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Historical Breakthroughs in Arab-Israeli Negotiations: Lessons for the Future

Ilan Peleg and Paul Scham

This article analyzes the conditions that might facilitate the long awaited diplomatic breakthrough in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians in the Obama presidency. In order to identify ten specific factors, the article relies on the rich historical record of peace negotiations, particularly since 1967. The analysis indicates that, despite the presence of a number of the factors which have facilitated past agreements, there are others which militate against excessive optimism.

The arrival of Barack Obama's administration in Washington in January 2009 generated particularly intense speculation with regard to the possibility of trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "once and for all." In the year before his inauguration, a number of veterans of the Oslo peace process of the 1990s wrote "how to" (or "how-not-to") books in impatient anticipation of a "new dawn" in Washington with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or even with regard to the Middle East as a whole. Authors included Aaron David Miller, Daniel Kurtzer with Scott Lasensky, Martin Indyk, and Dennis Ross with David Makovsky.¹ All of these books combined personal experience with policy prescriptions, and all made it clear that their authors fervently hoped that the new President would reverse George W. Bush's legacy. They joined a number of predecessors,² who have not only described and analyzed the Arab-Israeli

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1. Aaron David Miller's *The Much Too Promised Land* (New York: Bantam, 2008); Daniel Kurtzer & Scott Lasensky's *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace* (Washington, DC: USIP, 2008); Martin Indyk's *Innocent Abroad: An Intimate Account of American Peace Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009), and Dennis Ross and David Makovsky's, *Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East* (New York: Viking Press, 2009).

2. William Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) and Neil Caplan & Laurie Eisenberg, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: Patterns, Problems, Possibilities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

negotiations, but also have formulated a series of “lessons learned,” lessons explicitly intended to be relevant for future negotiations.

The new wave of policy prescriptions was grounded on the general, even universal, perception that not only might Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking be galvanized by the new administration, but that this is a particularly crucial time for peacemaking in the Middle East in general (including, in addition to the issue of Israel/Palestine, the issues of Iran, Lebanon, and the Golan Heights). For much of George W. Bush’s term, most observers, both in the US and abroad, believed that as long as he was President, no long-term solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was likely, nor would a serious attempt be made to achieve such a solution. In fact, the one exception proved the rule: very few considered the November 2007 Annapolis Conference to be a serious effort.³ Most observers, of whatever political persuasion, perceived Bush as an unabashedly pro-Israel politician who rarely even tried to portray himself as an “honest broker” between the sides. While Bush touted himself as the first US President to openly advocate the two-state solution, few took this pronouncement very seriously.

With two bloody wars within 30 months — Israel against Hizbullah in Lebanon (2006) and against Hamas in Gaza (2008-2009) — a new urgency for dealing with the conflict was established. The Arab League made clear rather forcefully that if Israel did not accept its Peace Initiative, announced in 2002 and reconfirmed in 2007, it would soon be withdrawn. And Arab leaders, who have warned repeatedly that the key to dealing with the Arab and Muslim worlds in general must be a consensual settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, clearly expected action from Obama.

These near-universal expectations of a break in the diplomatic stalemate were not unreasonable. Even apart from the current collection of crises, several characteristics of candidate Obama suggested that he would be strongly inclined to make the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a high priority on his agenda: a) he is in general a very engaged, resolute man, likely to prove himself to be an “activist” President; b) he appears to approach virtually all issues in a comprehensive manner, looking for fundamental solutions; and c) during the presidential campaign of 2008 he spoke about the concerns of both parties to the Middle East conflict — Israelis and Palestinians — with great passion, dwelling specifically on Israel’s security concerns and on “Palestinian suffering.”⁴ His balanced approach was noticeable, and it could be seen as validation of America’s reemergence as an honest broker. The one prominent exception to Obama’s balanced approach was his promise at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) convention in June 2008 that Jerusalem would not be divided; however, his campaign backtracked from this position within days.⁵

3. During 2009, however, there were a number of credible reports indicating that, in fact, the negotiations begun at Annapolis had come remarkably close to success. Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “The Two-State Solution Doesn’t Solve Anything,” *The New York Times*, August 10, 2009; Aluf Benn, “Olmert’s plan for peace with the Palestinians,” *Ha’aretz*, December 12, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1135699.html>. Perhaps a determined effort by then-President Bush might have provided the final impetus for a deal.

4. “Clinton and Obama Court Jewish Vote,” *The New York Times*, March 14, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/us/14aipac.html>.

5. “Transcript: Obama at AIPAC,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/us/politics/04text-obama-aipac.html?pagewanted=print>.

Obama's early actions indicated the likely importance of the Israeli-Palestinian issue for him and for his chief lieutenants. These included: a) the appointment of George Mitchell as the Middle East envoy on his first day in office; b) the public references by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Vice President Joseph Biden to the two-state solution; c) Obama's emphasis on repairing America's relations with Middle Eastern countries and the Islamic world (e.g., his interview with *Al Arabiya*, his first as President with the foreign media, as well as his speech in Ankara to the Turkish Parliament); d) his explicit statements that he expected and would work towards solutions; e) shortly after the formation of the new Israeli government headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, George Mitchell announced that the Arab Peace Initiative would be incorporated into the Administration's peace policy,⁶ and f) after the new Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said, "Western-backed peace efforts with the Palestinians had reached a 'dead end' and Israel intended to present new ideas for diplomacy," the administration pointedly reiterated its support for the two-state solution.⁷ Obama's speech to the Muslim world in Cairo made his commitments clear in the most public way possible.

Against this backdrop, and from the perspective of one year into Obama's presidency, this article has three major complementary goals. First, we offer an analysis of the conditions that might facilitate a diplomatic breakthrough in the Middle East, and we identify ten specific conditions and offer a theoretical as well as historical analysis of each. Second, we apply the lessons of the last four decades of peace negotiations in the Middle East to the situation today and in years to come (obviously, the tone of our discussion and, indeed, the content of our observations is tentative in nature — history might offer probabilistic outcomes for the future, never deterministic ones). Thirdly, we point out some of the complicating factors, elements that might continue to make progress toward Middle East peace difficult and perhaps impossible, focusing particularly on lessons from Camp David II (July 2000).

