COMMENTARY: ON NEGOTIATING THE NON-NEGOTIABLE

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This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first uses the discussion of a case of marital conflict to articulate a framework for thinking about negotiating the non-negotiable. For various parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict, many of the issues seem non-negotiable, and it may be helpful to consider the general conditions that are relevant to determining whether negotiations are apt to take place and to succeed. The second considers the Lebanese war of 1982 and why constructive negotiations were not a likely outcome. The final section addresses the question of what could be done, under present circumstances, to promote constructive negotiations.

A FRAMEWORK FOR THINKING ABOUT NEGOTIATING THE NON-NEGOTIABLE

As a psychologist, I have had the opportunity to do therapeutic work with couples who have been involved in bitter conflicts over issues that they considered non-negotiable. I will briefly describe a young couple who were involved in what I have elsewhere characterized as a "malignant process" of dealing with their conflicts.

The malignancy of their process of dealing with their conflicts was reflected in the tendency for them to escalate a dispute about almost any specific issue (for example, a household chore or their child's bedtime) into a power struggle in which each spouse felt that his or her self-esteem or core identity was at stake. The malignant process resulted in (as well as resulted from) justified mutual suspicion; correctly perceived mutual hostility; a win-lose orientation to conflicts; a tendency for each to act toward the other in a way that would lead the other to respond in a way that would, in turn, confirm the former's worst suspicion of the latter; an inability to understand and empathize with the other's needs and vulnerabilities; and a reluctance—based on stubborn pride, nursed grudges, and fear of humiliation—to initiate or respond to a positive generous action to break out of the escalating vicious cycle in which they were trapped.

Many couples involved in such malignant conflicts do not seek help; they continue to abuse one another, sometimes violently, or they break up. The couple that I worked with sought help for several reasons. On the one hand, their conflicts were becoming physically violent; this frightened them and it also ran counter to their strongly held intellectual values regarding violence. On the other hand, there were strong constraints making it difficult for them to separate. They felt they would be considerably worse off economically, their child would suffer, and they had mutually congenial intellectual, esthetic, sexual, and recreational interests which would be difficult for them to engage in together if separated. As is often the case in such matters, it was the woman—being less ashamed to admit the need for help—who took the initiative to seek the assistance of a skilled third party.

Developing a Readiness to Negotiate

Before I turn to a discussion of the negotiation of a non-negotiable issue, let me briefly discuss the steps involved in getting the couple to the point where they were ready to negotiate. There were two major interrelated steps, each of which involved many substeps. The first entailed helping each spouse to recognize that the present situation of a bitter, stalemated conflict no longer served his or her real interests. The second step involved aiding the couple to become aware of the possibility that each of them could be better off than they currently were if they recognized their conflict as a joint problem, which required creative, joint efforts in order to improve their individual situations. The two steps do not follow one another in neat order: Progress in either step facilitates progress in the other.

Irrational Deterrents to Negotiation

There are many reasons why otherwise intelligent and sane individuals may persist in behaviors that perpetuate a destructive conflict harmful to their rational interests. Some of the common reasons are:

1. It enables one to blame one's own inadequacies, difficulties, and problems on the other so that one can avoid confronting the necessity of changing oneself. Thus, in the couple I treated, the wife perceived herself to be a victim, and felt that her failure to achieve her professional goals was due to her husband's unfair treatment of her as exemplified by his unwillingness to share responsibilities for the household and child care. Blaming her husband provided her with a means of avoiding her own apprehensions about whether she personally had the abilities and courage to fulfill her aspirations. Similarly, the husband who provoked continuous criticism from his wife for his domineering, imperial behavior employed her criticisms to justify his emotional withdrawal, thus enabling him to avoid dealing with his anxieties about personal
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conditions that foster the recognition of the conflict as a joint problem requiring joint efforts

what are the conditions that are likely to help conflicting parties become aware of the possibility that each of them could be better off than they currently are if they recognize that their conflict is a joint problem that requires creative, joint efforts in order to improve the individual situations? A number of such conditions are listed below:

1. Crucial to this awareness is the recognition that one cannot impose a solution which may be acceptable or satisfactory to oneself upon the other. In other words, there is recognition that a satisfactory solution for oneself requires the other's agreement and this is unlikely unless the other is also satisfied with the solution. Such recognition implies an awareness that a mutually acceptable agreement will require at least a minimal degree of cooperation.

