

Perspective provides valuable insights in evaluating contemporary diplomacy. Though neither the Palestinian-Israeli-U.S. summit of July 2000 nor the Egyptian-Israeli-U.S. summit of September 1978 ended discussions between Israel and its Arab adversaries, there were more differences than similarities between the two intense and highly charged meetings.

–Kenneth W. Stein

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"CAMP DAVID AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE:

COMPARING THE CAMP DAVID SUMMITS"

By Kenneth W. Stein

A BACKGROUNDER

A U.S. president and former southern governor invites an Arab and an Israeli to the secluded presidential retreat at Camp David in the Maryland mountains. Their goal: to reach an agreement based on the negotiating framework of land for peace.

On matters of substance, there are tangible differences. For example, the Arab leader wants full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, a demand his Israeli counterpart opposes. Return of land held by Israel is a matter of Arab honor and national pride, and the Arab leader seethes at the presence of Israeli settlements on what he believes to be Arab land.

In contrast, national security is of paramount importance to the Israeli prime minister. In making an agreement with the Arab side, the prime minister has factored in the impact that territorial concessions might have upon his country's strategic defense needs vis-à-vis other Arab states.

The Arab leader's calculations have focused on his people's national interests, including their rights to Jerusalem. For him, Israel's withdrawal from the other territories taken in the 1967 war is secondary.

In the months leading up to the two-week summit, the Arab and Israeli leaders exchange views on how the Palestinian territories of the West

Bank and Gaza might be governed. Secret talks by emissaries of the leaders and face-to-face meetings have revealed the mutual distrust that exists between the two parties.

During the summit itself, both leaders consider truncating their negotiations, but neither leaves the talks prematurely. A media blackout is imposed to avoid leaks that might jeopardize the delicate proceedings. There is fear that the leaders will have to cater to domestic constituencies, and will, as a result, harden their negotiating positions.

In the Arab delegation, significant differences over substantive matters emerge between the leader and some of his advisers. However, though both leaders have elected parliaments at home, the Arab faces less opposition to his policy-making prerogatives than the Israeli, who holds the belief that an exchange of land is worth the prospect of ending the conflict, if security can be guaranteed. Soon after the summit, Israel's foreign minister resigns, objecting to the position of his prime minister who is also being vigorously attacked by those on his political right for his willingness to concede too much land and political prerogative to the Arab side.

The Arab leader believes he has a close friend in the U.S. president. (An international conference held years earlier--where leaders in Moscow played a ceremonial role as hosts--solidified U.S. engagement in and domination of Arab-Israeli negotiations.) But in Washington's foreign-policy circles, doubt exists about the prospects of an agreement being reached--even with U.S. involvement--between these historic enemies.

Both the Arab and the Israeli are convinced that active U.S. involvement provides an opportunity to reach an agreement, and both seek U.S. stewardship because their respective political and economic relationships with Washington would be enhanced by a successful outcome.

Before the summit, the U.S. president expends enormous amounts of time and energy trying to convince both leaders to modify their views, while officials of the U.S. Department of State shuttle between the leaders and their advisers, trying to narrow the major differences between the two sides.

At the summit's conclusion, a U.S. Department of State official travels to the Middle East to explain Washington's position and to seek support from the region's other leaders for what was discussed and agreed upon during the negotiations. At the same time, the Arab and Israeli leaders try to show to their respective publics that the other side yielded more in the

negotiations.

The Camp David summit is a phase in a long-term effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Though the meeting does not resolve all outstanding issues between Israel and the Arab side, it does break important ground. For instance, the Israeli prime minister accepts the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and both sides continue to talk to one another with the United States as adviser, architect, catalyst, friend, and umpire.

Perspective provides valuable insights in evaluating contemporary diplomacy. Though neither the Palestinian-Israeli-U.S. summit (July 11-25, 2000) described above nor the Egyptian-Israeli-U.S. summit (September 5-17, 1978) ended discussions between Israel and its Arab adversaries, there were more differences than similarities between the two intense and highly charged summit meetings. However, both were interim stages in the ongoing effort to resolve Arab-Israeli differences.