In the interest of full disclosure, let us state from the start that we both believe in the two-state solution as the most just, viable, and politically stable solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, unlike some other analysts,⁸ we believe that a two-state solution is still achievable, though we fully recognize that this is by no means a foregone conclusion. At least since September 1993, when the "Oslo" Declaration of Principles was signed, the "light at the end of the tunnel" has been the two-state solution. At the same time, the tunnel itself — the process through which we might arrive at the destination — has been considerably longer and contains far more treacherous obstacles than we realized at that time. The normative purpose of this article is to identify empirically, on the basis of the rich historical material, factors that might be associated with a successful diplomatic breakthrough — that is, progress toward a resolution of the conflict — and the application of this historically based knowledge to the Middle East of today and tomorrow.

6. Barak Ravid and Yoav Stern, "U.S. Envoy: Arab Peace Initiative will be part of Obama Policy," *Haaretz*, April 5, 2009.

7. Barak Ravid and Avi Issacharoff, "U.S. reiterates 2-state solution after Lieberman remarks," *Haaretz*, April 8, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1077129.html>.

8. Hussein Agha & Robert Malley, "The Two-State Solution Doesn't Solve Anything," *The New York Times*, August 10, 2009.

CONDITIONS FOR A DIPLOMATIC BREAKTHROUGH: GENERAL ANALYSIS

A breakthrough in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations might be defined as a situation in which direct or indirect negotiations between the parties to the conflict lead to a written agreement resulting in the appearance of a substantially new political and diplomatic situation in the region. Examples of historic breakthroughs in the Arab-Israeli conflict include the post-1973 Disengagement Agreements between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Syria, the 1978 Camp David Accords and the resulting Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, the 1993 Oslo Accord, and the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty. While those agreements were clearly “breakthroughs,” other episodes of peace-making can provide useful lessons. An example is the Madrid Conference of 1991, which moved the process forward, though in itself it did not result in an agreement. Unsuccessful efforts provide negative examples from which we can draw useful lessons.

The four successful sets of agreements (1973-75, 1978-79, 1993, and 1994) have been heavily documented.⁹ They provide us with material that could generate new insights regarding future agreements. Adopting this perspective, we identify a group of relevant factors that might be crucial, or at least highly important, in contributing to future Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

The following are ten conditions that we would identify as either *crucial* (the first six) or *secondary* (the last four) to producing a diplomatic breakthrough:

- The parties to the conflict must feel strongly that the *status quo* is seriously objectionable and that a new situation is demonstrably preferable. For example, in 1977-78, Israel wished to remove Egypt from the Arab military coalition aligned against it, while Egypt desired to reacquire the Sinai Peninsula; both parties were ready to offer substantial concessions to achieve their respective goals.
- There must be strong, authoritative leadership on both sides (Arab and Israeli), the type of leadership that can not only negotiate with its adversaries but that can “sell” an agreement to its own population and then implement it. Thus, Menachem Begin (in the late 1970s) and Yitzhak Rabin (in 1993) were accepted by most Israelis as visionary leaders capable of making concessions, as was Anwar Sadat in Egypt in the 1970s, Yasir ‘Arafat by most Palestinians in 1993, and King Husayn by Jordanians in 1994. While there were important differences both in the leadership styles of those leaders and in the contexts of the negotiations in which they were involved, they were all strong and authoritative leaders within their societies. Significantly, all were at times perceived as “hardliners.” Rabin’s reputation as a tough general helped him with the far-reaching Oslo Accords. Begin’s hard line reputation

9. See Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* and Caplan & Eisenberg, *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*, as well as Ian Bickerton & Carla Klausner, *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5th Edition (London: Pearson, 2007).

was crucial to the Camp David Accords of 1978 and to the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement.¹⁰ Sadat's attack on Israel in 1973 helped him both in the disengagement talks and in the peace treaty with Israel. 'Arafat's status as Israel's greatest enemy gave him the political strength to sign the Declaration of Principles in 1993.

- The “international community” needs to be generally sympathetic toward whatever deal is reached by the regional powers, although an international consensus is not entirely necessary. Thus, for example, the West enthusiastically supported Israeli-Egyptian *rapprochement* in the late 1970s, while the vociferous opposition of the Arab world did not succeed in derailing it. In 1993, the Arab world was divided regarding the Oslo process, while international support helped launch it. Now, by contrast, the general international community and the Arab regimes are unanimously supportive of the 2002 Peace Initiative, although support from the Arab populations is low. A significant reason for the regimes' support for Israeli-Palestinian peace is their hope that, if it succeeds, it will quiet their restive citizens.
- Since the 1967 war, the United States has been an active participant in Middle East peacemaking, and American involvement has usually been considered as a *sine qua non* for the successful negotiations of any Arab-Israeli agreement. While the US did not initiate most successful negotiations (the disengagement agreements in the 1970s are an exception), it took a central and forceful role in all the “peace processes” leading to these agreements once they came to light. This generally meant assisting politically, economically, and/or militarily in their implementation (sometimes to the tune of billions of dollars).
- Arab-Israeli agreements usually have involved energetic, focused, and personal US presidential leadership; the absence of such leadership might well be considered fatal. Presidential involvement could be direct or indirect. Thus, in 1973-74, the success of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's “shuttle diplomacy” depended on the widespread perception that “Henry” was completely supported by President Richard Nixon. Jimmy Carter was personally indispensable at Camp David, putting his full support behind the talks. President Bill Clinton supported the Oslo process every step of the way and made his personal commitment clear to all. Secretary of State James Baker was strongly supported by George H.W. Bush in his successful efforts to convene the Madrid Conference. This short anecdotal list indicates that while the physical presence of the President at the negotiation site is not always required, his unwavering commitment is necessary for the successful conclusion of Arab-Israeli negotiations. In the absence of presidential involvement, a strong surrogate representing the President is essential. If the

10. Ilan Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977-1983: Israel's Move to the Right* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987).

