

The Long Armistice

UN Peacekeeping and the
Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1960

Nathan A. Pelcovits



The Long Armistice
Published in cooperation with the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern & African Studies,
Tel Aviv University

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1993 by Westview Press, Inc.

Published 2019 by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pelcovits, Nathan A. (Nathan Albert), 1912–

The long armistice: UN peacekeeping and the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1948–1960 / Nathan A. Pelcovits.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-8133-8483-4

1. Jewish-Arab relations—1949–1967. 2. United Nations—Palestine. 3. United Nations—Armed Forces—Middle East. 4. Israel-Arab War, 1948–1949—Armistices. 5. Sinai Campaign, 1956.

DS119.7.P443 1993

956.04—dc20

93-19519

CIP

ISBN 13: 978-0-367-29362-8 (hbk)

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Foreword

A FEW MONTHS AFTER I arrived in Israel as U.S. ambassador in 1977, I delivered a speech in Haifa. The date coincidentally fell during the week in which, thirty years earlier, the United Nations General Assembly had cast a fateful vote to endorse the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states. The audience was shocked when I used the occasion to laud the United Nations. I recalled the crucial role the UN had played in smoothing the legal path to Israel's rebirth as a sovereign member of the community of nations. I was taken aback by the vehemence of the reaction. By the time my ambassadorship ended eight years later, I understood much more about the highly suspicious Israeli view of the UN and had frequently tried, with little success, to temper it. But I never fully grasped its origins until I read the manuscript for this book.

It is a seeming paradox that a state that owed its legitimacy to the UN should have become so bitterly estranged from the international organization, an estrangement that is finally beginning to fade in the 1990s. Understanding the nature of the paradox is essential if one is to comprehend fully the tangled history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the course of Israel's often tumultuous relationship with its major friend and ally, the United States.

The UN has been centrally involved in the "Palestine problem" since its earliest days, as mediator, as would-be peacemaker, as peacekeeper, and as a forum for endless debate over questions that have occupied the General Assembly and the Security Council more than nearly all other issues combined. During the 1970s and 1980s, seemingly endless assaults on Israel in various UN arenas by Arab delegations, their "nonaligned" colleagues, and Soviet-bloc representatives were unrelenting threatening on more than one occasion to force Israel's suspension or expulsion from the General Assembly itself or from other UN bodies.

Milestones in this persistent campaign to destroy Israel's legitimacy were the General Assembly's adoption of the so-called "Zionism is racism" resolution in November 1975, finally repealed as late as 1991, and the Security Council's refusal to endorse or even commend the achievement of full peace between Israel and Egypt in 1979. Had the United States not defended Israel's position so stoutly in the world organization throughout these years, Israel would likely have become permanently estranged and probably would have been expelled.

This book provides a much-needed history and analysis of the origins and early period of Israel's bitter, mutual distrust of the UN. It fills an important gap in the history of the Middle East. Dr. Pelcovits draws on a rich background of U.S. government experience in UN affairs to enrich his careful scholarship. He brings to his task an excellent blend of the perspectives of both practitioner and analyst. The story has multiple strands, and Pelcovits separates them carefully and objectively. He correctly dispels a widely held impression that the problem stemmed largely from conflict between individual Israelis and UN officials, personal chemistry, or contrasting political cultures. Rather, the persisting mutual mistrust stemmed originally from a clash between what Pelcovits calls "Israel's security ethos and the UN's peacekeeping ethos." Pelcovits finds that Israeli officials believed that UN representatives and its peacekeepers were not alert to Israel's security concerns, that their attitudes fluctuated between an unsympathetic detachment and judgmental partisanship.

Ultimately, all parties, including Israel, accommodated to a stalemated armistice regime monitored by UN peacekeeping units, but in the process Israelis came to regard the UN as part of

their problem rather than a vehicle for achieving a satisfactory peaceful solution. That attitude persisted for several decades, hardening into bitter hostility in the 1970s and 1980s as the Arab diplomatic offensive against Israel in UN bodies reached a crescendo.

How the conflict began and how it evolved is a fascinating, if depressing, story. Pelcovits has gotten to the core of the problem in this volume.

Samuel W. Lewis
U.S. Ambassador to Israel, 1977-1985

Acknowledgments

IN WRITING THIS BOOK I drew mainly on two sources: the diplomatic record, both published and archival, and conversations with officials, diplomats, military officers, scholars, and writers in the United States and Israel, many of whom witnessed or participated in the events here recounted.

Three documentary collections were primary: (1) the United Nations archives, through which I was guided by Harmut Hagner, chief of reference services; (2) the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem, where I was helped by Gilad Livne; and (3) the Central Files of the Department of State, housed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The voluminous U.S. material proved most valuable, reflecting Washington's pivotal role in the Arab-Israeli confrontation. The key documents, especially on the Suez-Sinai crisis of the mid-1950s, have recently been published in the State Department's series, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. For other periods, the unpublished papers still in the archives remain a principal source. Because the Arab state documents were not accessible to me, I came to depend heavily on the U.S. and UN documents and the scholarly literature for an understanding of Arab positions.

The many conversations I had with witnesses and participants in the events, and their willingness to speak candidly and at length, gave meaning to the historical record. What the interviews added to the tale was a retrospective evocation of how reality was viewed at the time as well as a clarification of the impact on the present.

Of the many people with whom I talked, particular gratitude is owed to several: Sir Brian E. Urquhart, the leading practitioner and philosopher of UN peacekeeping, for his penetrating and candid comments; Walter Eytan, the director-general of Israel's foreign ministry during the formative period, who was present during many of the events here recounted; Aryeh Shalev of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, whose experience and understanding of Israel's policies toward the Mixed Armistice Commissions helped focus my analysis; Mordechai Gazit, scholar and seasoned diplomat, who helped me sharpen the analysis of motivations; and Yehoshafat Harkabi of the Hebrew University, a participant at the Rhodes armistice talks in 1949 and leading military and political strategist in Israel for the past forty years.

In Israel during the fall of 1987 I had the good fortune of interviewing several former Israeli ambassadors to the United Nations who were active during and after the formative period. To Abba Eban, the late Michael Comay, Gideon Rafael, and Yehuda Blum (who appeared on the scene later) I am indebted for illuminating and instructive explanations of Israel's attitudes and experiences at the United Nations, as I am to Elyakim Rubinstein; senior officers in the Israeli diplomatic service, notably Hanan Baron, Robbi Sabel, and Shamai Kahane; and at the Ministry of Defense, Uri Lubrani and Brig. Gen. Danny Rothschild.

For their encouragement and keen insights on both U.S.-Israel relations and the UN scene, I am beholden to friends and former colleagues from the State Department. The need to respect confidences means that I cannot adequately thank them for specific ideas they contributed. I can, however, gratefully acknowledge the encouragement and advice of Samuel W. Lewis, former U.S. ambassador to Israel and until recently president of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

I owe a lot to the perceptions of scholars and writers with whom I have spoken and corresponded over the years, and in connection with this book, about the Arab-Israeli conflict

and UN involvement in it. None of those with whom I spoke, of course, is responsible for misjudgments or errant statements, though I have taken pains to recall and record views as I heard them. My primary debt is to Itamar Rabinovich, former head of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies and rector of Tel Aviv University, and now the Israeli ambassador to the United States, without whose help and inspiration this study might never have been pursued. I am also indebted for enlightened analysis of Israeli foreign policy to Nissim Bar-Yaacov of Hebrew University, Aaron Klieman of Tel Aviv University, and Ilan Pappé, research fellow at the Dayan Center. Writers and newspeople who took an interest in this study, many of them close to the Israeli political scene for years going back to the formative period, added a dimension of strategic realism and insider politics to the diplomatic tale. In particular, I benefited from talks with Shabtai Tevet, the biographer of Ben Gurion; Ze'ev Schiff, defense editor of the daily *Ha'aretz*; and Moshe Zak, senior editor of the daily *Maariv*.

Special thanks are due to the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, its current director, Asher Susser, and its staff (notably Amira Margalith and Edna Liftman) for assistance, administrative support, office space, and a stimulating research atmosphere during my stay there as visiting fellow in the fall of 1987. Though in the end I produced a study with a different focus than was projected, the center's support and cooperation were not diminished.

Again I thank Kristen Carpenter Stoeber for skillful editing. To Stephen Olman I am beholden for his expert and expeditious preparation of the maps. I owe a particular debt to Zilla Bristol, whose secretarial skills and mastery of word processing, unfailing good humor, and patience never flagged over more than four years of writing and revising.

Above all, I cannot ever adequately thank my beloved wife, Jeanette, for her support, forbearance, encouragement, and, as always, sensible counsel during a much longer haul than either of us anticipated when this venture was launched.