2. To believe that the other is ready to engage in a joint problem-solving effort, one must believe that the other has also recognized that he or she cannot impose a solution—that is, the other has also recognized that a solution has to be mutually acceptable.

3. The conflicting parties must have some hope that a mutually acceptable agreement can be found. This hope may rest upon their own perception of the outlines of a possible fair settlement or it may be based on their confidence in the expertise of third parties, or even on a generalized optimism.

4. The conflicting parties must have confidence that if a mutually acceptable agreement is concluded, both will abide by it or that violations will be detected before the losses to the self and the gains to the other become intolerable. If the other is viewed as unstable, lacking self-control, or trustworthy, it will be difficult to have confidence in the viability of an agreement unless one has confidence in third parties who are willing and able to guarantee the integrity of the agreement.

the foregoing conditions for establishing a basis for initiating the joint work necessary in serious negotiation are much easier to develop when the conflicting parties are part of a strong community in which there are well-developed norms, procedures, professional, and institutions which encourage and facilitate problem-solving negotiations. This is more apt to be the case in interpersonal conflicts than in conflicts between ethnic groups or nations that do not perceive themselves as members of a common community. When the encouragements to negotiation do not exist as a result of belonging to a common community, the availability of helpful, skilled, prestigious, and powerful third parties who will use their influence to foster problem-solving negotiations between the conflicting parties becomes especially important.

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issues that seem vitally important to a person, such as one's identity, security, self-esteem, or reputation, often are experienced as non-negotiable. Thus, con-
sider the husband and wife who viewed themselves in a conflict over a non-negotiable issue. The wife who worked (and wanted to do so) wanted the husband to share equally in the household and child-care responsibilities; she considered equality between the genders to be one of her core personal values. The husband wanted a traditional marriage with a traditional division of responsibilities, in which he would have primary responsibility for income-producing work outside the home while his wife would have primary responsibility for the work related to the household and child care. The husband considered household work and child care as inconsistent with his deeply rooted image of adult masculinity. The conflict seemed non-negotiable to the couple—for the wife it would be a betrayal of her feminist values to accept her husband’s terms; for the husband, it would be a violation of his sense of adult masculinity to become deeply involved in housework and child care.

However, this non-negotiable conflict became negotiable when, with the help of the therapist, the husband and wife were able to listen to and really understand each other’s feelings and the ways in which their respective life experiences had led them to the views they each held. Understanding the other’s position fully and the feelings and experiences which were behind them made each feel less hurt and humiliated by the other’s position and more ready to seek solutions that would accommodate the interests of both. They realized that with their joint incomes they could afford to pay for household and child-care help, which would enable the wife to be considerably less burdened by these responsibilities without increasing the husband’s chores in these areas: of course, doing so lessened the amount of money they had available for other purposes.

This solution was not a perfect one for either party. The wife and husband, each would have preferred that the other share their own view of what a marriage should be like. However, their deeper understanding of the other’s position made them feel less humiliated and threatened by it and less defensive toward the other. It also enabled them to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement that lessened the tensions between them despite their continuing differences in basic perspectives.

The general conclusions that I draw from this and other experiences with a "non-negotiable" issue is that most such issues are negotiable even though the underlying basic differences between the conflicting parties may not be reconcilable. The issues become negotiable when the conflicting parties learn to listen, understand, and empathize with the other party’s position, interests, and feelings, providing they are also able to communicate to the other their understanding and empathy. Even though understanding and empathy do not imply agreement with the other’s views, they indicate an openness and responsiveness which reduces hostility and defensiveness and which also allows the other to be more open and responsive. Such understanding and empathy help the conflicting parties to reduce their feelings that their self-esteem, security, or identity will be threatened and endangered by recognizing that the other’s feelings and interests, as well as one’s own, deserve consideration in dealing with the issues in conflict.