surrogate is considered weak or not truly representative of the President, the peace efforts might fail. An example of this is the failure of the Rogers Plan, strongly opposed by then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and perhaps unsupported even by President Nixon.¹¹ Similarly, although Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice put tremendous effort into Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking in 2007-8 (the “Annapolis Process”), it was never taken seriously by either participants or observers since it was generally perceived that President Bush was at best unenthusiastic, despite his formal expressions of support. William Quandt has argued that “the President and his top advisers must be involved and must work in harmony.”¹² While we agree with the notion that the President and his top advisers must be involved, we are less sure about the “harmony” claim. There are two models of top-level presidential involvement: the Carter/Clinton model in which the President is personally heavily involved, and the Kissinger/Baker model, in which the President is represented by a surrogate. While President Obama might be unable to devote full attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for sustained periods, he appears to have developed close and harmonious relationships with several of his deputies on this issue (George Mitchell, Joseph Biden, Hillary Clinton).

- *The Trauma Factor*: Most of the peace process breakthroughs in the past took place immediately following some kind of momentous political or military event or development that significantly affected the *status quo*. In 1977, it was the election of a new, right-wing Israeli leadership for the first time since independence as well as President Carter’s expressed intent to reconvene the Geneva Conference with the Soviet Union (something both Sadat and Begin wished to avoid at almost all costs) that led to the peace process. In the Disengagement Talks, the recently concluded Yom Kippur War was the backdrop. The drastic change of circumstances for the Palestinian Liberation Organization following the fall of the USSR and the First Gulf War was the prelude to Oslo, as well as the installment of the first Labor government in Israel in 15 years. And, of course, the 1994 treaty with Jordan was directly connected to the recently begun Oslo Process.¹³ A traumatic experience or a significant change might turn out to be a pre-condition for peacemaking in the Middle East in years to come.

In addition to those six “crucial factors,” there are four “secondary factors:”

- *The Domestic American Factor*: William Quandt observes that in order to be successful in bringing about progress toward a resolution, “the domestic support for American policy in the region must be constantly developed.”¹⁴

11. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, especially Ch. 2.

12. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, p. 417.

13. Paul Scham and Russell Lucas, “‘Normalization’ and ‘Anti-Normalization’ in Jordan: The Public Debate,” *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring 2003).

14. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*, p. 417.

We generally agree with this observation, but it needs to be further refined in a more detailed and nuanced fashion. For example, it might be important, indeed crucial, to develop the support of the “political class” (rather than the general public). This class includes Congress and the media, and probably the mainstream of the Jewish community.

- *Pre-negotiation Preparation:* The Arab-Israeli conflict is nothing if not complicated. The number of actors is large, the interests of the parties are diverse, world attention is intense, there may be “spoilers” (e.g., Iran, Hamas, and/or Hizbullah, not to mention al-Qa’ida and other radical Islamist organizations), and new developments in the region are constantly appearing. Thus, as obvious as it may seem, careful preparation, political and strategic analysis, and issue-parsing prior to negotiations are all essential. Moreover, quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy and alliance-building must be pursued before public diplomacy takes center stage. Moving into the high stakes game of summit diplomacy prematurely, as in Camp David II, could be disastrous and result in deterioration of the situation rather than improvement.
- *Timing:* If timing is, in general, important in life and essential in politics, then it is an absolute must in Middle East diplomacy. Good ideas fail if their timing is off. An example of fortunate timing producing success in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is apparent in the initiation of the Oslo process. Oslo was possible only because a remarkable number of important factors aligned in a timely fashion — among which were the decline of the USSR (a major supporter of the Palestinians and some Arab states) and the new role of the US as the world’s sole superpower, the shock of the Gulf War (which also increased US influence in the Middle East), the weakening of the PLO due to its support for Saddam Husayn, the return of the Labor Party under Rabin, and the growing willingness of the Israeli public to deal seriously with the Palestinian issue in the wake of the Intifada, perhaps also related to the massive Russian immigration to Israel — totaling about one million people, which strengthened Israel materially and psychologically and helped to give Rabin the confidence for the Oslo initiative.¹⁵

In retrospect, we can also see that the 1990s represented a window between the decay of secular, radical Arab nationalism and the rise to prominence that radical Islam achieved in the next decade.¹⁶

- *Willingness to apply pressure:* Little could be accomplished without appropriate pressure on both parties to come around and make the necessary concessions that represent progress on the peace front. Two almost contradictory points ought to be made on the issue of pressure: it can backfire, as it did

15. While the short-term result of the 1987-93 Intifada was to move the Israeli public to the right, in the longer term the public was moving to the center and to the moderate left even before Oslo, which led to the return of the Labor Party to power in 1992.

16. It could also be argued that the failures of the Oslo process may have contributed to radical Islam’s rise.

when applied to ‘Arafat in July 2000;¹⁷ on the other hand, the pressure cooker atmosphere of a summit might be necessary for breaking long-standing stalemates.¹⁸ The key issue is not only when to apply the most pressure (and on whom) but whether pressure ought to be applied in an all-or-nothing situation (as at Camp David II, when it resulted in a disaster) or in step-by-step situations, as it was used by Kissinger in 1973-75 (with much more success, albeit modest substantive results). Of course, pressure should be used as may be appropriate throughout the process, i.e., it is a presidential judgment call. Willingness to apply it (in practice, primarily by the US President) is somewhat derivative, depending as it does on the personality and political strength of the President himself, Congressional and public (and/or elite) support, and appropriate political conditions among Israelis and Palestinians, so that the pressure will be effective.

While it is unlikely that all of these ten factors will be aligned to produce a breakthrough, a number of them appearing together could well create a situation in which a solution seems reachable.

THE CURRENT SITUATION: APPLYING THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

As this article goes to press, things no longer seem as open as they appeared to be at the time of President Obama’s inauguration. However, our perspective is to take a historically informed longer view, and we believe there are specific factors that may well be of great importance in leading to a breakthrough. These factors need to be highlighted in an effort to both better understand them and deal more effectively with the challenges that lie ahead.