Nathan A. Pelcovits

Acronyms

ADL or AL Armistice demarcation line or armistice line
DL Demarcation line
DZ or DMZ Demilitarized zone
EIMAC Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission
ES-I First emergency session of the UN General Assembly
GA UN General Assembly
GAA General Armistice Agreement
GOE Government of Egypt
GOI Government of Israel
GOL Government of Lebanon
GOS Government of Syria
GSO General staff officer
HJK Hashemite Jordan Kingdom
ICA International Cooperation Administration
ICJ International Court of Justice
IDF Israel Defense Forces
IF International frontier
IJMAC Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission
ILMAC Israel-Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission
ISMAC Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission
JCS Joint chiefs of staff
JVP Jordan valley plan
LCA Local commanders' agreement
MAC Mixed Armistice Commission
MDAP Mutual Defense Assistance Program
MSP Mutual Security Program
NEA Bureau of Near Eastern and African Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State
NIE National Intelligence Estimate, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency
NSC UN National Security Council
OP Observation post
PCC Palestine Conciliation Commission
SC UN Security Council
SCUA Suez Canal Users Association
SEATO Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SNIE Special National Intelligence Estimate
S/P Policy Planning Staff, U.S. Dept. of State
SYG or SG Secretary General of UN
TC Truce Commission in Palestine
TSO Truce Supervisory Organization of UN
UAR United Arab Republic
UN United Nations
UNDOF UN Disengagement Observer Force

UNEF UN Emergency Force
UNFICYP UN Force in Cyprus
UNHq UN headquarters
UNIFIL UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMOs UN military observers
UNOGIL UN Observer Group in Lebanon
UNRWA UN Relief and Works Agency
UNSC UN Security Council
UNSCOP UN Special Committee on Palestine
UNTSO UN Truce Supervision Organization (UN usage) UN Truce Supervisory Organization
(U.S. usage)
USG U.S. Government
USMC U.S. Marine Corps
USNR U.S. Naval Reserve
USUN U.S. Mission to the UN

Introduction

THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) HAS BEEN immersed in the Palestine issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict longer and in a more operational sense than in any other regional dispute. Its long and often troubled relationship with the area has no parallel. The issue has been a perennial on the organization's political agenda and of increasing security concern, requiring a UN "peacekeeping" presence on Arab-Israeli fronts since the beginning of the conflict. Since 1948, military observers of the UN Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) have monitored the armistice lines, supervised cease-fire arrangements, and verified arms-limitation zones. The earliest authentic UN peacekeeping *force*, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF I), was deployed after the Suez War of 1956 to supervise the cease-fire and withdrawal, then to patrol the Sinai and Gaza border areas and to "enforce" the restored armistice. In fact, UNEF I became the prototype for later UN peacekeeping ventures.

What has been unique and therefore historically intriguing about the UN's involvement in the region is the suspicion and mistrust that have pervaded the relationship between Israel and the world organization. These early confrontations not only had significant repercussions in UN deliberative forums but they also adversely affected Israel's diplomatic relations with Washington. Indeed, the initial spur for this book was a discussion I had some years back with Professor Itamar Rabinovich, now Israel's ambassador to Washington. We speculated about how the early, hostile encounters might have affected Israel's international standing and diplomatic relations. Were the frequent instances of friction mere surface phenomena of clashing cultural and political styles? Or were they politically consequential?

When I began research for this book in the spring of 1987, preparatory to a three-month stay as visiting fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, it became clear that a focus on personal antagonisms, even on "misunderstandings" resulting from differing political cultures, would produce a one-dimensional study and distort history. Personal recriminations, which run like a thread through the diplomatic documentation and memoirs of the period, can almost invariably be traced to political differences over the UN mission. Israel resented what it saw as an inordinate assertion of authority by UN personnel. Manifested in personal wrangles and incivilities, raised voices and cocked weapons, the confrontations were essentially political, not personal.

To understand the impact of UN intervention on the Arab-Israeli conflict, I had to broaden the focus. How did it come about that the Israeli and Arab sides held such diametrically opposed views of the value of engaging the United Nations in their struggle? A related question is, how did the clashing outlooks of the protagonists affect the prospects for peace? And why did the UN shift its focus so early in the game—about 1952—from securing a peace settlement to "keeping" the peace of a long armistice?

This book seeks to answer these questions by chronicling the evolution of UN intervention in the region during the "formative years" (1948 to the end of the 1950s) and by seeking to explain why peacekeeping was prescribed to contain the conflict during the long armistice that, to this day, has governed the Arab-Israeli relationship on all fronts save the Egyptian one. During the formative years the patterns and policies were set, establishing a singular role for the UN as "peacekeeper" in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

From Israel's perspective, UN peacekeepers came to be seen more often than not as creating a

barrier to direct relations with the Arabs and demonstrating a distinct pro-Arab tilt in border disputes and other matters. The peacekeepers might have value when they served to buttress a disengagement agreement, but by and large, Israel questioned both their impartiality and their effectiveness along the armistice lines with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Early on, a chill developed between Israel and the world organization. Israel was faulted for not cooperating with UNTSO officers and condemned for carrying out disproportionate retaliatory strikes. The chill never really dissipated. By the late 1950s, when the UN political demography shifted to Israel's disadvantage, Israeli leaders concluded that the world organization could not possibly advance the prospects for a regional peace settlement. Israel's desire to "manage without the UN," as Bjorn Skogmo has observed, became an early tenet of Israeli foreign policy.

In a way, the Arab attitude toward UN intervention reflected a mirror image. Any UN intermediary role was welcomed precisely because it barred direct contact with the adversary. As the nonaligned coalition, gained dominance in UN forums, the Arab side could count on a protective majority in the General Assembly to support its political interests. And in the Security Council the Arab protagonist could, almost without exception, rely on the Soviet delegate to champion the Arab cause. It made political sense to involve the UN in the conflict and to magnify its authority whether as forum for political warfare, as arbiter, or as a mechanism to contain Israeli military advances.

The attitudes of Israel and the Arab world constitute only one dimension of a complex story. From the beginning, differences over the UN peacekeeping role and its authority to manage the armistice regime were manifested not only between Israel and the Arab protagonists but also between Israel and the UN establishment (both at headquarters and in the field) and between Israel and both U.S. administrations (Truman and Eisenhower) during the formative years. As the principal arena in which world politics was brought to bear in Middle East crises and as an organization with its own institutional interests, the UN establishment saw peacekeeping in the Israeli-Arab conflict as a device to salvage, in part, its prime role as maintainer of the peace. At the end of World War II it was universally expected that the UN would play a central, if not decisive, role in dealing with regional conflicts. By the end of the 1950s this hope proved illusory. With the onset of the cold war, the major international decisions were being made outside the UN. The Arab-Israeli conflict remained one of the very few crises in which the UN was given the central conflict-control assignment, with operational responsibilities as peacekeeper and enforcer of the armistice.

Both the political dynamics at the United Nations and its own institutional interests and sense of mission, salvaged from its declining importance as peacemaker, impelled it to carry out the peacekeeping task with imagination and dedication. But peacekeeping was a novel international venture; the powers of peacekeepers were ambiguous and operational modes improvised. And this often led to challenge and confrontation with the conflicting parties, particularly with Israeli security personnel on the ground. In countless incidents, as the story here shows, Israeli authorities and soldiers were faulted for resisting "full cooperation" with the peacekeepers. The disdain demonstrated toward the UN and its peacekeeping mission was deeply resented by both those in the field and the higher bureaucracy at UN headquarters.

Moreover, the UN perceived the armistice regime and machinery, notably the mixed armistice commissions (MACs), as the fundamental legal-political structure for its authority in the region. In this view it was backed by the United States and the overwhelming majority of the UN membership. Israel was isolated. From its perspective, the prolongation of the armistice regime had frozen the status quo, robbed it of the fruits of victory, shielded the Arab side from the

military and political realities, and impeded direct negotiations that alone could bring peace. In Israeli eyes, the United Nations had capitulated to Arab refusal to move beyond the military standoff to a political relationship, as had been anticipated when the armistice agreements had been negotiated with the warring Arab states at Rhodes in 1949.

Israeli suspicions about the UN peacekeepers were aggravated by concerns about the all-embracing scope of the UN authority, particularly in the aftermath of the Suez crisis. The world organization assumed responsibility for a strife-ridden Palestine, which had been summarily abandoned by the British mandatory power. And peacekeeping came to involve a responsibility not only to help maintain law and order but also to enforce an armistice negotiated by the parties and to serve as tribunal in their disputes. Was the United Nations arrogating the powers of a "successor mandatory," as some suspected when UNTSO headquarters was installed in Government House in Jerusalem? Was this a subversion of Israel's newly won sovereignty? Israeli prime minister David Ben Gurion, despite repeated pleas from UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld and the Eisenhower administration, adamantly refused to accept the deployment of UNEF troops or installations on Israel's side of the armistice line.

The United States was very influential in directing the course of events. As the senior partner in an Anglo-American alignment to protect Western interests in the Middle East against Soviet encroachment, Washington courted Arab allies and resisted too close a security relationship with Israel. Broader political and strategic concerns militated against a formal security alliance so avidly sought by Ben Gurion both before and after the Suez Crisis. Salvation for Israel, U.S. secretary of state John Foster Dulles exhorted, was not to be found in an arms buildup or security guarantee but in cooperating with the UN peacekeepers and complying with the armistice agreements.

The Americans' advice to rely on Hammarskjöld and his peacekeepers and on the Eisenhower doctrine's generalized pledge to protect Israel was not reassuring to the Israeli leadership. Some viewed it as a stratagem for denying Israel arms and a security guarantee in the face of perceived threats from Moscow and Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser. UN assurances were no substitute for U.S. guarantees and a place for Israel in Western-sponsored regional security arrangements. Israel never got the ironclad commitment it sought, though it came to value the assurances of February 1957 that Washington as a maritime power would take unspecified action, preferably "within the United Nations," to protect Israel's right to transit the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba.

The United States chose to focus Middle East diplomacy in the United Nations and to enlist UN peacekeepers in policing the long armistice. Both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations (particularly the latter) preferred the UN option partly out of conviction that it should play the key role in the postwar world order. The record shows, however, that national-interest considerations were also at work. By operating through the UN, Washington could limit its political and financial commitments while exercising a requisite degree of control in the world organization. This policy of limited liability (particularly during the early years through the mid-1950s, at certain crisis points in the 1960s, and again in the Carter years) almost always reinforced the central role of the UN as peacekeeper and political actor. Whether in supporting the UN stance on strengthening the armistice machinery or in endorsing the rulings of the UN chairmen of the mixed armistice commissions in border disputes—or in pressing Israel to be more responsive to the concerns of troop contributors to UN peacekeeping forces—U.S. political weight was applied in ways that Israel often questioned. But Israel prudently weighed these differences over the utility of UN peacekeeping intervention against its growing need for U.S.

political and economic support.