The purpose of this essay is to compare the two Camp David summits. Four aspects will be analyzed: the pre-summit environment and bilateral relations; the roles of the leaders and their preparations; the motivations and expectations; and the issues and outcomes.

Unfortunately this article was written before the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations reached the next stage, but we already know that Camp David I led to the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty on March 26, 1979.

PRE-SUMMIT ENVIRONMENT AND BILATERAL RELATIONS

The differences in the regional environment at the time of Camp Davids I and II are glaring. Before Camp David I, Egypt's diplomatic relations with many Arab states were strained. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's relationships with Syria's Assad, Jordan's King Hussein, senior Saudi figures, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leadership were cool, if not downright hostile. Personally, Sadat had little time or respect for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Sadat made no tour of the Arab world prior to Camp David I, whereas his Palestinian counterpart visited several Arab leaders prior to and after Camp David II.

Compared to 1978, in 2000 the Arab states represented a weaker collective. The Arab nations of Jordan, Morocco, and Syria--where new leaders are in power--have less political clout. Their views count for much less than those of their powerful predecessors who had roundly criticized Sadat two decades earlier for reaching out to Israel. (Furthermore, at the time of Camp David I, the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship was anything but friendly.) They now broadly favor a political settlement with

Israel and are somewhat distrustful of Arafat, whose foremost diplomatic counselor is Egypt.

By the 2000 summit, the Palestinians had achieved diplomatic autonomy within the Arab world, with the PLO becoming the sole representative of the Palestinian territories that might be evacuated by Israel. Reduced tension in the region and greater sympathy for the achievement of Arafat's objectives by his Arab contemporaries, made progress at Camp David II possible. In contrast, the Arab world's resentment of Sadat and the United States during Camp David I, made that summit's success that much more significant. At the time U.S.-mediated Arab-Israeli negotiations--though aimed at encouraging other Arab states and the PLO to negotiate with Israel--were limited to Egyptian-Israeli talks. (Likewise, Camp David II occurred after prolonged U.S. involvement in ongoing Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.)

Sadat was vilified in the Arab world for visiting Jerusalem in 1977, for negotiating with the Israelis directly and separately, and for reaching an agreement under the auspices of an American president. Today, Arafat received support for his initiatives, rather than vilification.

Aside from the inter-Arab conflicts, also absent from the political ambiance and circumstances surrounding Camp David II were the thundering claps of the Cold War in the Middle East and the widespread Arab disenchantment with the United States for its unwavering support of Israel. In fact, due to the 1991 Gulf War and the convocation of the October 1991 Madrid Middle East Peace conference, U.S. prestige in the region was far greater than it had been in the 1970s. In 2000, for economic and strategic reasons, virtually every Middle Eastern Arab state sought to sustain a positive relationship with Washington and tempered previously staunch ideological commitment to the Palestinians.

The feeling of "never surrender" expressed by both the Arab and Israeli sides had dissipated between Camp Davids I and II. Although the existential issue of survival was still paramount in Israel's national ethos and strategic thinking in 1978, more than 20 years later Israel had come to feel secure enough to recognize Palestinian national legitimacy and share what some termed "the historic land of Israel" with the Palestinians.

As for the relationship between Israel and Egypt after Camp David I, it has endured for two decades, though it remains cool and uneven, teetering regularly between antagonism and cordiality.

Camp David I occurred in the middle of a diplomatic process aimed at restoring the Sinai Peninsula to Egyptian sovereignty and providing Israel

with an opportunity to ensure Egypt's absence from any future conflict between other Arab states and Israel. It was also a step in fulfilling broader U.S. objectives in the Middle East during the Nixon-Ford-Carter administrations, namely: diplomatically resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict; denying or limiting the U.S.S.R's influence in the region; confirming Israel's sovereignty; securing access to Middle Eastern oil at a reasonable price; and sustaining friendly relations with moderate Middle Eastern states.