A. IMPATIENCE WITH THE STATUS QUO

The *status quo* between Israelis and Palestinians since 1967 — Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza — has never been acceptable to any of the Arab states, as well as to most international observers and to an increasing number of Israelis. In early 2009, conditions seemed worse than at most times in the past. The Gaza War had just ended, and Israelis showed their discontent by voting in a far more hawkish government than they had less than three years earlier. As of March 2010, some factors have stabilized. Fewer rockets are falling on Israel, the economy has not been as bad as elsewhere during the worldwide downturn, and many Israelis feel that Prime Minister Netanyahu has successfully outmaneuvered President Obama on the issue of settlements — at least until Vice President Biden’s March 9, 2010 visit to Israel. On the Palestinian side, the separation of Gaza and the West Bank and the enmity between Fatah and Hamas has not changed. The West Bank has enjoyed the removal of many Israeli

17. ‘Arafat, who bears at least some responsibility for the failure of Camp David II, went back to the Palestinians and to the Arab and Muslim worlds as a hero after the summit.

18. On Camp David I and the success of the summit pressure, see Ilan Peleg, *Begin’s Foreign Policy, 1977-1983: Israel’s Turn to the Right*.

checkpoints and a significant economic upturn is continuing in that area.¹⁹ Gaza, despite economic difficulties, seems to be surviving. Despite the precariousness of the situation, neither Hamas nor Fatah appears eager to risk the turmoil of an election campaign, and have acquiesced to extending President Mahmud ‘Abbas’s term of office to 2011. Thus, in our view, short-term impatience appears to have declined, while all Palestinians and many Israelis realize that the current situation cannot be maintained for the long term. However, at this point agreement breaks down. The current Israeli government is highly unlikely to agree to anything approaching the sorts of concessions that the previous Olmert government appeared ready to make,²⁰ and there appears to be little widespread support for agreement based on such concessions.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite the longstanding and almost universal sense of frustration, most Palestinians and Israelis have continued to express support for the two-state solution.²¹ Yet, recent surveys have found that both Israelis and Palestinians share a very deep-seated suspicion of the intentions of the other side, verging on a certainty, for many, that the other side wants to destroy them, and that “they” (i.e., the other) have no interest in a real peace.²² Both sides feel that they are the ones who have been asked to compromise and suffer, and they feel that punishing the other side is not simply morally just but that such punishment — invariably in the form of violent action — is also the “only thing they understand.”²³

So, ironically, while there is a light at the end of the tunnel — a widespread consensus that a two-state solution will be the final result — there is as yet no tunnel; that is, no agreement as to how to get to where we want and need to go. The “process” is considerably more difficult than the “outcome.”²⁴ Moreover, the deterioration of the overall situation is reflected in the fact that some of the leading political forces among the Palestinians (i.e., the Hamas leadership in both Gaza and Damascus) and among the Israelis (i.e., the Likud and much of the current coalition) are officially opposed to significant aspects of the two-state solution as generally proposed, although unofficially they may eventually accept it as inevitable. More radical forces such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Israeli parties Ha’Ichud HaLeumi (National Union) and HaBayit HaYehudi (The Jewish Home) will almost surely oppose any possible settlement, some of them by committing violent acts. For them the *status quo* is, at least in practice, better than any likely negotiated settlement.

It should be noted that the peace-oriented poll results, on both sides, consistently overlap with support for hawkish parties and positions. A considerable portion of the

19. Joe Klein, “Renewal in the West Bank: A Little Noticed Success,” *Time Magazine*, February 25, 2010, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1967787,00.html>.

20. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, once in power, right-wing Israeli governments have been more accommodating than their ideological positions have been.

21. Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge, UK: Polity: 2008), especially Ch. 4.

22. Paul Scham, “The Historical Narratives of Israelis and Palestinians and the Peacemaking Process,” *Israel Studies Forum*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Winter 2006), pp. 58-64.

23. A noteworthy example of this is (current Foreign Minister) Avigdor Lieberman’s slogan in the 2009 Israeli elections, “Lieberman speaks Arabic.” Lieberman by no means speaks the language, but the clear meaning was that his hardline policies were what was needed to deal with all Arabs, whether in Israel, Palestine, or the Arab states.

24. Whether true or not, it is by now a *cliché* that everyone (except the Israelis) knows the shape of the final settlement but no one knows how to get there.

78% of Israelis who support two states must have been part of the majority that supported the winning right-wing parties in the 2009 election, while the evidence is also clear that a portion of the 74% of Palestinians who likewise support two states was certainly part of the 44% that voted for Hamas in the last Palestinian elections in 2006. This overlap has been a consistent feature of polls for many years. Part of it may reflect the ambiguity of what the “two-state solution” refers to (for example, what percentage of the West Bank will become “Palestine”). We believe it primarily shows that the population overwhelmingly wants a solution to the conflict and is not wedded to any particular one.

Interestingly, the Arab world has made it clear that it now considers a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-state solution an urgent imperative. This contrasts, for example, with the posture of most Arab states, notably Saudi Arabia, during the Oslo process, when most of them had little interest in the peace process, contenting themselves with developing what they hoped would be lucrative trade relationships with Israel. The overwhelming acceptance of the two-state solution on the part of most governments is an indication that even if they may sympathize with the Palestinian side, they recognize that Israel is there to stay and that the best thing for the Palestinians is to end the conflict as quickly as possible. This is true despite the fact that some of the Arab governments also have potentially conflicting priorities of their own. Egypt, for example, wants a solution to the open sore of Gaza, but not if it will become responsible for Gaza’s survival and not if it will result in strengthening Hosni Mubarak’s primary domestic adversary, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (which is affiliated with Hamas). Syria, for its part, would have to determine how it would pursue a peace treaty of its own in tandem with an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

B. THE OBAMA FACTOR

American presidents have a unique pulpit and a unique ability to change major situations. To do so, however, they need to focus on it and put it at or near the top of their agenda. Several examples come to mind, including the focus of Jimmy Carter on diplomatic movement in the Middle East in 1977 (eventually leading to the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of 1979), and Bill Clinton’s eventually unsuccessful focus on producing an Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough in July 2000.