The interplay of these conflicting interests and pressures impelled the international community to somehow "manage" the Arab-Israeli conflict. No explicit decision was taken to set aside the peacemaking mandate of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). Diplomatic rhetoric might explain peacekeeping as just the prelude to addressing the underlying issues in the Arab-Israeli dispute. But the archives and memoirs reveal unmistakably that already in the early 1950s deep-seated Arab-Israeli differences were judged to preclude any possibility of a negotiated compromise on the "hard-core" issues relating to refugees and territory. The Arab-Israeli case was viewed as too complex and intractable for any "Olympian" diplomatic exercise at peacemaking under UN auspices—to use Brian Urquhart's term.

Recent publication of the U.S. diplomatic record prior to 1956, however, reveals that a grand peacemaking initiative, called "Operation Alpha," was undertaken by the United States outside the UN context. At the end of 1954 the Eisenhower administration concluded that the West's vital strategic interests in the Middle East made imperative a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Washington launched Operation Alpha, a joint, highly secret enterprise with London, aimed at inducing the adversaries to negotiate a settlement. The plan was predicated on the assumption that Israel, "suffering from a severe feeling of isolation and insecurity," could be induced to make major territorial concessions, including the transfer to Egypt of a slice of the Negev as a bridge to Jordan, and to repatriate a substantial number of Arab refugees. A peace settlement, it was believed, held "little attraction" for the Arabs, particularly an ascendant Egypt, but they might be cajoled into negotiating if not a formal peace then an end to belligerency and to the blockade and secondary boycott, by generous inducements of military and economic aid, including help in financing the Aswan High Dam.

Nasser was expected to find the Alpha package appealing enough to keep him from jumping into the Soviet camp and to reconcile him to the Western-sponsored Baghdad Pact in which Iraq, Egypt's rival for pan-Arab leadership, played the key role. Parallel to this grand design was a "unified" development scheme for sharing the Jordan River waters, then being negotiated by Eric Johnston. When the Alpha operation appeared to falter toward the end of 1955, President Dwight Eisenhower sent his former deputy secretary of defense and "personal friend," Robert B. Anderson, to persuade Nasser and Ben Gurion to negotiate a settlement of their differences and thus avert a Middle East war. Anderson encountered the same suspicions and obstacles as had the Alpha mediators who had offered the same package of inducements and admonitions.

By the end of March 1956 all three missions had broken down, mainly because of what Washington saw as Nasser's "continued negativism" and his alignment with Moscow in the wake of the Czech arms deal in September. The administration's attempt to broker a negotiated settlement was thus foiled by Nasser's distrust of the West and the irreconcilable interests of Israel and the Arab states.

What the record makes clear is that the decision to abandon peacemaking efforts and opt for the enlargement of the UN peacekeeping role was not a direct consequence of the breakdown of the armistice at the time of the Suez War. It followed from the conviction six months earlier that the Arab-Israeli dispute was not amenable to settlement. Stabilizing the border and policing a restored armistice were likely to be demanding and protracted.

UN peacekeeping therefore became the instrument of choice for managing the impasse. It institutionalized the stalemate. George Sherry, a senior officer in the UN Secretariat, later concluded that the decision to employ peacekeeping is often not

a second-best choice to be used as a last resort when the preferred outcome, peaceful settlement, proves unattainable. In fact,

impasse management may in practice be the optimum available outcome. The alternative to it is not peaceful settlement and disappearance of the dispute; it is rather uncontrolled hostility and war.¹

In this case it served as insurance against the breakdown of the armistice and resumption of war.

Although Israel accommodated itself to this state of affairs, it never fully accepted the rationale, and this was a major source of friction with the UN in times of crisis when Israel took unilateral political or military action to defend its people or territory, rejecting advice that it rely on the peacekeeping mechanism. Israel faced a dual dilemma. Security concerns militated against placing reliance on the UN peacekeepers, whose efforts were often considered "ineffective" to deal with cross-border threats or raids, let alone to protect the nation's larger strategic concerns. Yet it was restrained by Washington pressure not to retaliate, and when it did it paid a heavy diplomatic price. The other dilemma flowed from the contradictions of its armistice policy. Israel gained nothing but world censure when Ben Gurion declared the armistice agreement with Egypt a dead letter, on the ground that Cairo's claims to rights as a belligerent were incompatible with the armistice. Yet, Israel's very legitimacy as a state, not to mention its claim to the 1949 boundaries, derived largely from its membership in the UN and international ratification of the armistice regime.

In the end, all the parties, including Israel, accommodated themselves to the stalemate of an armistice policed by the UN peacekeepers. For Israel, the relative stability of the armistice gave it breathing room to develop its economy, build a political and administrative structure, extend its hold over disputed lands, absorb a massive flow of immigrants, and strengthen its armed forces. Nor did Israel, any more than the Arab side, feel itself secure enough to take the risks of initiating attempts at negotiating a settlement on terms that would have required concessions that were considered politically unrealistic. Israeli policy remained reactive and defensive—a pattern that in many respects has lasted until today. The armistice stalemate and its UN guardians in the end proved to be the least unacceptable option for all concerned.

1

The Fateful Year—1948–1949

FORTY YEARS AFTER THE EVENT, Walter Eytan, who became the first director-general of the Foreign Office of the new state of Israel, recalled how besieged Jerusalemites cheered the arrival of Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden, the UN mediator, not many days after Israel's declaration of independence on May 18, 1948. Bernadotte was welcomed as the UN rescuer who would lift the siege and bring a halt to the fighting. Indeed, the Swedish diplomat did help arrange the first truce in the Arab-Israeli war, which went into effect on June 11, 1948. Disenchantment soon followed, however. Within a month or two the Israeli attitude became *kabdehu vehashdehu* — treat him with regard and respect—but also with caution and suspicion.¹

How, in less than a year after Israel's declaration of independence, did the relation between the new state and the world organization, its midwife and legitimizer, come to be marked by tension and mutual mistrust? What accounted for the atmosphere of suspicion and antagonism that came to pervade Israel's relations with the UN military observers (UNMOs) who supervised compliance with the cease-fire of July 1948 and later the 1949 armistice agreements? This personal antagonism was no small matter and soon took on a larger meaning, for the bad blood spilled over onto the UN political scene, where Israel was increasingly isolated and placed on the political defensive.

Although this study focuses on the encounters between Israel and the UN peacekeepers during the formative period, 1948-1960, it also asks a larger historical question: Did UN intervention help the search for a peace settlement or impede it? How consequential was UN involvement as the key intermediary in the conflict, notably in the early years, in determining the course of the Arab-Israeli relationship?

To understand the complex and tangled history of the Arab-Israeli relationship and the part played by the UN, one must recall certain issues that became prominent during the first year or two and helped to set a pattern for the future course of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The United Nations: Successor Mandatory?

By the summer of 1948 a fundamental issue divided the opposing parties and soon isolated Israel. How authoritative a role could and should the fledgling UN assume in the region?

The United States and Britain (which took the lead in shaping policy), the Arabs, and the UN establishment all opted for an activist UN in the region; the aim was to internationalize the issue. Alone of the major actors, Israel preferred a more minimal role for the organization. It suspected the UN assumption of the British Mandate. It also distrusted the direction of the UN and feared that the organization's intervention would erect a barrier to direct contacts.

The other major actors tacitly agreed that the UN should assume a dominant role in both defining the Palestine issue and resolving the conflict. The UN asserted a singular concern and involvement with the future of Palestine—in effect assuming a custodial responsibility. During

the formative years, the UN came to play a more activist and authoritative role with regard to Palestine than with regard to any other trusteeship or mandatory territory moving to independence.² The Palestine case and Arab-Israeli conflict were treated as unique.

Much of Israel's concern over the UN involvement derived from doubts about where the international guardianship would lead. Unrecognized by its neighbors, its survivability often in question, Israel was naturally sensitive to any challenge. Two events were particularly traumatic. In April 1948 the UN General Assembly deferred implementation of the 1947 partition plan and proposed placing Palestine under a five-year trusteeship, during which it was presumed a peaceful settlement would be reached. Especially troubling to the Jewish leadership was that the proposal for a transitional trusteeship was initiated by the U.S. delegation. A month later, when Israel declared its independence, the second blow fell: No one came to Israel's aid as the surrounding Arab states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon—converged in a military attack aimed at throttling the newborn state in the cradle. Although, as described in the next chapter, the UN was instrumental in bringing about a truce in June, and, after the Israeli forces scored large territorial gains, in ordering a more permanent cease-fire in July, in the nation's historical memory the United Nations acted only when the Arab side suffered reverses.

Peace Broker or Political Actor?

Closely related to Israel's reservations about being treated as a quasi ward was its mistrust of the utility and purpose of UN peacekeeping. By the end of 1949, Israel and the Arab side held diametrically opposed views on the value and modality of UN mediation. UNTSO's authority as well as that of the UN chairmen of the MACs were also disputed. Despite the myth in some Israeli circles that the early years were a golden age for Israel at the United Nations,³ sharp differences emerged during the first year.

From the start a "Rashomon effect" about UN involvement came into play, straining the new country's relationship with the organization. The same historical reality was read differently in New York and Jerusalem. Partly this stemmed from conflicting historical myths about the events of 1948 and what ensued. Israel's view was that it had been betrayed when Arab armies invaded Palestine with the declared aim of wiping out the Jewish state, and was, furthermore, robbed of military gains by the untimely intervention of the UN.