"Non-negotiable" issues also become negotiable when the conflicting parties can be shown that their vital interests will be protected or enhanced by negotiation. As R. Fisher and W. Ury have stressed, it is helpful for negotiators to learn the difference between "positions" and "interests." The positions of the conflicting parties may be irreconcilable, but their interests may be concordant. Helping parties in conflict to be fully in touch with their long-term interests may enable them to see beyond their non-negotiable positions to their congruent interests. An atmosphere of mutual understanding and empathy fosters the conditions that permit conflicting parties to get beyond their initial rigid, unnegotiable positions to their underlying interests.

THE LEBANESE WAR OF 1982 AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICTS

In the previous section of the chapter, I have utilized a case of marital conflict to illustrate some thoughts related to the conditions affecting the readiness to negotiate and some notions relevant to negotiating the non-negotiable. Although the Arab-Israeli conflicts are vastly more complex, multilateral, and difficult than the case I have used for illustrative purposes, I believe the ideas contained in the discussion of the simpler situation are applicable to the more complex one. From my perspective as a "conflict resolver," the two key process issues in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflicts are: (1) creating the conditions in which the various parties to the conflicts are ready to engage in creative, joint problem-solving efforts as part of a negotiation to resolve their disputes, and (2) helping the disputants to negotiate the substantive concerns that they consider to be non-negotiable.

I have no special knowledge or expertise relating to the Middle East or to the nations and their leaders which are discussed in the various chapters of this book, so the discussion that follows is speculative, and draws heavily on material presented by the authors of the earlier chapters. From this material, it seems evident to me that before the onset of the 1982 war in Lebanon, none of the national leaders or the peoples directly involved felt that conditions were ready for joint problem-solving negotiations on the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian-Syrian complex of problems. The lack of readiness to negotiate reflected internal political and psychological deterrents to negotiation, a distrust of the other sides with whom one would be involved in negotiations, and beliefs that one might improve one’s position in future negotiations through unilateral actions in Lebanon. The weakness of Lebanon—resulting from its bitter internal strife—had left it prey to the alien purposes of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), Syria, and Israel.

The disastrous 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel, the chapter by Ofira Seliktar indicates, had as its maximalist objectives the strengthening of the Maronite government in Lebanon, the weakening of Syrian influence, and the denial of a
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The territorial base to the Palestinian resistance led by the PLO. Presumably, the achievement of these objectives would have enormously strengthened Israel's strategic position in future negotiations on the Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian-Syrian complex of problems. Hopefully, from Menachem Begin's perspective, it would have insured a non-aggressive Lebanon, decapitated the Yasser Arafat-PLO leadership of the movement for an independent Palestinian nation, encouraged King Hussein to assume control over a binational Jordanian-Palestinian state, and isolated rejectionist Hafez al-Assad. These maximalist objectives were consistent with the "New Zionism" and the "idealistic" approach that Seliktar indicates characterized the approach of Begin and his colleagues to foreign policy thinking. As Betty Glad's chapter suggests, these objectives were also not inconsistent with the views of a key part of the Ronald Reagan administration. However, in retrospect, it is obvious that these objectives were inconsistent with reality.

It is also apparent that important elements of the Begin government and the Reagan administration were, from the beginning, strongly opposed to the maximalist objectives that Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister, ardently advocated before and during the invasion and pursued relentlessly throughout. Why did the realism of the opponents of the maximalist objectives, who were probably sufficiently powerful politically to do so, not block the pursuit of these objectives? The chapters by Seliktar and Glad make it clear how intragovernmental organization and decision-making procedures that were inadequate and unclear, combined with weak leadership by Begin and Reagan, enabled those who favored the maximalist objectives to pursue these objectives.

As Seliktar indicates, there is little reason to doubt that Begin's flawed leadership during the Lebanon invasion reflected both enduring and temporary features of his personality. Many of his enduring personality characteristics predisposed him toward the "New Zionism," an activist foreign policy, contempt for the Arabs, and a win-lose orientation toward conflict which would have made him antagonistic to the maximalist objectives advocated by Sharon. On the other hand, other enduring personality characteristics such as his intelligence, realism, and strong impulse control would have raised doubts about their feasibility and might well have led him to restrain Sharon. However, his psychological depression at the time of the invasion of Lebanon seems to have been sufficiently intense for him to have withdrawn into himself so much that he no longer maintained adequate knowledge or effective control of the actions of the officials in his government. The unreflective impulse of his "New Zionism" government was "maximalist"; it would have necessitated Begin's strong impulse control, intelligence, and realism being effectively employed to restrain this impulse.