Twenty years after Camp David I, U.S. interests in the Middle East had changed little, although new interests had been put on the agenda, such as: preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction in the region; curbing the actions of unfriendly regimes; and acting in concert with local governments to prevent terrorist acts.

On the eve of both summits, Israel's relationship with Lebanon was a central feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and its effect on each summit's Arab faction intimated the extent of Israel's accord with the entire Arab world during each period. Sadat found Israel's March 1978 incursion into Lebanon objectionable, while Arafat considered the Jewish state's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 a harbinger of full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Face-to-face Palestinian-Israeli talks had become the norm by 2000, while face-to-face talks between Israel and an Arab party in 1978 were groundbreaking. The PLO and Israel had politically recognized one another by 2000, having signed agreements concerning trade, labor, and other issues, while establishing cooperative arrangements on security issues. In contrast, contacts between the leaders of Egypt and Israel, or between their emissaries, were limited prior to Camp David I.

The divide between Israel and its summit rivals has diminished over the years due, in part, to the knowledge the Jewish state has gained of Palestinians through interaction. Israelis and Palestinians have a more intimate relationship with each other in 2000 than did Israelis and Egyptians in 1978. Physical distance between population centers, ideological hostility, and inflammatory media attacks characterized Egyptian-Israeli relations at the time of Camp David I. Egypt was a physical threat to Israel's existence, whereas now, though a small Palestinian minority physically threatens the personal security of Israelis, it is not a military threat to Israel's existence.

For more than 30 years, Palestinians and Israelis have interacted, as a result of the latter's occupation and administration of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. Unlike with the first summit, prior to Camp David II, thousands of hours were logged between Arab and Israeli negotiators. Familiarity existed between the respective elites and the

laboring classes; sophisticated and varied Palestinian-Israeli relations were the norm. Despite this contact, pragmatism, disdain, apprehension, and mistrust overlapped with institutional and personal Israeli-Palestinian collaboration. For along with the positive aspects of integration, each group has also developed a discomfiting awareness of the other's expectations, apprehensions, and objectives.

In spite of this, the 1993 Oslo accord and subsequent agreements have emphasized cooperation in many fields, sought to separate political prerogatives, and drawn boundaries for the eventual establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Palestinians came to understand that without guarantees to the personal security of Israelis, neither land nor prerogatives would be transferred to Palestinian control. For all intents and purposes, Camp David II aimed at narrowing the parties' differences concerning the conditions upon which a Palestinian state would be established and how Israel would interact with that state after its inception.

THE LEADERS AND THEIR PREPARATIONS

In 1978, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat were lifelong politicians who, at the apex of their careers, had stepped out from the shadows of their larger-than-life predecessors--David Ben-Gurion and Gamal Nasser, respectively. Jimmy Carter was in his first and only term as U.S. president, and Arab-Israeli negotiations were one of the many difficult foreign policy issues on his agenda.

Conversely, Bill Clinton, at the end of his second presidential term, had a full and complicated foreign policy agenda, but it lacked the cutting, national-security sensitivities of Carter's SALT II and Panama Canal Treaty negotiations. In comparison with the Carter period, Clinton and his foreign policy team were more familiar with the Middle East's players, had the benefit of years of contact with them, and had protégés who understood the red lines of both sides.

Because personal chemistry was poor between the Arab and Israeli leaders at both summits, Carter and Clinton acted as essential mediators. Although Barak and Arafat got along much better than Begin and Sadat ever did, there was significant mistrust between them, both before and during Camp David II. Nevertheless, Arafat and Barak met, talked, and negotiated more frequently than Begin and Sadat. Unlike Sadat who was negotiating his first agreement with an Israeli prime minister, Arafat had negotiated agreements with two of Barak's predecessors and had negotiated the September 1999 Sharm el-Sheikh

agreement with his current rival.