UN Secretariat officials of the time dispute Israel's view. UN intervention (notably the cease-fire of July 1948), they contend, rescued Israel from disaster. Down to its last reserve company, Israel would have been defeated if not for the UN; the organization's peacekeeping efforts also helped to stabilize Israel's borders. Israel's response is twofold: (1) the cease-fire, while welcome, saved the Arabs, not Israel, from certain defeat, and (2) the UN has since made it a practice to intervene in the fighting when the Arab side is close to defeat.⁴

The View from Jerusalem

Almost from the beginning Israel's relation to the UN and what role it should play in the Arab-Israeli conflict has been paradoxical. The UN had been the vehicle for creating the state and would inevitably play a commanding role in determining its fate. Israeli leaders also realized that

U.S. policy on Palestine would be centered at the UN.

At the fortieth-anniversary celebration of Israel's independence several observers recalled that of the five foreign-policy principles set forth in the country's proclamation of independence, three were linked to the UN: adherence to the tenets of the UN charter, a pledge to cooperate with Arab neighbors in the framework of the UN, and a commitment to strengthening the capacity and authority of the world organization. Even as an undercurrent of suspicion emerged, Israel's central foreign-policy aim was international legitimacy, which it sought through admission to the UN.⁵

A widespread myth has it that Ben Gurion scorned the UN from the start, dismissing it with the epithet *Um Shmum* (UM is UN in Hebrew; Shmum is a derogatory, rhyming word). This myth distorts reality. Along with other founding fathers, Ben Gurion took seriously the acts of the UN and was sensitive to its place in world affairs and the effects of actions there on Israel's security and survival. Thus, a diary entry of December 14, 1949, reveals how he pondered the decision to transfer government offices (apart from Defense) to Jerusalem. He could not recall a more difficult decision ever: to defy the UN, confront the Catholic world, evoke U.S. and Soviet opposition, and infuriate the Arabs. But after weighing all considerations, he decided to take the "risk" (using the English word) by declarations and deeds, even in the face of opposition from Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok (Sharett) and others in his cabinet. A major consideration was his estimate that U.S. policy had not yet crystallized. If the United States will not harm us, he concluded, then the United Nations is not to be feared.⁶

The record reveals that the often sharp debate between the Ben Gurionites and the "internationalists," led by Sharett, had to do with the relative weight to be given the UN factor and world opinion on issues affecting Israeli security. Ben Gurion and Moshe Dayan stressed that Israeli strength and resolve was what counted above all and might dictate bold and often unilateral action. Sharett responded that the world community, acting primarily through the UN, had established and legitimized the state and was therefore central to its destiny. Though the *Um Shmum* expression has become legendary, many Israeli commentators discount its importance; it is not reported anywhere but in Sharett's diary (from which it has been lifted, often without attribution). Often forgotten is the fact that Ben Gurion went on to say: "Certainly the UN decision is important, but even without it, Jews would have achieved independence."⁷

The difference between them was what importance to attribute to action by and in the UN. Partly, also, they differed in their assessment of how important the UN was in the U.S. scheme of things: If the United States chose to conduct its Middle East policy through the UN—as was the case up to the Six Day War—could Israel afford to circumvent the world organization? Israeli misgivings about the UN were not doctrinal; they were based on political judgment about where the UN was headed and its effect on Israel's future.

As counterpoint to Israel's early sensitivity to world opinion, there emerged an outright doubt about the reliability of UN intervention. On the one hand Israel was anxious that the UN would impose a damaging settlement and interpose itself between Israel and its neighbors. On the other, there was disenchantment with the UN failure to implement plans to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, and later, impatience with paralysis in the process of transforming the armistice regime into a permanent negotiated peace settlement.⁸

Alongside the Ben Gurion-Sharett debate over the United Nations was the view of the more militant Israeli leaders that any move to consolidate Israel's boundaries was premature. This stress on flexibility is seen in diplomatic documents on Israeli policymaking during the crucial period of May to December 1949, when it became clear that any settlement negotiated in the UN,

notably in the Palestine Conciliation Commission, would require vital concessions from Israel on the hardcore issues of territory and refugees, as noted below. As Yemima Rosenthal wrote, "The line adopted on the question of peace during the period ... held that Israel must not rush, or allow herself to be rushed, into any peace settlement entailing far-reaching territorial or any concessions which would threaten her security."⁹

The Sharett-Bernadotte Encounter of July 26, 1948. Actually this counsel of caution about rushing to embrace any UN-sponsored peace plan was widely shared in Israel in the summer of 1948. Bernadotte's activism and the haste with which he prepared a proposal for solution to the dispute aroused suspicion in Israel as well as in the Arab world. By June 27, only six weeks after his arrival on the scene, the UN mediator presented suggestions for a settlement to the two sides. His approach appeared to signal a readiness in the UN and among the powers to ignore Israel's legitimate interests and subvert the political expectations on which the state had been established.

Bernadotte was the first, but not the last, agent of the UN who was perceived as intervening to frustrate Israel's military gains. Not only were Bernadotte's substantive recommendations criticized (surgical alterations in the boundaries, with the Negev to be Arab territory and Western Galilee to go to Israel, return of the refugees, and all of Jerusalem to be Arab and not given international status) but also the precedent he was establishing: that is, that settlement would be achieved not out of negotiations between parties to the conflict but via an international blueprint, drafted by the mediator and sanctioned by the international community.

Israel's differences with the UN were made dramatically evident when Count Bernadotte called on Foreign Minister Sharett on July 26, 1948, to discuss Bernadotte's June "suggestions" to the parties.¹⁰ starkly foreshadowed many issues that would mark the Palestine debate and the Israel-UN relationship in the coming years.

The two men immediately crossed swords over the role of the UN mediator. Bernadotte objected to recent Israeli statements that the Palestine problem could be resolved by direct negotiations, not through the good offices of a mediator. Sharett countered that although Israel accepted Count Bernadotte as an "emissary" of the UN, it had not requested his appointment, and neither the question of "confidence" in him arose, nor was Israel committed to accept the mediator's proposals.

Sharett reemphasized Israel's readiness to enter into direct negotiations with the Arabs; he suggested that Bernadotte might help bring about such negotiations on the basis of "absolute equality as between states which recognized one another's sovereignty and independence."

Israel's sensitivity about the UN assertion of custodial authority in Palestine was especially pronounced regarding the UN proposal to demilitarize Jerusalem. Sharett observed that if everything in Jerusalem were subordinated to the city's demilitarization, then the UN-appointed "truce commission would in many respects, become the supreme arbiter of the daily lives of the people." He also doubted "it would be possible to trust an international force to guarantee the predominantly non-Arab character of the city."

Sharett thus focused on two concerns that would inform Israel's policy for years to come: that an international authority might impair the political authority and full sovereignty of Israel and that an international force would not be relied on to guarantee Israel's safety and security.

Sharett and Bernadotte also differed profoundly over the nature of an armistice. Was Israel interested in transforming the truce into an armistice? Bernadotte asked, defining "armistice" as a withdrawal of the warring forces to a no-man's-land under international supervision so as to reduce chances of untoward incidents. Sharett would have none of this. A truce was a "phase of the war," and an armistice was a "phase of peace," implying some willingness to discuss terms of

settlement. If a truce merely entailed evacuation of certain areas and placing neutral zones "under international control" this might lead to reduction of Israel's bargaining power before agreement had been obtained to negotiate a peace settlement.

Sharett also revealed Israel's sensitivity about the presence of UN observers on Israeli territory. The truce was now indefinite. Would Bernadotte give him a confidential list of the disposition of the UN military observers in various parts of the Middle East? There was a "feeling in the public mind," said Sharett, "that an unduly large number of these observers were concentrated in Israeli territory and that implementation of the truce was perhaps not being watched as closely in the Arab countries."¹¹

On taking leave, Bernadotte said he hoped Israel would succeed in "establishing direct contact with the Arabs." He himself was off to Stockholm and would return to the Middle East by September, at which time he would prepare a full report for the General Assembly (GA).

Israel's concerns were heightened when Bernadotte presented his September report, which contained certain "conclusions on means of peaceful adjustment." Apart from the substantive recommendations, which Israel found disturbing, these "conclusions" were addressed to the United Nations whereas the June "suggestions" had been addressed to the parties. Bernadotte did not expect that his conclusions would win "the willing approval of both parties," but "if firmly approved and strongly backed by the General Assembly, would not be forcibly resisted by either side." In other words, as Touval noted, "he proposed an imposed settlement."¹²

Israel's anxieties were not eased when, three months later, the General Assembly embodied the main elements of the September plan (though without drawing a map of the new boundaries) in Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948. The resolution, which formed the basis of Arab claims for the next forty years, did not call for a negotiated peace settlement—indeed, the word "peace" was not mentioned in the text—just negotiations, through the conciliation commission or directly, "with a view to final settlement of all questions outstanding between them." The resolution mandated certain premises of settlement—the "repatriation" of refugees to their previous homes or compensation or resettlement; Jerusalem to become an international trusteeship; and, a Palestine Conciliation Commission to help the parties reach a settlement.

The danger of "Bernadottism" came to haunt Israeli policymakers and became a crucial factor in Israel's distrust of UN intervention (or, for that matter, any third-party intermediary who came bearing a blueprint). Such outside intervention would dissuade Arabs from reaching a negotiated agreement and was an incentive to wait for external imposition or arbitration.

The model Israel preferred—and about which many legends arose in later years—was that of the armistice negotiations at Rhodes under the chairmanship of the UN's acting mediator, Ralph Bunche. There, armistice agreements were concluded, and armistice lines delineated, in negotiations between Israel and individual warring Arab states—Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon—presided over by Bunche or his representative in circumstances described in the next chapter. The Rhodes scenario gave rise to opposing mythologies as to whether the negotiations were direct, with the UN serving as broker, or indirect because they were throughout organized and managed by UN representatives.