Similarly, Glad's discussion of Reagan's personality indicates how his enduring personality characteristics and style of leadership resulted in actions and inactions that gave the impression that, at the minimum, the U.S. government was acquiescing in the Israeli actions and not restraining their invasion of Lebanon. As Glad points out, Reagan was ideologically inclined to see the Soviets as the source of all disturbances in the Middle East, and the PLO and the Syrians as their surrogates; hence, he was not unhappy with the initial Israeli military victories. However, among his key advisers there was considerable conflict over the Israeli invasion. Secretary of State Alexander Haig apparently thought that the Israeli invasion offered grand new strategic opportunities for the United States to achieve its anti-Soviet and antiterrorist goals, as well as to facilitate a Middle East peace based on new power alignments. Others saw the maximalist objectives of the Israelis as unrealistic, as alienating the Arab world, and as being destructive of U.S. interests. However, as Glad points out, Reagan's dislike of detail and his difficulty in confronting conflict among his political intimates led to policy and turf battles which he had no taste for controlling. This led to a considerable incoherence of policy in which the U.S. government was perceived by the Arabs and Israelis alike as implicitly endorsing Israeli actions because it did not act consistently and strongly to restrain the Israelis; something which was within its power.

The results of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon were a disaster for almost all the parties directly or indirectly involved. For Israel, there were the large number of casualties, an enormous economic drain, an increased political rancor in Israel, the intensified hostility of almost all groups in Lebanon, the further alienation of Egypt and Hosni Mubarak, and the tarnishing of its reputation and loss of much public sympathy in the United States and among other supporters in the West. For Lebanon, there were the enormous destruction and casualties as well as the further demonstration of the impotence of its central government. For the United States, its credibility in the Arab world was decreased and its relations with Israel were significantly strained. The PLO was very much weakened by its severe military losses, the loss of its military base in Lebanon, the dispersion of its fighting force to a number of different countries, the internal conflicts among its component units, and the Syrian attempt to gain control over the PLO. The Arab nations lost credibility because of their lack of effective intervention and support for the PLO. Similarly, the Soviet Union also lost credibility because of its lack of effective action in support of the PLO and because of the poor performance of the military equipment it had provided to Syria. The Palestinians in Lebanon suffered severe casualties and abuse, and lost much of the protection provided by the PLO, while the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza felt that their prospects of achieving an autonomous national state had been lessened because of the decreased strength of the PLO.

The only gainers seemed to be the leaders of Syria, Egypt, and Jordan: Assad, Mubarak, and Hussein. Assad's power was enhanced by Lebanon's increased dependence upon Syria, by his increased control over important components of the PLO, and by the increased quality and quantity of military supplies provided by the Soviets in an attempt to rebuild its military image in the Middle East. Mubarak increased his acceptance in the Arab world, decreased some of the internal dissent in Egypt, and helped Egypt to resume some of its former leadership role by his

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denunciation of Israel and by his support of the PLO. Hussein's importance as a potential negotiator and spokesman for the Palestinians increased as the PLO's strength was weakened.

From this situation of disaster for so many of the leading actors in the Middle East, with its vivid human tragedies, it was theoretically possible that the follies of their orientations and behaviors in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict would become so salient that they would undergo a fundamental change and reexamine their underlying assumption about how they should act in relation to their conflicts. Unfortunately, instead of the occurrence of a "conversion" phenomenon with the creation of new opportunities for constructive negotiation, a more typical "dissonance reduction" phenomenon seems to have occurred, in which the key leaders defensively dug into their previously held positions and tried to justify them even more.