At Camp David I, Carter could not afford to alienate Sadat because he was essential for marginalizing Soviet influence in the Middle East. If Arafat bolted from Camp David II, what choice did he have but ultimately to return to the U.S. negotiating tent? Having been shunned by virtually every other U.S. president of the era, Arafat, though aware of Clinton's closeness to Israel, sensed that Clinton would be fair-minded and therefore trustworthy. Begin and Moshe Dayan, Israel's foreign minister, did not feel that Carter always had Israel's best interests at heart, though they admired his interest and stamina and acknowledged that Camp David I would not have occurred or succeeded without his determination. Unlike Carter who had a credibility problem with American Jews, Clinton was considered to be the U.S. president most sympathetic to Israel's strategic and political needs. On major issues, such as Jewish settlements and Israeli arms sales to China, Clinton had publicly chastised Israel for its policy choices, but Israeli policy-makers doubted that Clinton would pressure Israel into making unwanted concessions.

Prior to and during Camp David II, informed advisers, preparatory staff workers, and those with substantive legal skills and/or negotiating experience were essential. In comparison to Sadat's advisers, Arafat's were vastly more talented and competent to handle the details of the Camp David II talks and subsequent negotiations. Like Begin, Barak kept virtually all critical information to himself, sharing it with only a few of his most trusted associates.

At Camp David I, Begin's team possessed more experience than Sadat's, though the delegations were roughly the same size. In part, this was a result of Sadat's style of authoritarian rule, decision-making, and being psychologically more prepared than his advisers to accept the state of Israel as a reality.

No one in the Israeli delegation forced Begin to remain ideologically true to his life-long beliefs.

Begin's advisers were talented pragmatists. Among Sadat's advisers, only a few matched the Israelis' skills, and among them, some wanted to pull Sadat back from making an unwanted compromise over Palestinian rights.

Unlike Begin, who took his foreign minister and defense minister to Camp David I, Barak was his own defense minister during Camp David II, and his foreign minister stayed home during the talks. Barak's negotiators were carefully chosen for their loyalty, competence, and expertise. Likewise, Arafat's team was chosen for its evident skills and

experience.

While Sadat was perhaps more forthcoming than members of his delegation, it is reported that Arafat was less so, at least when it came to resolving differences over Jerusalem. Arafat, according to a high-ranking U.S. Department of State official, was more interested in Palestinian and Arab consensus on major issues than in making controversial decisions that a leader--and not a manager--might make.

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Both Sadat and Begin knew what they wanted from Camp David I; for them the question was what else, if anything, would they have to relinquish to realize their objectives. Sadat wanted both to regain the Sinai Peninsula and to transform Egypt's relationship with the U.S., while Begin wanted a peace treaty with Egypt, but no territorial withdrawals other than from the Sinai Peninsula.

The Carter administration wanted to be sure that Sadat did not sign a separate agreement with Israel that would relegate the Palestinian issue to Begin's restrictive self-government proposal.

Though Carter had an over-arching procedural preference for a comprehensive agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors, Sadat's Jerusalem initiative vaporized that option.

In contrast, the Clinton administration focused exclusively on improving the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian relationship. It was not wedded to a comprehensive agreement to suit all parties of the Arab-Israeli dispute simultaneously. For the Carter administration, dealing with Sadat and Begin was more difficult than refereeing a Barak-Arafat contest. While the issues were relatively clear for Carter, the four key final-status issues of security, borders, refugees, and Jerusalem were more complex, emotional, and sensitive for Clinton.

Simply for lack of opportunity, Carter's foreign policy team did not enjoy the years of experience Clinton's advisers had culled from diplomatic engagements with Egypt and the Palestinians. Carter's difficulty, which Clinton did not endure, was the Arab world's complete denial of Israel as a political reality.

Infrequent, direct contact existed between Israeli officials and Sadat before Camp David I. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Roy Atherton narrowed differences between Jerusalem and Cairo through shuttle diplomacy in the nine months prior to the summit. Perhaps as much as 70 percent of the agreement that emerged from Camp David I was

secured before the summit had even occurred. However, in the prelude to Camp David I, no one in the U.S. delegation believed that a full agreement would be worked out.