Though in later years the armistice regime became unpopular in Israel, at the time the armistice agreements were valued on two counts. One was that they had been negotiated between the parties, though how direct the exchanges had been and how crucial the role of the intermediary became a subject of dispute.¹³

In the Israeli diplomatic judgment, the other benefit that flowed from the armistice agreements was that they legitimized the 1949 boundaries, replacing the narrower 1947 partition lines and

adding some 30 percent to Israeli territory. Moreover, as Israel's ambassador to the UN, Abba Eban, interpreted the armistice agreements, they denied the validity of any territorial claims by the neighboring Arab states.¹⁴ In Arab eyes, on the contrary, the new boundaries were just truce lines without political consequences and prohibited only overt, hostile military attacks. And, in fact, the armistice agreements did not become the prelude to peace negotiations as Bunche had planned and anticipated.

Israel's Concern About Admission to the UN. Although all this was already evident during the first year, Israel's misgivings about both the Bernadotte approach and the shift in UN peacekeeping were suppressed until it was admitted as a member of the UN in May 1949. Israel recognized that it owed its emergence as a modern state to the UN and also that the most certain route to international status and recognition lay in its admission to the world body.

Much of Israel's foreign policy during that year revolved around the urgency of admission—before the fortuitous coincidence of U.S. and Soviet policies should vanish. Israel's formal application for membership on November 29, 1948 (precisely a year after the General Assembly had voted partition and blessed the idea of a Jewish state) failed to get the necessary votes for recommendation in the Security Council (5-1-5) and was resubmitted on February 24, the day the general armistice agreement (GAA) with Egypt was signed. On March 4, by a vote of 9 in favor, one (Egypt) against, and one (the United Kingdom) abstaining, the Security Council recommended Israel's admission. General Assembly approval was voted a week later by 37-12, with 9 abstentions.¹⁵ Formal admission took place on May 11, 1949.

On its best diplomatic behavior during that year, Israel held back from official acts that might irritate supporters or call into question its intention to cooperate and conciliate.

On two occasions, in particular, Israel refrained from challenging actions by UN bodies that might harm its interests. In the first, Israel did not directly challenge the British initiative that led to the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948, which, as noted above, in effect codified the Bernadotte approach to the Palestine problem, prescribing solutions for the refugees and Jerusalem without addressing these critical issues in the context of a negotiated peace. One can only speculate that fighting the adoption of Resolution 194 was not considered to be worth jeopardizing Israel's admission to the United Nations.

It should be said that Israeli diplomats at the UN succeeded, with the help of sympathetic officials, in offsetting the British initiative by a countermove in the Security Council. This action resulted in a resolution that launched the armistice negotiations at Rhodes. Of course, the main development that induced Egypt and the other Arab states to negotiate an armistice was the battlefield successes of the Israeli forces in October. Bernadotte's plan to allocate the Negev Desert to the Arabs impelled the Israeli leadership to mount a major military operation to drive out the Egyptian forces. Any hope that international pressure could compel Israel to return to the lines of October 14, when renewed fighting had broken out, was abandoned, and Cairo agreed to armistice talks.¹⁶

The second fateful event occurred at the Lausanne Conference of the PCC in the spring of 1949. The Israeli delegation, pressed to accept a "protocol" with appended map, which postulated as "a basis" for negotiation on boundaries the 1947 partition lines (rather than the 1949 armistice lines), acquiesced, subject to approval by the Israeli government. Eytan, head of the delegation, cabled that he would perforce accept the "protocol" unless instructed to the contrary within the given forty-eight hours. Ben Gurion had the cable on his desk but did not act on it; the delegation at Lausanne then acquiesced in the protocot which was adopted on May 12, just one day after Israel's admission to the United Nations. Eytan is convinced that Ben Gurion's

reason for inaction was to avoid jeopardizing UN approval of Israel's application for admission to the UN, which was on the verge of decision in the Security Council.¹⁷ Israeli diplomats comforted themselves by discounting the protocol as just "a" basis, not "the" basis, for dealing with the boundaries, but this concession did have political consequences in later years.

The Arab states thereafter considered the protocol an agreement to negotiate a Palestine settlement on the basis of the partition boundaries delineated on the map attached to the protocol and they complained that the United States, as the leading power in the conciliation commission that had drawn up the protocol failed to insist on its observance. The United States considered the protocol only as a working document to be used as a basis for discussion. Still for years Washington adhered to the Jessup formula, that is, that any acquisition of territory by Israel beyond the partition boundary required compensation.

The View from the Arab Side

The Arab position on UN intervention during the first year was the mirror image of Israel's. Although the surrounding Arab states rejected the UN decision for partition and went to war to strangle the Jewish state (as well as to aggrandize themselves at the expense of any emerging Arab Palestine), they soon came to value UN involvement. The cease-fire of July 1948 was welcomed as a way of halting Israeli military advances.¹⁸ And though Bernadotte's proposals were rejected, his activism as mediator suggested that the deck could be reshuffled to their advantage. The partition lines were not sacrosanct and the issue of refugee return, rather than peace and recognition of Israel, became the focus of the international agenda. Moreover, although not explicit, General Assembly Resolution 194 placed claims on Israel, not on them. The resolution did not necessarily imply there would be an Arab state of Palestine that might challenge their territorial gains.

Above all, by year's end the world, led by Britain and the United States, with a solid General Assembly majority, had certified that the UN would be assigned an authoritative role as intermediary in bringing about a settlement and as peacekeeper to monitor the cease-fire and enforce the armistice regime. The UN presence, whether in Geneva and Lausanne as peacemakers, or on the armistice demarcation lines (ADLs) as peacekeepers, obviated the need for direct contact and relieved the Arab side of any urgency to negotiate directly with an ascendant Israel.

Within the next two to three years, the Arab disinclination to deal with Israel directly and to engage the UN was reinforced by the strengthening of its position in voting lineups at the General Assembly. Soviet policy began to shift against Israel after the Security Council decision to organize a U.S.-led UN command to resist the North Korean invasion of South Korea in July 1950. Israel lined up with the United States (and the UN majority) in support of this venture and, indeed, played a prominent role in formation of UN policy on Korea. Moscow, already suspicious about the surprising display of warmth for newly arrived Israeli ambassador Golda Meir, began to have doubts about the political orientation of Israel.

The Arab political calculus, developed that first year, was based on the premise that only by internationalizing the Arab-Israeli dispute could the Arabs hope to prevail, and not only because a better deal could be expected from bringing in a third party. Certain other considerations came into play. One was that, given the rivalries among the Arab states, only by presenting a solid front and negotiating as a unified delegation could they be sure that Israel would not play off one

Arab state against another. The Arab side was helped in this maneuver by the procedure inaugurated by the PCC from the beginning of meeting with the Arabs as a bloc and without the presence of the Israelis.¹⁹

Another consideration, stressed by such scholars as Malcolm Kerr and Fred Khouri, was that Arab internal politics dictated that they avoid the onus of apparent surrender by making concessions directly to Israel in face-to-face bargaining. The same concessions wrung out of them by an international authority could be explained away as bowing to international pressure. Kerr faulted Israel for "blocking" the promise of Lausanne and the peace effort overall by Israel's refusal (a) to recognize that the Arabs needed to be mollified by concessions, especially on refugees and boundaries, to have their confidence strengthened as a necessary basis for moderation and realistic compromise and (b) to accept the Arab need to be seen as surrendering to the international community, not to the enemy. Similarly, some Americans, notably the first U.S. representative on the conciliation commission, Mark Ethridge, believed that "Egypt and perhaps other Arab governments would have welcomed an imposed peace."²⁰

In effect, what the Arabs wanted from a third party, particularly the United Nations, was to be seen as imposing a settlement and thus absolving the Arab governments from charges of surrender and treason. Not that submitting to outside *force majeure* is without its political costs to the Arab side, as Malcolm Kerr has pointed out. Still, "as long as the terms are minimally favorable, yielding to outside imposition may excuse them somewhat from charges of treason."²¹

Part of the Arab design, too, has been to engage a UN intermediary to redefine the agenda of the Arab-Israeli conflict so as to focus on the wrongs done to the Palestinians and to undo the political consequences of the partition decision. Beyond this, the Arab approach has been to induce UN intermediaries—from Folke Bernadotte to Gunnar Jarring—to view the conflict not simply as an issue of equitable geographic partition of Palestine between rival claimants, but as part of the global anticolonial struggle in which the United Nations should resist Zionist ambitions.²²

Rejection of direct negotiations was declared a collective Arab policy by the Arab League as it drafted its defense pact in April 1950. The league's collective security concern focused on the Arab-Israeli conflict; the state of war was considered as continuing despite the armistice agreements. The league's policies of nonrecognition and rejection of peace with Israel were reaffirmed. An Arab League council resolution on April 1, 1950, warned that any member state entering into negotiations with Israel would be expelled and sanctions imposed. Sanctions would range from severance of political relations to suspension of commercial and financial links and the closing of common borders between Arab states and the state that had violated the league charter.²³

Nowhere was the difference between Israeli and Arab outlooks more marked than in their visions of an appropriate role for a third-party mediator or peacekeeper. Israel envisioned the mediator as broker or matchmaker and peacekeepers as monitors of compliance with mutually agreed arrangements—not as referees who would judge and assess blame.²⁴ It was no business of the chairmen of the MACs to break the tie, rendering judgment (more often than not against Israel) that became the basis for condemnation in the Security Council and for building up a record of Israeli violations of the armistice agreements. Direct negotiations, face-to-face talks both in negotiating agreements and in the MACs, became the talisman for Israel. And this stress on direct negotiations—a "hallowed phrase" as Walter Eytan later ironically termed it—led Israeli leaders to disparage the utility of an intermediary. The value of mediator or peacekeeper was measured not by diplomatic skill in clarifying issues and damping down crisis, but by the

degree to which he brought the sides together and then vanished.