For a conversion phenomenon to have occurred as a consequence of the mutually disastrous and tragic experiences associated with the invasion of Lebanon, several conditions that were not existent would have had to be present. First of all, it would have required cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union to establish a framework for constructive negotiation and for each country to place the necessary persuasive pressure on its friends in the Middle East to engage in such negotiation. As I indicated in the first section, when the encouragements to negotiation do not exist as a result of the conflicting parties belonging to a strong common community, powerful third parties will have to use their influence if problem-solving negotiations are to occur between embittered adversaries. However, the intense antagonism between the two superpowers during the first term of the Reagan administration would have made such cooperation impossible. Beyond that, the initial incoherence of the Reagan administration's policy in the Middle East and the recent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan would have made effective cooperation impossible.

Secondly, it would have required Begin's government to adopt a new understanding, a more generous attitude, and less defensiveness toward the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians and their leader, Yasser Arafat. This would have taken strong, daring, imaginative leadership by Begin, but this was not possible given his psychological condition during this period. Moreover, Begin's personal attitudes toward the PLO, his religious convictions, and his new Zionist ideology would not have predisposed him to such an initiative. Third, the weakened PLO, with Arafat's leadership under strong challenge from Syrian-supported factions, was not in a position to take a more open, accepting stance toward Israel's existence as a nation without the risk of being further torn apart by internal dissension. Fourth, Assad of Syria would have had to negotiate from a position that would not be as strong as he expected it would be in the future. He believed that the relative balance of power between Syria and Israel was shifting away from Israel and that, similarly, his relative power among the Arab nations was also increasing; furthermore, Assad believed that he would be in a better position to achieve his objectives of a Greater Syria if he waited. Finally, given the populist outrage throughout the Arab world at the Israeli invasion, it would have taken unusually courageous and far-sighted leadership for the "moderate" Arab leaders such as Hussein and King Fahd to propose or even support direct negotiations with Israel about many issues that are considered non-negotiable in the Arab world. However, as the chapters on Hussein and Fahd indicate, neither of these leaders has the personal boldness or sense of invulnerability that would enable them to follow in Anwar Sadat's footsteps.

For these and many other reasons, I suggest that the summer of 1982 and the following period were not times in which there was any readiness in any of the major actors (except possibly Egypt) to negotiate constructively about the issues involved in the Arab-Israeli conflicts, and it would have been impossible to create the conditions under which the conflicting parties would have actually attempted to negotiate the non-negotiable. Have things changed sufficiently since 1982 to permit more positive possibilities? I shall address this question in the remaining section of this chapter.

WHAT CAN BE DONE NOW?

The situation has changed in many respects from the circumstances around the time of the 1982 war in Lebanon. I select two changes for emphasis because I believe that they bear strongly on the likelihood that constructive negotiation can be initiated and conducted. First of all, I believe that a number of factors have contributed to the increased recognition by the leading actors in the multiple Arab-Israeli conflicts that they cannot impose a solution which is acceptable only to them upon their adversary. Secondly, changes within the Soviet Union and the United States, and in their relations with one another provide new possibilities for developing a constructive context for negotiations.

The increased recognition that one cannot impose a solution upon one's adversary is reflected in the Fez Declaration of the Arab League Summit Conference on September 9, 1982, which implicitly endorsed the UN Security Council's resolutions that affirm "the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force" (UN Resolution 242). As the chapter on King Fahd indicates, the Fez Declaration represented a Saudi initiative; the wavered-down quality of the declaration reflected the indecisive, weak quality of Fahd's leadership. It is also reflected in the Jordanian-Palestinian agreement between King Hussein and Chairman Arafat of February 11, 1985. Further, as Margaret Hermann points out in her chapter on Assad, Assad tacitly recognized Israel as early as May 1984, when he signed a disengagement treaty with Israel, and he has clearly adhered to the terms of the treaty since then. Additionally, Kenneth Dana Greenwald's chapter on Mubarak indicates that Mubarak has maintained Sadat's policy of peace with Israel despite the severe strains placed on the relations between Israel and Egypt caused by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Finally, the multiple and severe costs of Israel's
military adventurism in Lebanon have made it politically unfeasible for Israel's leaders to employ Israel's military power other than for well-defined defensive purposes; strong opposition within Israel as well as from Israel's supporters in the United States would be expected.