At the time of writing, the “Obama factor” remains unclear and inconclusive. In his Cairo speech in June 2009, the President appeared to have signaled that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict might be a priority. He and his National Security Advisor, General James Jones, insist that it still is.²⁵ The decisive position taken by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton (March 2010) in regard to Israel’s intention of building 1,600 housing units in Ramat Shlomo has demonstrated the potential impact of Presidential positions on the behavior of Middle Eastern actors.

25. See, for example, Jones’ speeches to the American Task Force for Palestine gala and at the conference of the liberal American Jewish group J Street, both in October 2009.

C. STRONG AND AUTHORITATIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE REGION

This factor may be the weakest point in the current constellation from the perspective of a possible breakthrough. Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas has not been able to provide strong leadership of the sort that Yasir ‘Arafat offered. His moderation and comparative reasonableness has led to good relations with the Israelis and the Americans, who consider him far more trustworthy than his predecessor. However, the Israelis especially have not appeared to take him seriously, which has predictably weakened him among the Palestinians. Partly thanks to American insistence on allowing Hamas to participate in the 2006 elections, Hamas also has emerged as a significant challenge to ‘Abbas’s Fatah in the electoral arena, and now is the undisputed ruler of Gaza, admired by many Palestinians for its resistance to Israel. While Hamas’ leadership appears collectively strong, it is ideologically unwilling to lead a peace effort, though they have signaled that they might *accept* one that included the basic Palestinian demands of almost all the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.²⁶ Perhaps the only potentially strong Palestinian leader on the horizon is Marwan Barghouti, currently serving a sentence of several life terms in Israeli prison for murder charges related to the deaths of Israeli soldiers and civilians. However, ‘Abbas’s own position, weakened by accusations of kowtowing to the US at the UN in September 2009 and over the Goldstone Report in October 2009, was strengthened for the time being by the general agreement of all relevant parties to postpone presidential elections, which were scheduled to occur in January 2010.

On the Israeli side, Binyamin Netanyahu has proven himself to be a more effective leader than seemed likely when he took office. In our view, he bested the Obama Administration on its demands for a settlement freeze by only implementing a temporary, ten-month freeze after completion of the 3,000 housing units currently in progress, and continuing to build in East Jerusalem. In addition, President ‘Abbas felt compelled to declare that he would not resume negotiations until a full freeze was implemented, thus putting the Palestinians in the position of refusing negotiations while the Israelis were ready and waiting. Israel is now in the position of offering to resume negotiations without preconditions — set against the Palestinian demand for a full freeze — and the US apparently has made such resumption its top priority.

The Arab world is lacking any charismatic leadership on this as well as other issues. Saudi Arabia took the lead in proposing the Arab Peace Initiative, but appears to be unwilling to do more than urge its adoption. Egypt has sponsored lengthy and, thus far, unsuccessful negotiations between Fatah and Hamas, and is the most vocal Arab state on the issue. However, President Husni Mubarak, in office since 1981, is over 80 years old and there will likely be a struggle over succession. Syria appears eager to close a deal but it is not in a position to provide pan-Arab leadership. King ‘Abdullah of Jordan is in the same boat.

26. Paul Scham and Osama Abu-Irshaid, “Hamas: Ideological Rigidity and Political Flexibility,” *US Institute of Peace Special Report* (June 2009), <http://library.usip.org/articles/1012237.1112/1.PDF>.

D-E. US PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

The intensity of the American involvement in Israeli-Palestinian relations and the quality of presidential leadership may be the two most important factors at this critical and so far unpromising juncture. Obama and his senior aides have reiterated how important this issue is for the administration, but other priorities (health care, Afghanistan, Iran, the economy, etc.) have demanded the attention of the US President in his first year.

The appointment of George Mitchell indicated that Obama would take the Israeli-Palestinian peace process seriously. Mitchell, at 75 years old, would have been unlikely to assume such a role without assurances of Obama's complete support and backup, as well as serious intentions to pursue the peace process. Mitchell's track record as the "producer" of the Good Friday Agreement (1998) has created expectations for a diplomatic movement rather than the near-freeze of the last eight years, but Mitchell's frequent trips to the region have so far produced few discernible results.

It is important that Obama has shown himself to be personally involved in all important elements of his presidency. But this may be a factor that could, conceivably, sabotage his desire to be personally involved. Unlike any president since Franklin Roosevelt, Obama inherited from his predecessor a collection of crises that demand personal, day-to-day management. Thus, it is improbable to believe that, like Carter or Clinton, he could put the rest of his schedule on hold in order to preside over a lengthy summit like Camp David I and II. And unlike the disengagement talks in the 1970s, the stakes here are so high that Obama's personal involvement may well be essential.

F. THE TRAUMA FACTOR

Ironically, or perhaps tragically, it only may be in the wake of a major trauma that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process can be renewed with the measure of intensity needed for significant progress toward a diplomatic breakthrough. For example, another intifada, or a war in Gaza or Lebanon, could potentially move the parties, and the international community, toward additional effort for a negotiated settlement. As was stated before, the historical pattern indicates that a trauma of some kind, usually one related to massive violence, has been a *sine qua non* for a diplomatic initiative. We emphasize that major trauma does not necessarily produce breakthroughs but, in the past, some have done so.