Direct talks were valued in themselves whether at the military or political level. Dayan, in particular, was an early and persistent advocate of the doctrine. Shabbtai Teveth recalls the origin of Dayan's approach. At the end of August 1948, the UNTSO chief of staff, Lt. Gen. William E. Riley, summoned representatives of the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Israeli armies to discuss demilitarization of the area surrounding Government House in Jerusalem, where UNTSO headquarters was located. The meeting ended in impasse. Dayan suggested to the Jordanian commander, Abdullah el-Tel, that the two talk privately. Rapport was established and an agreement reached to set up a direct telephone line between the Israeli and Jordanian commanders of Jerusalem. This meeting was the first to be held without the participation of a third party since the end of the war. Its principal importance, Teveth wrote, lay in the effect it had on Dayan's political thinking, that relations with the Arabs must be direct or "nothing at all."²⁵

Although Israeli doctrine and practice thereafter did not accept the idea of "nothing at all" if direct contacts were out—the UN secretary general's good offices and mediation as practiced by Bunche at Rhodes were welcomed—dearly this method was preferred and an intermediary was judged useful to the extent he helped bring the parties together.

Another favored model was the third party who screened direct talks where mutual agreement could be reached in secret, face-to-face talks. Thus, at Rhodes, formal exchanges between the Israeli and Jordan delegations to the armistice talks were taking place under a UN chairman; the real negotiations were concluded through secret talks at Shuneh Palace where the Israeli negotiators met nightly with King Abdullah.²⁶

The Arab doctrine about the value of enlisting third-party mediation and peacekeeping was reinforced during the first decade (1948-1958) as the political demography at the United Nations turned in their favor. Thus it made sense for the Arabs to involve the UN in its conflict with Israel whether as instrument for political warfare or as peacekeeper to contain Israeli ambitions and to avoid direct contact. Even at Rhodes, Arab states were able to keep direct contacts to a minimum and claim that contacts were always in the presence of Bunche or one of his deputies. So the Egyptian representative could state for the record at the joint informal meeting of February 4, 1949, on the eve of the conclusion of the armistice agreement, that the transaction had taken place under the chairmanship of the UN, based on the Security Council resolution of November 16, 1948, and was not a "product of the will of the parties."²⁷

The View from the United Nations

From the vantage point of the secretary general on the thirty-eighth floor of the secretariat building in New York, the UN's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict was based on a political logic that differed from that of the protagonists, notably from that of Israel. As the principal arena for world politics and as a world organization that rapidly developed its own institutional interests, the UN had been assigned a formidable peacemaking mandate: resolve the conflict and help bring about a Palestine settlement. The mandates were more demanding, more authoritative, and required a deeper and more protracted involvement than any other issue that came before the UN during its own formative years.

As noted earlier, the UN assumed a custodial relationship to the Palestine issue—verging on that of trustee—when Britain, abdicating its mandate, submitted the question of Palestine's future

to the world body. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly in Resolution 181 recommended the partition plan (a Jewish state, an Arab state, and a special status for Jerusalem). The UN thus became the de facto successor to the British when London gave up the mandate on May 15, 1948, until such time as this plan went into effect. A unique relationship emerged, un-matched by any other conflict or disputed territory. By the end of its first decade, the UN had discovered a peace mission in the operations of its peacekeepers in the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip. It was a mission unplanned by the UN's founding fathers, and it salvaged the role of the UN as maintainer of peace, a role that had eluded it as a result of the East-West confrontation.

The UN quickly developed an institutional pride in its peacekeeping mission, and charges of ineffectiveness and partiality were deeply disturbing. Senior secretariat officials in New York and the force commanders in the field resented what they perceived as an Israeli tendency to disparage the utility of UN peacekeeping. What particularly irked them was that while professing to want a strong and effective force, Israeli officials and Israel Defense Force (IDF) officers tended to be "non-cooperative" and, indeed, would from time to time interfere with the effective functioning of the peacekeepers. Moreover, from the UN vantage point, the Israeli pretense of relying entirely on themselves and disparaging international arrangements was seen as hypocritical: Israel disparaged the UN but benefited from it. The peacekeeping presence was deprecated as of little relevance for the security and stability of its borders, yet Israel would complain when it was removed. In the UN version, policing of the cease-fire of July 1948 by UNTSO helped to rescue the Israeli army in a time of "desperate need." UNTSO policing of the armistice regime helped Israel consolidate its territorial gains and proceed with nation building. UNEF I, which was stationed on Israel's "worst frontier " from 1957 to 1967, provided ten years of total peace with Egypt. Some recall that although Israel resisted the UNEF's deployment in 1957, ten years later it was Israel that "made the biggest fuss" when it was withdrawn at Nasser's behest.²⁸

A particular source of UN resentment has been that from UNTSO's first years to the deployment of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) (1978 to date), Israeli disdain for UN peacekeeping has been accompanied by charges of partiality. To this day, secretariat officials recall with bitterness that on withdrawing from the Sinai in 1957, Israel engaged in a scorched-earth policy, sabotaging installations and leaving unmarked mine fields, and carried on a propaganda campaign against the UN, charging that Hammarskjöld and Lt. Gen. E. L. M. Burns, the first commander of UNEF were pro-Egypt and intent on restoring Egyptian rule to Gaza. Israel is accused of carrying on a vitriolic press and public campaign designed to discredit the UN and influence congressional attitudes against it. It is charged, for example, that the prominent columnist Joseph Alsop was incited to write in the *New York Herald-Tribune* "the most blatantly propagandistic stuff" about the UN and its bias. (The same kind of campaign, it is charged, was let loose when UNIFIL was deployed in south Lebanon in 1978.)²⁹

At the outset the UN felt it rarely received adequate cooperation from either side. In the beginning the Arabs were less cooperative because of resentment at UN efforts to partition Palestine, while Israelis considered it essential to work with the world organization to establish and preserve the state. This attitude did not last long. After Israel attained military superiority during the 1948 war, and with the establishment of the UNTSO mechanism, attitudes and policies of the opposing side toward the UN were largely reversed.³⁰ The Arab side welcomed the UN peacekeeping presence as both a protective presence and a physical manifestation of international authority in disputed territory.

Strained U.S.-Israel Relations

Already evident that first fateful year was the degree to which U.S. support for UN intervention as mediator and peacekeeper emerged as a major source of tension in U.S.-Israel relations. What became a constant in U.S. policy through administrations from Harry S Truman to Lyndon B. Johnson, and, indeed, persisted into the Carter era, was the determination that it was in the U.S. national interest to let the UN be up front in dealing with Middle East crises and to serve as the vehicle for maintaining crisis stability through what came to be called "peacekeeping."

Often overlooked is the degree to which Washington policy, well into the 1970s, chose to operate through the UN in dealing with regional crises. Unilateralism was not, of course, abandoned, as Robert W. Tucker has noted. But his conclusion that an "apparent devotion to multilateral forms in the postwar years masked the substance of what was largely unilateral action" does not reflect either doctrine or practice with respect to certain crises, notably in the Middle East.³¹ Washington preferred UN involvement in those regional crises, notably the Congo, Cyprus, and the Middle East, in which the national interest was to keep the Soviets out, not necessarily to assure U.S. hegemony. (In Southeast Asia and the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, the United States did not rely on the UN to help it prevent a communist takeover.)

This preference for multilateral, collective action was partly doctrinal. Important voices in the Truman administration, Dean Rusk, for example, held that World War II was not inconsiderably caused by the U.S. failure to back collective security and the U.S. decision to isolate itself from the League of Nations.³² But U.S. policy mainly operated on the logic that acting through a UN in which the United States was preeminent would allow Washington to achieve its purposes of adequate control while sharing the political and financial burden with like-minded allies. At the same time, the UN option was quite compatible with the core objective of U.S. policy, the strategic need to contain the Soviet drive to spread its power through the communist movement that was seen as the instrument of Moscow's imperial ambitions. There was no inconsistency between these two aims.

There was also no inconsistency with the U.S. role as the perceived protector of Israel on the world scene. This fact was true even in administrations like Eisenhower's in which the United States opposed Israeli policies. So Washington tried to persuade Israeli leaders that their concern about UN effectiveness and impartiality was misplaced. U.S. dominance in the UN during the formative years provided a requisite measure of assurance that UN political and peacekeeping intervention was compatible with Israel's survival and security. Working through the UN also helped finesse the need for Washington to come down on the side of one friend without alienating the Arab side. (Similarly, the decision to enlist UN peacekeepers in the Cyprus crisis of 1964 followed a calculation in the Department of State that operating through the UN could finesse an agonizing choice between two NATO allies—Greece and Turkey.)

The consequence of this policy of limited liability (particularly during the early years and at certain crisis points in the 1960s) was that U.S. policy quite consistently strove to reinforce the political authority of the UN and its key role as peacekeeper in the Arab-Israeli conflict and, in the early years, to seek there the international solution to the Palestine problem.

In 1947, the United States backed partition in large part because it allowed the nation to avoid direct political and military involvement (while lining up with Britain); U.S. involvement would take place under UN auspices.³³ Indeed, even before partition, U.S. delegate Herschel Johnson, reviewing the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) report, cautioned that U.S. aid

would be channeled through the United Nations.