This change of viewpoint comes from several sources. The repeated Arab-Israeli wars, none of which have enabled the parties involved to achieve their maximalist objectives or even to achieve gains that would not be subject to future challenge, have led the conflicting parties to reduce their aspirations and to have more realistic objectives vis-à-vis one another. Although not pleased by it, most of the Arab leaders have come to accept the idea that Israel will continue to exist as a nation: they are only in the beginning stages of coming to terms with the practical implications of this idea. Similarly, most Israelis have come to accept the view that the Palestinian aspirations for autonomy and nationhood cannot be ignored and are permanent; they too are only in the early stages of coming to terms with the practical implications of this recognition.

Since 1982, the economic situation of all of the nations in the Middle East has worsened considerably. For Israel, this has been largely due to the costly consequences of the Lebanon invasion and occupation, while the oil glut has severely affected the Arab nations. The worsened situation has two important possible consequences. It may make leaders such as Assad, Mubarak, and Yitzhak Shamir even more prudent and less likely to engage in costly military adventurism, and it creates more unrest among the national populations. To the extent that the leaders seek to address the domestic economic problems underlying the unrest, they will be less apt to think they have the resources necessary to impose their will on their external adversary. On the other hand, if they feel unable to cope successfully with their domestic economic problems, they may attempt to channel the internal unrest toward the external "devil" as a means of redirecting it away from themselves. Thus, the current economic adversity in the Middle East represents an opportunity if the leaders in these nations can be helped to cope with their domestic economic problems, and a danger if they are not so helped.

Another factor contributing to the growing acceptance of the fact that neither the Arabs nor the Israelis can impose their solutions on the other is the recognition that the superpowers will not allow this to happen. The United States will not allow Israel to be dismembered nor, as Dina Rome Spiescher's chapter indicates, will the Soviet Union allow Syria to be overwhelmed by Israel. These realities serve to limit and constrain the military options available to the opposing sides.

Despite the growing awareness that the Arab-Israeli conflicts cannot be resolved by military force and the increasing recognition that the continuing military jostling is debilitating to the economies and to the national well-being of the various nations involved, it is evident that there is considerable resistance to participating in serious negotiations within each of the parties to the conflicts—Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, the Palestinians (and the PLO). I suspect that the political and psychological deterrents to serious negotiations within each nation, and within the bloc of Arab nations, are sufficiently strong at the present time to make it unlikely that a creative initiative which could overcome the obstacles to negotiations would come from any of the leaders in the Middle East. Such an initiative and pressure apparently must come from outside, as I suggested in part I, if the barriers to problem-solving negotiations are to be overcome.

A joint initiative by the Soviet Union and the United States, supported by the other Western nations, is most apt to create the conditions for fruitful negotiations. A framework for such a joint initiative has been outlined by Nadav Safran in The Wall Street Journal. He proposes that the following two steps be undertaken in rapid succession:

First, U.S. and the Soviet Union would simultaneously announce parallel moves: The U.S.S.R. would restore diplomatic relations with Israel and indicate... that it would allow large-scale Jewish emigration. Simultaneously, the U.S. would announce its acceptance of the latest Palestine Liberation Organization "peace proposals," which envisaged acceptance of Resolution 242 the moment the U.S. acknowledged the right of the Palestinians to self-determination... and open a diplomatic dialogue with the PLO.

In an immediate second step, Washington and Moscow would cause the United Nations secretary-general to issue an invitation to all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict to rendezvous at Geneva at a designated prompt date for a peace conference. Once the conditions long insisted upon by the parties have been essentially met by the first step, nonattendance would carry its own penalty of isolation and superpower ire. No agreement on procedure would be negotiated in advance; procedure would be the first and only substantive item on the agenda. The only other requisite, adherence to 242, would have been secured by the first step. A peace conference can thus be envisaged to take place within a month of the first step.

The Soviet move would compensate Israel for the American move and diminish its resistance to it. It is useful to recall that Shimon Peres has already agreed to an international conference and has intimated that a PLO that accepted Resolution 242 would "no longer be PLO." The U.S. move would compensate the Arab side for the Soviet move and clear the way for PLO participation alongside Jordan in the peace process. The U.S. move would... [also] have an excellent chance of gaining endorsement by the great majority of Arab countries, and thus generate enormous pressure on Syria, too, to adhere to it or at least to subscribe to the second step.