G. DOMESTIC AMERICAN FACTORS

Congress, the American Jewish establishment, and the evangelical Christian community which is strongly represented in the Republican Party have served as a brake on presidential peace initiatives for decades. However, this factor seems to have moderated thus far in Obama's term for several reasons: a) the economic crisis has forced all parties to put greater emphasis on pocketbook issues; b) significant elements of the American Jewish community are dismayed by the current Israeli government and may not be as opposed to peace initiatives involving Israeli concessions as they were in the past, as indicated by the surprisingly quick ascent of the liberal Jewish group J-Street to prominence; c) the evangelical Christian community is much less cohesive than it

has been for the last decade and a half, and some of its parts, especially its youth, are questioning the old verities; d) evangelicals, though not the Jewish establishment, are far less influential in a Democratic administration. Thus, Obama's path in promoting a negotiated settlement might be somewhat easier than usually assumed. The establishment of organizations such as J Street reflects an important and significant change in the domestic American scene, and specifically the Jewish scene, and it could prove decisive in the future. AIPAC has been for decades the dominant force representing, or claiming to represent, American Jewry. Yet, many among America's Jews have felt uneasy about what they have viewed as AIPAC's automatic, even reflexive, support for any and all Israeli policies. The emergence of Obama and the return of a Democrat to the White House have strengthened those more liberal voices in America's increasingly diverse Jewish community. The appearance of J Street has reflected those developments. It is important to note that J Street defines itself as a pro-Israel, pro-peace, Jewish and Zionist organization which supports a two-state solution.

H. PREPARATION

As noted above, the parties are probably more realistic today and more appreciative of the difficulties involved in reaching an agreement than they were at Camp David II (July 2000). It is crucial that, if and when serious negotiations on the core issues are inaugurated, the parties arrive with willingness, capacity, and preparations to make tough choices. Yet, the administration's somewhat sudden emphasis on the settlement issue and its subsequent failure to impose a full settlement freeze once the issue was raised indicates a significant lack of preparation and/or strategy.

I. TIMING

This is not a matter that can be predicted. There have been reports (rumors) of a two-year negotiation framework.²⁷ But at this stage, this is an inherently speculative matter. Despite the high volume of speculation on the time limit for negotiations, and the expected resistance of the Israeli government to it, there is an increasingly powerful international consensus around this issue.

J. PRESSURE

Until the crisis of March 2010, Obama had been sparing with his pressure. He clearly pushed Netanyahu heavily to obtain his grudging endorsement of a two-state solution, but did not use it in the settlements controversy. On the other hand, he pressured President 'Abbas to meet with him and Netanyahu at the United Nations, and shortly afterwards to endorse a delay in consideration of the Goldstone Report on the Gaza War, which is highly critical of Israel. Both of these damaged 'Abbas seriously with his own constituency and the latter endorsement had to be withdrawn. Later, Secretary of State Clinton surrendered the American demand for a complete settlement

27. See Hilary Leila Krieger, "Jerusalem Rejects 2-Year Peace Deadline," *Jerusalem Post*, January 8, 2010.

freeze, memorably terming the Israeli announcement of a limited and temporary freeze an “unprecedented development,” a phrase that was likewise quickly withdrawn. However, given the apparent success of presidential pressure in March 2010, and the concurrent boost in the perception of Obama’s power with the success of his health care bill, this could change.

LESSONS FROM CAMP DAVID II/TABA TALKS

It is useful to mention briefly some of the factors that have proved fatal to peace negotiations in the past and examine whether and how they may relate to the current context. This type of analysis could prove important for current and future American negotiators.

The summit at Camp David in July 2000, convened by President Clinton and attended by Yasir ‘Arafat and Ehud Barak along with most of their chief advisors, remains the single biggest failure in Middle East peacemaking and a warning to President Obama. Camp David II, the Clinton parameters, and the Taba negotiations in January 2001 were the last major effort, by the US or anyone else, to produce a breakthrough in the negotiations. It also has generated a substantial collection of books, articles, and memoirs reporting, analyzing, and critiquing the summit. If we regard Camp David II as a “laboratory for failure,” we might extract a few factors that should be considered in a new initiative.

PERSONALITY CLASHES

Ehud Barak never developed, and perhaps never even tried to form, the working relationship that Yitzhak Rabin established with Yasir ‘Arafat or that Menachem Begin established with Anwar Sadat. Many have commented that the inability of Barak and ‘Arafat to understand the constraints on each of them was a major factor in their failure to find common ground.²⁸ Barak is considered arrogant and “pushy” even in a culture that arguably prizes those traits, while ‘Arafat, coming from a culture where politeness is treasured, always had found it difficult to deal with strong personalities, and especially resisted being pushed. From the beginning of the summit, symbolized by the famous footage of Barak trying to push ‘Arafat into the cabin, even while all seemed to be laughing, to the fact that ‘Arafat and Barak barely communicated directly during the entire summit, the two men clearly grated on each other. Barak’s negotiating style, in which he repeatedly made offers that he declared were final, only to sweeten them a day or two later, also made interchange difficult. ‘Arafat, for his part, refused to engage Barak, and thus the leaders were left to relate to each other only through their aides or through the Americans, including Bill Clinton.

An example of how the avoidance of likely personality clashes assisted the conclusion of an agreement is demonstrated by the fact that Rabin and ‘Arafat never met before the signing of the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993. Though they were later to work together, Rabin’s palpable dislike of ‘Arafat (indicated clearly by his body language that day) might have prevented any

28. For example, Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, “Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors,” *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 48, No. 13, August 9, 2001, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/14380>.

disagreement had negotiations between them been part of the initial process.

This factor is difficult to analyze now, as we do not know the shape of the peace-making effort and who will be directly involved. However, we believe it to be crucial that President Obama and his advisors take this factor into account in structuring any new peace process, so as to minimize personal friction and maximize the possibility of positive exchanges.

LACK OF COMPREHENSION OF THE OTHER SIDE'S "RED LINES"

In retrospect, it is difficult to believe how unaware each side was of the perception of the most important issues on the other side at Camp David II. Palestinians, for example, could not envisage an agreement that a) did not provide for the return of very nearly 100% of the West Bank; b) retained Israeli sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount), and c) did not deal with the "right of return." Israelis, on the other hand, assumed that the only territorial issue was how much of the West Bank each side would retain, could not imagine relinquishing control of any significant part of Jerusalem, let alone the Temple Mount, and were adamant that the issue of the right of return would not be discussed. The latter two issues, Jerusalem and right of return/refugees, are generally considered to be those on which the summit foundered.