Khouri has noted that most UN members, led by the United States, voted for partition in the belief that it would somehow resolve the problem and that the parties would ultimately bow to the will of a world organization.³⁴ This belief proved illusory when Arabs attacked the partition resolution as being unfair and contrary to the UN Charter and said that the UN had disregarded the rights of the Arab majority. Zionist leaders were generally unhappy with the territorial disposition and with the internationalization of Jerusalem, but partition was accepted because it provided international sanction and an early opportunity to establish a Jewish state.

Challenge to the partition plan did not discourage the United States and other UN members from placing responsibility for resolving the Arab-Israeli dilemma on the fledgling UN. The United States at first also backed the Bernadotte plan despite the change in partition boundaries, with Secretary George C. Marshall terming it a "fair and sound proposal."³⁵ On October 28, 1948, Truman reversed U.S. support for the plan on the grounds that no change in partition could be accepted unless it was acceptable to Israel. But the primacy of the UN in the search for a solution to the Palestine problem remained a cardinal element of U.S. policy well into the 1950s.

Joint Strategic Approach with Britain

From the beginning the State Department, apart from seeing the UN as an alternative to direct involvement, read U.S. strategic interests in the region as requiring both a joint strategic approach with Britain and a responsiveness to Arab interests. The Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs opposed lifting the arms embargo against Israel when fighting broke out and stressed the importance of keeping the Soviets out of the Middle East.³⁶

The quasi alliance with Britain was key. George F. Kennan, of the policy planning staff, commented on "the necessity for the observance of parallel policies in that area." No consideration involved in the Palestine question, he concluded, could justify the disturbance of the "understanding and cooperation between ourselves and the British ... on Middle East matters.... The British position there is in large part our position." Among dissenters on close coordination with the British was Robert A. Lovett, undersecretary of state, who took exception to the view that "this Government should not take any action which would bring the U.S. into conflict with the British over the Palestine issue."³⁷

Thus, with few exceptions, U.S.-UK cooperation in achieving a final settlement in Palestine was considered crucial to the success of U.S. policy,³⁸ and Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin told U.S. ambassador Lewis Douglas in August 1948 that the cabinet had given him full discretion to concert with the United States in seeking a UN decision on the future of Palestine through the "most appropriate organ of [the] UN and method of conducting our business there."³⁹ The secretary of state agreed and wrote President Truman that when the Palestine question came before the General Assembly that fall, it was "essential that U.S. and UK policy be coordinated." And the department instructed the U.S. delegation to the General Assembly (then meeting in Paris) that "we are keenly aware that [the] principal role [of] achieving some UN arrangement on Palestine lies in [an] arduously achieved U.S.-UK solidarity."⁴⁰

By the fall of 1948, then, many U.S. policymakers in the departments of State and Defense and the National Security Council (NSC), concerned about the strategic importance of achieving an early and stable settlement acceptable to the Arabs, and working in tandem with Britain, were

pressing Israel to give up territory and make bold concessions in regard to refugees and Palestinian self-determination. The UN role was to serve as the vehicle of the great powers to provide both international machinery for peacekeeping and an international sanction to guarantee a settlement.

Truman's Long Telegram of May 28, 1949

In that first fateful year extreme pressure was exerted on Israel by Washington to be more responsive to the mediation efforts in the Palestine Conciliation Commission on the refugee and territorial questions. Long before the Nixon-Kissinger threat to "reassess" U.S. policy when Israel resisted the U.S. plan of March 1975 for partial withdrawal in the Sinai, the notion of "revising" U.S. policy so as to induce Israel to make concessions was dramatically injected into the U.S.-Israel relationship just a year after the founding of the Jewish state.

On May 28, 1949, a long telegram, cleared by the White House, admonished the Israeli government that the United States was "seriously disturbed by [the] attitude of Israel with respect to territorial settlement in Palestine and to [the] question of Palestine refugees, as set forth by [the] representative of Israel at Lausanne" (the conference convened by the PCC to achieve a settlement under provisions of General Assembly resolution 194). The United States opposed Israel's retaining all territory "now held under military occupation ... which exceeds [the] partition boundaries" and urged Israel to accept the principle of "substantial repatriation" of refugees with "immediate beginning of repatriation on [a] reasonable scale." Territorial disposition had to start from the partition boundaries and not the armistice lines, and any further acquisitions were to be in exchange for other territorial concessions, in accord with the Jessup formula.⁴¹ In the first—but not last—instance of a threat of "reassessment" of U.S. policy toward Israel, the message concluded that if Israel rejected the UN principles in the General Assembly resolution of December 11, 1948, and U.S. "friendly advice," the United States would "regretfully be forced to [the] conclusion that [a] revision of its attitude toward Israel has become unavoidable."⁴²

The message presented to Ben Gurion the next day by U.S. ambassador J. G. McDonald as a note coming from President Truman, caused such dismay that a reply was delayed for some weeks. Meanwhile, in intramural discussions Ben Gurion showed increasing concern, blaming the State Department for ignoring two fundamentals: that Israel had been established not by help from the United States or the UN but by the sacrifices it had made to prevail on the field of battle, and that the Arab refugees represented potential enemies of the state and their return in the absence of a peace settlement threatened Israel's security.⁴³

Two lengthy replies sent in June reflected the gravity with which Israel took the U.S. demarche but fundamentally rejected the rationale of the U.S. position. The first, sent on June 8 by Foreign Minister Sharett on behalf of the prime minister to President Truman, rejected the charge that Israel was not acting in accord with the principles of the General Assembly resolution.⁴⁴ After all, that resolution had enjoined the parties to "seek agreement by negotiations, conducted either with the Conciliation Commission or directly, with a view to the final settlement of all questions outstanding between them." Israel had sought direct approaches and had been rebuffed. On boundaries, although the delegation had never proposed "an additional acquisition of further territory," Israel could not accept that it owed territorial compensation for any areas acquired beyond the boundaries laid down in the partition resolution.

Refugees, as "members of an aggressor-group defeated in war of its own making," could not be integrated en masse, given the profound change in the ethnic pattern and economic structure of Israel, but on humanitarian grounds Israel was ready to pay compensation for land abandoned, to reunite families separated by the war, and generally to make its contribution to the solution of the problem of resettlement.

Some weeks later, a second reply in the form of a letter from President Chaim Weizmann to President Truman elaborated on these points in somewhat more conciliatory language. Israel was ready to help solve the Arab refugee problem in cooperation with the UN and the Arab states and wished to establish normal political and economic relations with the Arab states. Israel had readmitted some 25,000 refugees during the last few months, had accepted the principles of compensation for land abandoned by Arabs, was ready to unfreeze Arab bank accounts "immediately on the conclusion of peace," and was ready to reunite families separated by war. But the notion of territorial "compensation" was rejected. "We may," Weizmann wrote, "if real peace is established, be able to do more in this respect than if the present atmosphere of latent war and hostility continues. But an all-round solution can only be found as part of a general development scheme for the benefit of the Middle East as a whole."⁴⁵

This exchange in the late spring of 1949 adumbrated the strains in U.S.-Israel relations that would erupt from time to time during the next ten years and beyond, suppressed in some administrations and flaring up with particular intensity in the Eisenhower administration during the Suez crisis. The periodic tension in U.S.-Israel relations centered largely on differing perceptions of what Israeli security required and how authoritative a role should be assigned to the UN as mediator and peace keeper in reaching a peace settlement.

2

From Peacemaking to Peacekeeping

AFTER VIOLENT FIGHTING broke out toward the end of April 1948, the UN General Assembly on May 14 appointed a UN mediator for Palestine (Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden) to promote a peaceful settlement of the situation in Palestine. The same day Britain relinquished its mandate and the Jewish Agency proclaimed the State of Israel. The Palestinian Arabs and the Arab states opened hostilities the next day. The war ended with a truce declared by the Security Council on May 29, 1948 (Resolution 50), to be supervised by the mediator with the assistance of military observers. The truce agreement went into effect on June 11.

In mid-1948 the first task of the UN military observers (UNMOs) was to secure a lasting truce. When the four-week truce expired on July 9, the provisional government of Israel accepted the mediator's proposal for an extension but the Arab governments did not. In the large-scale fighting that ensued, Israeli forces made large gains. Both sides needed a breather, and the Security Council succeeded—for one of the few times in its history—in ordering the parties concerned to accept an unconditional cease-fire, threatening sanctions under [Chapter 7](#) of the UN Charter for noncompliance. Because the new truce was of indefinite duration and was to remain in force until a peaceful solution was devised, a more elaborate system of truce supervision was installed.¹ Observers of the first truce had already left the area, and a new operation had to be created and equipped. Almost six hundred observers and auxiliary personnel were recruited. Observers were deployed in groups assigned to each Arab army and each Israeli army and organized as the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).²

The Dual Mission

Bernadotte's twofold mandate was to oversee the truce and to fashion a plan for the region that would resolve the conflict over Palestine. The United Nations thus became institutionally involved from the start on two parallel tracks: (1) to supervise the truce and secure the armistice and (2) to mediate the dispute in an attempt to achieve a solution of the Palestine problem. For Bernadotte, mediation meant more than brokering the dispute. He felt he had to devise an international plan for settlement that the parties would be induced to accept. Shortly before the General Assembly was to meet to discuss Bernadotte's revised plan, he was assassinated in Jerusalem on September 17 by two Jewish assailants of the extremist "Stern group." Bernadotte's successor, UN under secretary Ralph J. Bunche was named acting mediator but the mediator's twofold mandate was split. The General Assembly, in its Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948, assigned the task of devising a plan for settlement to the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). For the peacekeeping task, the Security Council provided Bunche with an expanded UNTSO corps to supervise the truce of July 1948 and later authorized UNTSO to ensure compliance with the armistice agreements negotiated the following year under Bunche's chairmanship.