Is such a joint initiative by the United States and the Soviet Union feasible? On the one hand, the political leaders of both superpowers undoubtedly recognize that one of the greatest perils that they face is the risk of getting involved in a direct military confrontation with one another through the escalation of conflict between nations in the Middle East to whom each of the superpowers has strong commitments (for example, Israel and Syria). This shared recognition of danger can provide the basis for a joint initiative of the kind described above. On the other hand, the superpowers have been rivals for influence in the Middle East, and much of their rivalry has been expressed through the supplying of weapons
to the conflicting parties, feeding a dangerous arms race in this area. In pursuing
the U.S.-Soviet rivalry, the Soviet Union has curried favor with the Arabs by
breaking diplomatic relations with Israel and by ostracizing that country, while
the United States has attempted to limit Soviet influence by excluding it from
involvement in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. My hunch is that each of the
superpowers is beginning to recognize how self-defeating their strategies have
been. By ostracizing Israel, the Soviet Union has cut itself off from playing any
effective role in promoting peace in the Middle East; and by "freezing" the
Soviet Union out of any constructive role in peace negotiations, the United States
has inadvertently encouraged them to play the role of "spoiler" to any Arab-
Israeli peace negotiations.

A joint initiative such as the one proposed by Nadav Safran seems desirable
because it would not only lessen the likelihood that a war between the super-
powers might arise out of the conflicts in the Middle East, but also because it
would enhance the interests of both superpowers.\(^7\) Such an initiative would
implicitly recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet interest in the Middle East,
something very much sought after by that country, and it would at the same
time place the USSR under strong pressure to give up the "spoiler" role, some-
thing clearly in the interests of the United States. A joint initiative of this sort
would have to be preceded by quiet diplomacy between the two superpowers to
teach the terms of the joint initiative. Undoubtedly, it would require considerable
preparatory work, as well as diplomatic skill, for such an initiative to be de-
veloped successfully.

Could such an initiative set the stage for constructive negotiations about the
Arab-Israeli conflicts? It could if the proposal were phrased in such a way that
it successfully addressed the basic anxieties of the Israelis and the Arabs. There
is considerable reason to believe that the basic anxieties of the Jewish people in
Israel center around the images of the Nazi Holocaust and their history of cen-
turies of rejection and traumatic persecution.\(^8\) Given these anxieties, it is not
surprising that security and acceptance have become overarching objectives of
Israel, nor is it surprising that being "strong" and "tough" have come to be
viewed as national virtues. There is also reason to believe that the basic anxieties
of the Arab people center around being humiliated and treated as inferiors, and
about being dominated and exploited by intruders. It is easy to understand the
Arab preoccupation with self-determination, the occupation of its territories, and
its proud refusal to be treated as a defeated party.

The joint initiative proposed by Safran could start the process of addressing
the anxieties of both the Israelis and the Arabs. The restoration of relations with
the USSR, the resumption of more regular Jewish emigration from the Soviet
Union, and the PLO acceptance of the UN Resolution 242 would reduce some of
Israel's apprehensions. The United States acknowledgement of the right of
self-determination for the Palestinians and its opening of a diplomatic dialogue
with the PLO, following its acceptance of Resolution 242, would meet some of
the Arab concerns.

representatives (rather than the top leaders) of the Israelis and the various Arab
groups would be encouraged in order to prepare them and their constituents for
constructive, realistic negotiations about the issues in conflict. At this informal
stage of prenegotiations, it would be very useful to have impartial discourse
facilitators available to help the conflicting parties deal successfully with the
difficulties that are apt to rise in such meetings.\(^9\) Such informal meetings would
not only precede the conference proposed by Safran but would continue during
and subsequent to such a conference. They would provide an opportunity to test
out proposals, for each of the conflicting parties to communicate their views and
feelings fully to the other, for possible agreements to be developed, and to work
out some of the underlying emotional concerns that might stand in the way of
agreement.