Significantly, prior to Camp David II, none of the parties wanted a framework, declaration of principles, or a partial agreement. There was a desire to go for broke, and the Clinton administration saw little downside in not succeeding. Arafat and Barak knew what the other side's red lines were, and they were more responsive to their own respective domestic constituencies than Sadat or Begin needed to be. The U.S. team dwelled on the minutiae of the various negotiating points in the Palestinian-Israeli relationship. Prior to Camp David II, U.S.-Middle East negotiator Dennis Ross and his assistant, Aaron Miller, logged thousands of hours of contact with Palestinian and Israeli officials to help shape agreements between them and reduce mutual distrust, as well as create confidence-building measures.

In contrast, Carter administration policy-makers--Brzezinski, Quandt Vance, Saunders, Atherton, and others--were always unsure about possible sudden shifts in Sadat's priorities. They wanted Begin's autonomy plan for the Palestinians to be the minimum acceptable outcome in any Egyptian Israeli talks, but in the end, they failed to alter Begin's self-rule proposal. At the outset of Camp David I, the U.S. was diametrically opposed to Begin's priorities and convinced that he would devote more time to process than substance. They feared--as results of Camp David I proved--that Sadat could be persuaded to give less emphasis to the Palestinian question. Amazingly, at the next Camp David summit, the Palestinian issue formed the core of negotiations.

Camp David II was convened for several reasons, including: to focus on the implementation of existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements already reached, such as prisoner releases and application of promised Israeli withdrawals; and to discuss the final status issues.

Arafat aimed to achieve three major goals at the summit: the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in as much of the West Bank and Gaza as possible; the return of refugees; and the assertion of Palestinian control over Muslim holy sites and the Arab quarters of the Old City and East Jerusalem. Neither an interim nor a partial agreement, nor anything short of Israeli recognition of a Palestinian state, as he defined it, would suffice.

Barak's goals were to: protect Israel's security; safeguard a majority of existing settlements; secure Israel's control of necessary water supplies; guarantee a unified Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty and political control; and, if necessary, resolve the Palestinian refugee problem with

minimal impact on Israel's finances or existing population. In reality, Barak did not want to talk about the 1948 refugees, an issue for Israelis as sensitive as the issue of Jerusalem.

The Israelis went to Camp David II acknowledging that an independent Palestinian state would be established in the not-too-distant future. Israel was prepared to end its conflict with the Palestinians yet was not quite sure whether the Palestinians and their leadership had merely recognized Israel temporarily or were willing to accept the legitimacy of its existence and to declare a formal end to the conflict. Barak did not have the existential issues and the strategic concerns that influenced Begin, and he remained more pragmatic. The Israeli army under Begin concerned itself with maintaining security over the land west of the Jordan River, while Barak had inherited the decisions of three previous prime ministers who had returned to the Palestinian issue.

Begin's prime motivation had been strategic, but there were also elements of ideology--trade between a withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula for no withdrawal from the West Bank (Judea and Samaria). Furthermore, Begin was only interested in functional autonomy that would grant self-rule to the Palestinians but deny them control over the land. In contrast, Barak and his Likud and Labor predecessors had already made the strategic and philosophical decision to divide the land west of the Jordan River. Also, whereas at Camp David I, Sadat said that he would speak on behalf of the Jordanians, Barak, at Camp David II, framed his responses to Arafat in terms of Israeli national interest, but he also acknowledged Jordanian interests.

Prior to Camp David I, there was little, if any, discussion with the press by Begin, Dayan, or Sadat about what they would or would not agree to in mediation with Carter. However, before Camp David II, Barak and Arafat addressed all the issues openly and frequently, as did their ministers and negotiators.

Though "agreement-less," Camp David II provoked profound public debate among Israelis and Palestinians. In contrast to the period before Camp David I, the present-day domestic constituencies in Israel and among the Palestinians developed a sophisticated political palate for all the issues that were going to be discussed. Both Barak and Arafat were willing to talk about their "sacred political cows." Think tanks, op-ed pieces, conferences, study groups, meetings between high-ranking Palestinian and Israeli officials collectively provided the Palestinian and Israeli domestic environments with more information and permutations about negotiating outcomes than analysts could ever digest. Both the Israeli and Palestinian press, prior to Camp David II, calculated that only a partial or interim agreement would result from the negotiations. No

such collective and gnawing reflection emerged after Camp David I.

