toward a situation in Israel and the occupied territories that militates against compromise, political stability, economic well-being, and factors conducive to peace negotiations.

II. Requirements for Settlement

a) Circumstances required to generate movement toward peace settlement -

1. The major prerequisite for effecting changes in Israeli policy toward peace negotiations is a change in the U.S. presidential administration, in U.S. Middle East foreign policy, and in perspectives of the Administration in the region. At this point only an American initiative seems capable of breaking the internal deadlocks that have stymied Israeli policy on issues related to a peace settlement. Thus, in the next two years there is little likelihood of changes in U.S. Middle East policy, and accordingly little possibility of changes in Israeli policy. Beyond 1989 movement will depend on the outcome of the next U.S. presidential election.

2. For Israel to convince Egypt and Jordan (the two most likely partners in a peace dialogue) of its earnest Israeli policy changes would be required in the occupied territories, toward the Palestinians, and toward territorial compromise, changes that are not likely to occur in the present political context.

3. For Egypt and Jordan to convince Israel of their earnest they might dilute their support for the PLO (King Hussein seems to have moved in this direction).

b) Feasibility and/or desirability of an international conference -

1. There are many ways of structuring an international conference, thus its format is a major consideration. A properly structured conference would be desirable

as a way to mediate the interests/demands of all parties to the conflict and all power interests in the region (Israel, Palestinians, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, U.S. , USSR). Should the interests of one or more major powers or parties not be accomodated, such parties or powers might undermine progress toward settlement.

2. Although desirable, organization of an international Middle East peace conference is not likely to be feasible in the next couple of years for the following reasons:

A) Israel and the U.S. would be outnumbered by other countries with common interests.

B) Israel's NUG would oppose such a conference. Although Labor's Shimon Peres has indicated willingness to participate in such a conference under restricted conditions, Prime Mjnister Yitzhak Shamir adamantly opposes such an effort. Even if Peres could convince his cabinet colleagues to participate, his conditions for participation are not likely to be acceptable to Syria, the Soviet Union or the PLO.

c) Feasibility of "Track II" approaches to a settlement -

To-date "Track II" approaches, especially the Sadat iniative in 1977, the resulting Camp David meetings and the peace treaty signed between Egypt and Israel in 1979 have been the most productive. Despite asperities in Egyptian-Israeli relations since 1979, relations between the two countries are a significant improvement over pre-treaty relations. The agreement has brought a measure of stability to the Middle East and in Arab-Israel relations, has improved relations between the U.S. and Egypt, the most significant Arab country. True, there are many deficiencies in the agreement and disadvantages for all concerned, however, the balance is weighted on the side of broad American objectives in the region.

Similarly, "Track II" approaches between Israel and Jordan have, in the past, been promising, although they were aborted because of the Reagan Administration's failure to play its role as an active intermediary. Following the Peres initiative in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly during October 1985 in which he laid out a framework for a settlement, relations between Jordan and Israel were closer than they had ever been, and closer than they have been since. Although the Peres initiative created dissention within the NUG, both Jordan's King Hussein and Egypt's President Mubarak responded favorably. Although Israel and Jordan followed through in direct talks ("Track II") the gap between/was not closed, due largely to the absence of a persistent, reliable, and strong intermediary, a role for which only the U.S. was suited.

"Track II" approaches, if properly structured, and backed with sufficient support from the U.S. may not guarantee a comprehensive peace settlement, but they can substantially diminish tensions in the region and forestall the outbreak of new conflict.

III. U.S. Policies

a) Policies and strategies the U.S. should adopt to achieve a settlement or a partial settlement.

1. Regional

A. Diminish or at least contain U.S. and U.S. allies' dependence on Middle East oil through massive collaboration (Western Europe, Japan, etc.) in unified approach to energy problem: develop technological and policy alternatives - energy alternatives, oil reserves, shared energy resources, energy economy (the less the U.S. and its allies depend on Middle East oil the greater their leverage in offering solutions to Arab-Israel conflict).

B. Rationalize U.S. investments in ALL Middle East countries and Middle East investments in the U.S. Establish a board to monitor U.S.-M.E. investment.

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C. Deescalate or at least contain Middle East arms race:

(1) Set across the board limits on U.S. arms shipments and military assistance to ALL Middle East countries.

(2) Initiate negotiations with U.S. allies which provide arms to M.E. (U.K., France, Germany, W. Europe) to establish weapons quotas.

(3) Initiate negotiations with the Soviet Union and Third World arms suppliers for M.E. arms limitations agreements.

(4) Establish a Middle East Arms Control Agency, either through the United Nations or through bi- and multi-lateral accords.

D. Renew "Track II" bi- and multi-lateral Presidential negotiation and mediation on Arab-Israel issues with reappointment of a Presidential Negotiator at highest political level (outside diplomatic track) , i.e., designation of a well known and highly visible presidential confidant endowed with extraordinary power to make decisions who will reestablish base for direct presidential intervention.

E. Presidential initiative.

2. Israel

A. Establish join Presidential-Congressional working committee to examine realities of Israel-U.S. relations: aid, arms, Lavi project, Pollard, Irangate, etc.

B. Initiate program to inform U.S. Congress, media, public of political realities in Israel-U.S. relations.

C. Invite direct Israel participation in implementation of program for arms deescalation described in 1.C. above and in planning for presidential negotiations described in 1.D. above.

D. Review U.S. policy toward Israel in light of U.S. General Accounting Office study, U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE STATE OF ISRAEL, June 1983.

B) Prospects for adoption of these policies depend on the results of the next U.S. presidential election.

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IV. Assessment

While prospects for peace or conflict in Arab-Israel relations depend in large measure on events and circumstances within the Middle East region such as trends within Israeli politics and Israeli policies toward the occupied territories and the Arab states as well as on policies of Jordan, Egypt, Syria and the Palestinians toward Israel, the heaviest burden and greatest responsibility lies with the U.S. Only the U.S. has the credibility with all parties involved, the military and economic power, and the history of relationships with all parties that endow it with ability to break through the inevitable road blocks that are likely to arise in negotiations on peace, whether "Track II" or international conference. Since Congress is unlikely to take any initiatives, public agencies lack clout, and the formal government agencies (State Department) are incapable of breaking the deadlock, the prospects depend in the final analysis on initiatives by the president of the U.S.

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