If the Arabs and Israelis were enabled to listen to and really understand each
other's feelings and how their respective experiences have led to the views each
side holds, they would become more able to seek solutions that would accom-
modate the interests of both. This would be true even for issues that are consid-
ered to be non-negotiable. As I have stated earlier, non-negotiable issues become
negotiable (even though underlying basic differences may not be reconcilable)
when the conflicting parties learn to listen, understand, and empathize with each
other's position, interests, and feelings, providing they are also able to com-
municate their understanding and empathy.

A joint initiative such as proposed by Safran seems desirable, but is it likely?
As I started to write this paper early in November 1986 (before the Iran arms
scandal became known), I believed it was a possible but not probable initiative.
I thought that there would be more resistance to it within the Reagan than the
Gorbachev administration. The ultra-conservatives believe that it is neither de-
sirable nor feasible to try to engage in constructive cooperation with the Soviet
Union on the problems in the Mideast, and they would be able to immobilize
colleagues who were less ideologically committed to an adversarial relation with
the Soviet Union. The complexity of the issues involved would make it highly
unlikely that Reagan (as depicted by Glad) would take a strong leadership position
implementing the proposed Safran initiative, even were it brought to his attention.
Such an initiative might have had more chance of acceptance by Israel when
Shimon Peres was Prime Minister than under Shamir, who was opposed to the
Camp David accord.

After the arms control debacle in Iceland and the scandal over the arms deal
with Iran, the Reagan administration's foreign policy, at the time of this writing
(January 1987), seems to be in disarray. The administration's arms deal with
Iran has impaired its credibility with the leaders of the Arab nations and made
its policy seem duplicitous or incoherent. Under such conditions, it is rather
unlikely that the Reagan administration will take any major new initiatives in
the Middle East. Nevertheless, it is not altogether impossible that under the
pressure to have some dramatic accomplishment in foreign policy to compensate
for its recent debacles, the Reagan administration might be open to new ideas.

To sum up this discussion, to establish the conditions necessary for the
tiating the non-negotiable" between parties involved in an embittered conflict usually requires help from influential, prestigious third-parties. The required assistance is of two kinds: (1) help in getting the parties to communicate effectively (2) help in getting them involved in a constructive problem-solving process. Such help is initially directed toward addressing the basic anxieties of the conflicting parties. By so doing, one enables them to listen, understand, and empathize with one another sufficiently that they are ready to seek solutions that would also accommodate the interests of the opposing side. The second function required is assisting the parties to identify or create potential agreements that would be responsive to the interests of each of the parties involved. The two kinds of help are mutually supportive. To the extent that the parties can see the possibility of satisfying agreement, they will be more able to listen to one another in an understanding, empathic manner, and, of course, the converse is true too.

The current situation in the Middle East is, I believe, potentially conducive to serious negotiations about the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Despite this potential, there is sufficient resistance within each of the parties involved in the conflicts to require the intervention of third parties before serious negotiations are likely to begin. If the United States and the Soviet Union could, as influential third parties, mount a joint initiative such as the one described above, it would have a good chance of starting a constructive process of negotiation. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, it does not seem likely that such an initiative will be undertaken in the near future. It would take strong, highly skilled, active leadership by the United States to foster the complex, creative negotiations required in the Middle East. Such leadership capability in foreign affairs has not been evident so far in the Reagan administration.

NOTES

3. I except from this generalization only the leaders of Libya and Iran, who have messianic visions that may have little to do with current or foreseeable realities.
5. My hunch is that Assad of Syria is in the best (but very unlikely) position of any of the leaders in the Middle East to break through the impasse between Israel and the Arab nations with a bold Sadat-like initiative. However, the initiative would have to be preceded by secret negotiations with Israel that would lead to a return of the Golan Heights and the acceptance of self-determination for the Palestinians, combined with well-defined security guarantees for Israel. Assad is in the best position because, as Margaret Hermann points out in this volume, he is a very effective leader, he has strong control over Syria and he play the "sponsoring" role in relation to possible agreements by Hussein and Arafat with Israel that omit his interests.
7. Since the United States is more influential in the Middle East than the Soviet Union, such an initiative is more apt to get underway if it originates with the United States, but its success would require the endorsement and active participation of both superpowers. Secretary of State George Schultz, with the guidance of Henry Kissinger, might have been able to get such an initiative underway if he had been a more assertive foreign policy leader.