Only six months later, at Taba, the Israeli position, based on the "Clinton parameters," had shifted significantly towards a much greater acceptance of the Palestinian position on all three issues.²⁹ Though Taba has remained the high-water mark of Israeli-Palestinian agreement,³⁰ the mainstream Israeli consensus today on the first two issues is informed by a much greater understanding of the Palestinian view, though not necessarily acceptance. On the third issue, however, largely due to the explosion of public fear of the "demographic issue," evidence strongly suggests that Israelis are more adamant than ever about not accepting large numbers of Palestinians, and the Geneva Initiative, which accepts the possibility of admitting tens of thousands of Palestinians as part of a peace settlement, is not within the Israeli consensus on this issue.³¹

Reports of the negotiations between the Olmert government and the Palestinian Authority in 2008 have alleged that Israel was ready to be considerably more accommodating of Palestinian demands than it had been previously.³² It seemed clear that the Palestinian expectation of the return of 100% of the West Bank was being taken seriously by Israelis, even if it would not be fully reached. Palestinians still feel very strongly that their "historic compromise" of accepting Israeli control of 78% of historic Palestine (i.e., the 1949-67 borders of Israel) means that they are fully entitled to the other 22%. Reportedly, Israel has seriously considered some land "swaps" to bring the Palestinian state closer to 22% of historic Palestine. For all intents and purposes, the

29. See the report by Miguel Moratinos, the European Union's envoy to the peace process, who prepared an eyewitness report of the negotiations at Taba in January, 2001 at <http://prn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/moratinos.htm>.

30. See David Makovsky, "Taba Mythchief," *The National Interest* (Spring 2003), pp. 19-29.

31. See <http://www.geneva-accord.org>.

32. Aluf Benn, "Olmert's plan for peace with the Palestinians," *Haaretz*, December, 12, 2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1135699.html>. Also see Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Obama and the Middle East," *New York Review of Books*, June 11, 2009, p. 67.

idea of a land swap has now been accepted by both sides, although the precise size and territories involved would involve long and painful negotiations.³³

On Jerusalem, it is clear that the centrist Olmert government was ready to compromise, probably on the basis of the formula of “Arab neighborhoods to Palestine, Jewish neighborhoods to Israel.” Jerusalem was not officially discussed because of the threat of the Shas Party to bring down the government if it were, but the mainstream understands that Jerusalem must be on the table and that the accusation that a politician is ready to divide Jerusalem no longer has the resonance it once did.

For Palestinians, the refugee issue is the most important legacy of 1948 and it must be addressed. The most moderate Palestinian leaders at the time of Camp David II understood that Israel would never admit a significant number of Palestinians, even if they were unwilling to state that publicly.³⁴ But they wanted an acknowledgement of the “right” of return, even if they accepted there would not be the “reality” of return. However, they completely underestimated the Israeli unwillingness to deal with this issue, and did not understand the Israeli consensus that even talking about return was “proof” that the Palestinians were not serious regarding peace.

Some moderate leaders on both sides are more aware of the importance of this issue now, and its delicacy.³⁵ There are various proposals to deal with it³⁶ but there is no consensus. This is an issue that will have to be further refined in the pre-negotiation process. However, as noted above, the current Israeli government is appreciably less likely to be sympathetic to Palestinian claims than was its predecessor.

INSUFFICIENT AWARENESS OF THE OTHER SIDE'S POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

At Camp David II, neither Americans nor Israelis seemed to understand that ‘Arafat, though a strong and generally popular leader, was temperamentally unwilling and perhaps unable to tell Palestinians bad news straightforwardly, including that there would be no right of return and that they would not have sovereignty over the Temple Mount, because he was afraid of jeopardizing his position. Rather, he was regarded as a dictator who could simply decide and have his decisions accepted. At this point, almost ten years on, the fissures in Palestinian society are plain and there is no strong leader. Now, however, Israelis and Americans are more aware that any Palestinian leader must tread carefully, and that none will be a free agent in making decisions.

For their part, Palestinians have always had a better idea of Israeli politics, since the Israeli political system is much more visible and transparent, but at Camp David they were apparently unaware of the implications of the fact that Prime Minister Barak had lost his parliamentary majority even before the summit, that he desperately needed an agreement to retain power, and that if he did not get one, the country was likely to

33. See, Gershon Baskin, “Encountering Peace: In the land of miracles, let’s get real,” *Common Ground News Service*, October 9, 2009, <http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=26510&lan=en&sid=0&sp=0>.

34. An exception is the Palestinian intellectual Sari Nusseibeh.

35. Yet even the former Foreign Minister and current leader of Kadima, Tzipi Livni, has remarked that talking about the “*Nakba*” is incompatible with desiring peace. Gideon Levy, “The New Goldas,” *Ha’aretz*, May 27, 2008, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/pages/986591.html>.

36. Scham, “The Historical Narratives of Israelis and Palestinians and the Peacemaking Process.”

swing sharply to the right. That, of course, is what happened. Even at Taba, a month before the elections, the Palestinians did not seem to understand that Ariel Sharon almost certainly would win the upcoming elections and, therefore, Taba would be the last possible chance for an agreement for years.

While the political situation is very different today, it is to be hoped that both sides and the US will take seriously the importance of political dynamics on the other side.

THE US AS AN HONEST BROKER

Arab commentators on Camp David often portray the US as primarily focused on Israel's perceptions and needs, neglecting those of the Palestinians. Others have expressed similar views. For example, Aaron David Miller, who has referred to the US at Camp David (where he was part of the delegation) as "Israel's attorney,"³⁷ and Robert Malley, also on the US team, have likewise been sharply critical.³⁸

Since then, of course, the Bush presidency solidified this perception of the US. However, in some American Jewish circles, American "even-handedness" is not a desirable position.³⁹ While Barack Obama is seen differently, a major goal for the US must be to both satisfy domestic constituencies and simultaneously not appear to automatically validate all Israeli concerns.

ENGAGING IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

At the time of Camp David, the Israeli and Palestinian populations, though skeptical, were far more hopeful that peace was possible than they are now. This is both a positive and negative in peacemaking. Negatively, it will be harder to use public demands as a force towards peace. Positively, the public has fewer illusions and may (though this is by no means certain) be willing to consider compromises that it formerly did not consider necessary.