Before and after the first summit, the United States offered the prospect of economic assistance as an incentive to reach agreement. At Camp David II, though it was believed that both Israel and the Palestinians would receive some financial package to assist in the implementation of any agreement, Washington lacked the will to provide financial assistance to cement an agreement.

While the U.S. was expected, at or after Camp David II, to provide some assistance to the Palestinians, to compensate the Israelis for some withdrawals and to create a fund to compensate the refugees, monies for the implementation of any agreement could not come from U.S. sources alone. Moreover, the Clinton administration and members of Congress threatened both obliquely and directly to deny Arafat economic assistance, if he carried out his threat to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state.

ISSUES AND OUTCOMES

Unlike Camp David I, Camp David II resulted in neither a final document, a White House signing ceremony, nor a presidential presentation of the respective leaders to a joint session of Congress. Unlike Camp David I where no Palestinian attended the summit and Egypt negotiated for the Palestinians, at Camp David II, no Egyptian attended the talks and the Palestinians represented their own interests.

Unlike Sadat, who violated notions of Arab unity by negotiating a separate agreement with Israel, Arafat reached no such agreement but enjoyed Arab sanction to negotiate with Israel and reach a political settlement. Arafat also walked away from his summit as an Arab hero for not making any concessions to the Israelis.

Both before and after Camp David II, Arafat had consulted closely with other Arab leaders, while for Egypt in 1978, Camp David I widened its divide with other Arab states, with the November 1978 Baghdad Arab summit meeting condemning Sadat's action and vilifying Egypt. Now, 22 years after Camp David I, the Arab world, especially Egypt, has staunchly defended Arafat's position, creating, at least temporarily, a distinctive unease in Cairo's diplomatic relations with Washington. Cairo's seemingly convoluted response after Camp David II resulted from seeking to balance its patronage of the Palestinians and defense of Arab rights--especially with regard to Jerusalem--on the one hand, while wanting to sustain good, though complex, relations with the U.S on the other.

After Camp David I, Begin returned to Israel as a hero. Carping from his political right occurred, but the Israeli public and parliament overwhelmingly accepted the two segments of the Camp David accords: one dealing with the future of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship, and the other, announcing an amorphous degree of Palestinian self-rule.

Barak by comparison, returned to Israel as he had left it, with his ruling coalition floundering and no-confidence motions threatening his leadership. His foreign minister resigned because of the concessions the prime minister might have made at Camp David II; Moshe Dayan, similarly resigned in 1980 but only because he felt Begin was not sufficiently forthcoming in accommodating the Palestinians.

To Sadat, Palestinian interests were at best only secondary to the fulfillment of Egyptian national objectives. Furthermore, in 1978, Palestinian attitudes toward negotiations with Israel, either directly or indirectly, were unanimously hostile, and Israel was not prepared politically or psychologically to negotiate the return of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem-or even to negotiate with the PLO at all.

In 1978, unequivocal supporters of Israel in the U.S.-those in the "Israel right or wrong camp"-were overwhelmed with delight and anticipation that an agreement might be reached between Israel and the most powerful Arab state. By comparison, in 2000, supporters of Israel in the U.S. had more doubts about Israeli concessions that were to be made in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians. After Camp David I, both sides met and fleshed out the details of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship with the issue of Palestinian autonomy being relegated to second place. By contrast, after Camp David II, both sides' highest negotiating officials met within a week after the summit had ended because they still wanted to reach a Palestinian-Israeli final agreement.

After Camp David I, the possibility of military conflict still lingered, but after Camp David II, while the possibility of renewed violence existed, the Palestinians lacked any credible military option against Israel.