In 2000, neither side had made any real effort to educate its own public regarding the necessity for compromise, and what it might have to relinquish. Thus, 'Arafat received a hero's welcome both from Palestinians and from the entire Arab and Muslim worlds when he stood on principle and allowed Camp David to fail. There was a disconnect between public hopes and expectations on the one hand, and reality on the other. Barak's reception in Israel was more mixed. His political enemies rejoiced at his failure while many of his political allies did not support him.

The clear lesson of this failure was that governments seriously seeking a successful outcome of peace negotiations must intensively work to educate their populations as to what may be possible and what is not. Few politicians are willing to tell their public what it does not want to hear. The steady decline in President Obama's popularity in

37. Aaron David Miller, "Israel's Lawyer," *The Washington Post*, May 23, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/22/AR2005052200883.html>.

38. Miller, "Israel's Lawyer;" Hussein Agha and Robert Malley, "Obama and the Middle East," *The New York Review of Books*, June 11, 2009, p. 67.

39. For example, Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League. James Besser, "Mitchell as Envoy could Split Center," *New York Jewish Week*, January 22, 2010, http://www.thejewishweek.com/view-Article/c37_a14675/News/National.html.

polls gives him less of an ability to do this than may have seemed possible at the inception of his term.

CONCLUSIONS

The situation in the Middle East in regard to the possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough remains as complicated as it is uncertain. The region, and the process, are both at a crossroads. In many ways, this “intractable” conflict seems ripe for a resolution — there is a broad international consensus in favor of a two-state solution and Obama has committed himself to exerting serious energy on this issue. On the other hand, there are powerful “spoilers” in high places on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides.

In order to produce a significant diplomatic breakthrough, various major factors must be aligned. These include decisive and creative leadership in Washington, a stronger sense of urgency in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and a willingness to deal with — and compromise on — major issues of ideological importance on the part of the Palestinians and Israelis. To date, these factors have not been present.

The Obama Administration, despite genuine interest in promoting a political settlement, has been preoccupied with numerous domestic and international issues, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is but one of many issues on its agenda. Despite numerous trips by Senator Mitchell, the US seems as of yet unwilling or unable to muster the diplomatic and other resources necessary for a breakthrough. Israel is led by a right-wing coalition that is unlikely to make offers which match those made by Prime Ministers Barak or Olmert. The Palestinians seem to be hopelessly divided, and efforts to bring about reconciliation between their warring factions have faltered.

Our “factor analysis” has come up with a mixed result. A number of factors seemingly necessary to peace seem to be in place, but others are lacking. We continue to believe that a breakthrough is possible, but all three major parties will have to change their present postures for this to happen.

On the whole, the situation does not appear overwhelmingly promising. The Palestinian leadership is as divided as ever, with Hamas and the PA representing two ideologically contradicting prisms. Negotiations to close the gaps between those two forces have been frustratingly unsuccessful. The Israeli government represents the right wing of the country’s public opinion, and Binyamin Netanyahu, always perceived as a hardliner by friends and enemies alike, now finds himself in the political center of the Israeli ideological spectrum, and, indeed, one of the most moderate (perhaps even conciliatory) members of his own government. While Netanyahu himself might be agreeable to the reopening of negotiations, the government itself, heavily weighted towards the ideological right which opposes a two-state solution and especially a shared Jerusalem, appears incapable, as presently constituted, of opening negotiations on that basis, let alone concluding a mutually acceptable peace agreement.

This conclusion is being written following an unexpected and (conceivably) historic week which began with a friendly visit by Vice President Biden to Israel in order to emphasize the strong US-Israel relationship and to open the “proximity talks” envisioned as leading to real negotiations. While Biden was in Jerusalem, the Interior Ministry, headed by Shas’ leader Eli Yishai, a hardliner who rejects any negotiations over

Jerusalem, announced the construction of 1600 new housing units in Ramat Shlomo, a new Haredi (“ultra-Orthodox”) neighborhood in East Jerusalem. While it is likely true that the Prime Minister himself did not know of or plan this announcement, which was in blatant opposition to the American insistence on the need for a settlement freeze that included Jerusalem, the Obama Administration reacted with shock and fury, terming the move an “insult” to the United States.⁴⁰ While the Israeli government treated it as an unfortunate example of intra-governmental miscommunication and bad timing, the Obama administration characterized the incident as emblematic of what it perceives as a fundamental problem, which is that the Israeli government has continued to insist on its right to expand settlements in the West Bank and to absolutely reject any limitation of its freedom to expand Jewish housing in East Jerusalem, which the US, the Palestinians, and virtually the entire world outside of Israel regard as the future capital of a Palestinian state.

The highly respected Israeli journalist Aluf Benn saw this as the eruption of a “widely predicted crisis between Israel and the United States. ... Instead of accepting Netanyahu’s partial apology and letting bygones be bygones, Obama issued a stern warning to the Israeli Prime Minister and is now demanding that he take ‘specific actions’ to show he is ‘committed’ to the U.S.-Israel relationship and to the peace process itself.”⁴¹

If the Obama Administration maintains this course of action, we believe that the analysis that we have presented in this article is highly relevant. We have shown that some of the conditions historically necessary for a successful peace process are present, while others are lacking. Factor “e” — US presidential leadership — appears to be the key ingredient at this point, whether actually carried out by the President himself, or delegated to a strongly supported surrogate, in this case Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. If, indeed, the Obama Administration chooses to make a stand at this point and insist on significant limitations to settlement growth, it is possible that a successful peace process could ensue. If it does not, then the positive factors that we have adumbrated in this article may count for nothing in the process of creating Israeli-Palestinian peace during the Obama Administration.

40. Barak Ravid, “Top Obama aide: East Jerusalem construction plan is an ‘insult,’” *Haaretz*, March 14, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1156275.html>.

41. Aluf Benn, Netanyahu must choose between ideology and U.S. support,” *Haaretz*, March 14, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1156251.html>.