This year, Israel and the Palestinians tried to complete a difficult, if not impossible, task: dividing the land that each felt belonged exclusively to themselves. This remains a more difficult task than that faced by Sadat and Begin in 1978. Few, if any, Israelis doubted that the Sinai Peninsula belonged rightfully to Egypt, but many Israeli still do not want all-or even some-of the West Bank and Gaza to be transferred to Palestinian control. If Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin can be said to have started the process of finding a way for Israel to share the land with Palestinians, his military protégé is poised to still complete it.

The larger issue, at the second summit, was the readiness of a secular Israeli political leader to draw the political boundaries of the Zionist state in such a way that the more ideologically nationalist Israelis believe impermissible. For them, no temporal leader can redesign the map outlined in a promise by G-d to the Jewish people.

The Camp David I agreement was the quintessential "compromise document," with purposeful ambiguity where both sides understood that self-translation would allow for different interpretations. This imprecision suited Begin and Sadat. However, in 2000, Arafat was not satisfied with any ambiguity; he sought specificity on outstanding issues. While Barak, unlike Begin, was not opposed to an independent Palestinian state, like his predecessor, he sought to control the timing of the implementation of any agreement.

Unlike Egyptians and Israelis two decades ago, Palestinians and Israelis have reached agreements without Washington's engagement, and may do so in the future, but they have proven unable to implement agreements in a manner that complies with previously negotiated timeframes.

Carter was essential for convoking Camp David I. The meeting set a precedent, with the very idea of having such a trilateral summit considered bold and unique. Clinton too, was a required participant for Palestinian-Israeli negotiations to move forward, with the power of the Oval Office and the personal effort expended by the president being absolutely necessary for narrowing differences between the parties.

In nurturing the Egyptian-Israeli relationship in Camp David I, the U.S. did not insist upon tension-reducing initiatives that would curb verbal incitement and unilateral actions by one side toward the other. Israelis and Palestinians could learn from these essential shortcomings in the Egyptian-Israeli relationship. For a Palestinian-Israeli agreement to stick, their respective media outlets, religious officials, and politicians need to exercise unaccustomed restraint.

Once Israel put aside its existential fear and was recognized by the most powerful Arab state, as a society it began to look at domestic issues, heretofore postponed by concerns of survival, legitimacy, and security. If the same occurs for the Palestinians, how will they face issues of governance, ethnic division, and social cleavage? If Camp David II ultimately results in a treaty with Israel and sets the stage for peaceful relations, how will Palestinians fare without an external threat to help weld them together?

For Israel, a peace treaty with the Palestinians does not suggest that

one fine morning Barak will teach Arafat to play the piano, or that Arafat will invite Barak to his daughter's birthday party. Unlike Clinton whose presidential term ends in January 2001, Barak enjoys the possibility of a long political life ahead of him. However, that may not necessarily mean that he will be prime minister long after Clinton's term.

Regardless of who is at the Palestinian, Israeli, or U.S. helm next year, Camp Davids I and II have enshrined the U.S. role in bilateral Arab-Israeli negotiations. Though the latter summit did not end with an official document as its predecessor had, its very convocation, issues discussed, and immediate aftermath suggested beyond any reasonable doubt that the once war-dominated Arab-Israeli conflict has evolved into a series of negotiated Arab-Israeli relationships, albeit ones spotted by mistrust, violence, and anxiety.

Though the Palestinian issue may be the core of the present Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinian recognition of Israel does not automatically guarantee Israel's acceptance by a majority in the Arab or Muslim world. Like Camp David I, an agreement will not constitute a historic reconciliation between peoples, but will instead create a historical time-out--perhaps of a generation or more in duration--during which the task will be to make a settlement last.

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Some exceptions to the limited contact were: one or two secret meetings; some political and military committee talks held between January and March 1978; an occasional visit by an Israeli politician to Cairo; the establishment of a hot line between Israel and Egypt after Sadat's 1977 visit to Jerusalem; the July 1978 Leeds Castle foreign ministers' meeting in England; and meetings between the Israeli and Egyptian defense ministers.

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