Though reasonable in concept, the two-track mission set up tensions between the UN peacemaking mandate (which derived from the General Assembly and was considered the organization's primary task) and the peacekeeping assignment of UNTSO (which was mandated by the Security Council and seen as an auxiliary and transitional undertaking). Whether the UN should focus on conflict management (peacekeeping) or mediation was not an issue or choice in 1948. Both were seen as necessary and mutually reinforcing. But the premise accepted by all was that the Security Council-mandated assignment of UNTSO—to stabilize the truce and monitor compliance with the armistice—was meant as a holding action while the main effort was to be exerted in mediation for an early settlement, as mandated by the General Assembly.

The division of responsibilities was quite in accord with the intent of the UN Charter, but it gave rise to institutional tensions between the assembly and the council. As the armistice negotiations at Rhodes proceeded in early 1949, the U.S., French, and Turkish representatives who made up the PCC as well as the secretariat of the commission, constantly prodded Bunche to hasten the pace and inquired about any progress so that the UN effort should move rapidly on to the PCC's peacemaking work. Some friction ensued. Bunche and his staff resented the secretariat's supervision and pressure to conclude the Rhodes exercise.³

The armistice arrangements were to be transitional and subordinated to whatever settlement came out of the conciliation exercise. For Israel, downgrading the Rhodes agreements was a portent. By the fall of 1948, Israeli diplomats at the UN were troubled by certain political tendencies in the assembly, where the British (with the support of some U.S. diplomats) were seen to dominate deliberations on the Palestine issue, with sentiment moving in the direction advocated by Bernadotte in his September report to the assembly. As a counterbalance, with the support of certain secretariat officials, Israel took the initiative to involve the Security Council in moving from truce to armistice.⁴

To complicate matters even more, UN intervention as peacekeeper derived from two separate mandates, authorized by the Security Council; both these mandates remain formally valid to this day. The cease-fire ordered by the council on July 15, 1948, became a basis for a protracted truce to be "supervised" by UNTSO. The truce was to last "until a peaceful adjustment of the future situation in Palestine is reached." During the next four months, periodic clashes erupted mainly on the Egyptian front, precipitated principally by an Israeli campaign to extend the territory under its control. Israel came to occupy about 30 percent more territory than it had been granted in the partition plan of 1947 and far beyond what was allocated to it in the Bernadotte blueprint of September. For Israel it was important that the fighting be brought to an end without its having to give up any territory it held; a central objective in the armistice negotiations was to solidify its hold on the newly gained territory. (Israel's battlefield successes in the Negev induced Egypt to agree to negotiate an armistice, but it still hoped that Israel's advances would be rolled back to the October 14 line as the Security Council had demanded.)

The armistice agreements assigned new and broader peacekeeping tasks to UNTSO, and these were validated by the Security Council on August 11, 1949 (Resolution 73). The role of mediator was ended. UNTSO became an autonomous operation with the chief of staff assuming command. UNTSO's main responsibility now was to assist the parties in supervising application and observance of the armistice agreements. In addition, on the Egyptian and Syrian sectors demilitarized zones were established, and UNTSO became responsible for ensuring that the parties' armed forces were excluded from the zones. UNTSO's main duties related to the work of the four Mixed Armistice Commissions (MACs) set up by the armistice agreements.⁵

However, the armistice did not replace the truce arrangements. UNTSO's responsibility for

supervising the cease-fire ordered by the Security Council in July 1948, which had no time limit, continued. UNTSO was thus organized to provide observers both to supervise the cease-fire and, in another configuration, to monitor compliance with the armistice provisions. Besides, UNTSO observers have been subsequently deployed in a third guise, seconded as auxiliaries to the commanders of UN peacekeeping operations on Arab-Israeli fronts. To this day they serve in this capacity with UNIFIL in southern Lebanon and with the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan.

Bernadotte's Legacy

The UN two-track involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict—peacekeeping and active mediation—overlapped during the early years with the primary focus from the summer of 1948 to 1951 on mediation. Truce supervision and armistice monitoring by UNTSO and the MAC machinery was cast in a supportive role.

By the end of 1951 the peacemaking effort had been sidetracked,⁶ and it would be many years before another grand peacemaking effort would be undertaken by the UN.⁷ The experience with Bernadotte and the PCC left a legacy that affected Israeli and Arab attitudes toward UN peacekeepers throughout the formative years. For Israel the course followed in these mediation efforts posed a double political concern: that the United Nations would be enlisted to roll back the territorial gains of military victory, which had been legitimized in the armistice agreements, and to interpose a barrier to direct negotiations. Israeli leaders thereafter came to fear that a third-party intermediary in the Arab-Israeli conflict tended to maneuver Israel into "an uncomfortable diplomatic position."⁸

For the Arab side, the experience with Bernadotte and the pee projected a mirror opposite: that a third party could help redress the political and territorial balance and shield the Arabs from the need to deal directly with the foe in circumstances of military weakness and political vulnerability.

The role of mediator was ambiguous and left Bernadotte room for stretching his authority to the point where he could fashion a plan for the Palestine settlement that would depart substantially from the partition resolution and pay scant attention to the changed realities on the ground resulting from the war. Israel—and at the time also the Arabs—were suspicious of the mediator's activism in drafting the blueprints of June and September.

Not only did both plans embody substantive features unfavorable to Israel—a reshuffling of territory that would take away the Negev area (though in compensation Israel would receive most of the Galilee); exclusion of Israeli sovereignty from any part of Jerusalem; and a call for refugee return without requiring this to be in the context of peace.

Of equal concern was the fact that the plans were designed from the outside, and not the outcome of negotiations. In particular, the September plan—unlike that of June—was submitted not for the consideration of the parties but to the General Assembly for its approval⁹—and thus in Israeli eyes was being "imposed." Not only was the price demanded in territory and in return of the refugees high, but such concessions would not be in exchange for recognition and a negotiated peace settlement. Moreover, some Israeli leaders suspected Bernadotte of serving as a mouthpiece for the British. Though this was groundless with respect to the first plan in June, the record shows that Bernadotte did discuss his September proposals with British and U.S.

diplomats before submitting them to the United Nations. Although the United States believed he had moved too hastily and it had reservations about his disregard for the partition resolution in the suggestions for territorial exchange, the September plan had the strong support of both London and Washington.¹⁰

Although the Bernadotte plan as such was not approved by the General Assembly—and Bernadotte's successor as acting mediator, Ralph Bunche, moved rapidly to complete the armistice agreements—his basic approach was reflected in General Assembly Resolution 194, adopted December 11, 1948. As noted, this resolution defined the Palestine problem in terms that were to Israel's disadvantage. Naturally, it did not reflect the legitimacy of the armistice lines that were to be negotiated in the armistice discussions during the next few months. It took as its basis the partition lines, internationalized Jerusalem, and, in paragraph 11, sanctified the right of refugees to return to their homes or receive compensation or resettlement. Even though the choice was granted to refugees as individuals, it came to be interpreted as a "right of return" for the Palestinians as a collectivity, a form of self-determination for the Palestinian people.

The effect of Resolution 194 was felt mainly in the assembly, but it sounded themes that increased Israel's distrust.¹¹ It became the foundation of Arab claims and Arab policies at the UN for the next forty years. Even after the PCC ended its active role, Resolution 194 became the basis for UN consideration of the Palestine "question," for UN involvement with the refugee problem through the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and for politicization of the Palestine issue in various UN bodies.

Collapse of the Palestine Conciliation Commission

Created by the General Assembly in December 1948, the three-nation PCC got under way early the following year. Led by Mark Ethridge, the first U.S. representative, France's Claude B. deBoisanger, and Turkey's Huseyin Cait Yalcin, the PCC operated with a sense of urgency and high hopes of achieving a quick settlement. Faced with a general mandate to "assist the Governments and authorities concerned to achieve a final settlement of all questions outstanding between them," and charged more specifically to prepare proposals for an international regime for Jerusalem and "to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees and the payment of compensation" for those who did not wish to return, the commissioners chose to focus on the specifics, particularly the refugee question. Whether because of inept diplomacy or the unbridgeable gap between the Arab and Israeli positions on the refugee issue, on territory, and on the process itself, the commission collapsed within three years. Its failure had a profound effect on U.S. policy, on the outlook of Israel and the Arab states about the utility of enlisting the UN in the Palestine issue, and more particularly on the ascendancy of the novel concept of international "peacekeeping."

Revisionists, such as Ilan Pappé, faulted Israel for not seizing negotiating opportunities offered by the PCC process, particularly at the Lausanne Conference of 1949, and, without absolving the Arab side, charge that Israel was "not interested in the whole process at Lausanne." The Lausanne deliberations, Pappé noted, operated on two planes: the formal agenda "dictated" by the commission, and informal talk in hotel corridors and Lausanne surroundings.¹² Yet both documents and individual recollections reveal a consensus that the unofficial exchanges got nowhere and were overshadowed, if not submerged, by the official ones. No one can read the

diplomatic record without being convinced that the commission representatives, led by the Americans, discouraged the Israeli delegation from pursuing the parallel informal talks.¹³ During the event, the PCC process was seen by the Israeli leadership as harmful to Israeli interests by regressing from Rhodes and legitimizing Arab stalling. Its procedure of dealing with the Arab state delegations as a collective Arab unit and its failure to link solutions of specific items on the agenda—refugees, Jerusalem, territory—to a negotiated peace settlement tended to discourage direct talks. For Israel it was important that the PCC refrain from making proposals on fundamental issues that would only stiffen Arab reaction to Israeli proposals that were advanced behind the scenes.

The dismal course of the PCC exercise from 1949 to 1951 revealed how intractable the differences were between the two sides, particularly on refugees and boundaries, and how unavailing such third-party peacemaking was likely to be. The PCC experience, in which U.S. diplomacy took the lead, also generated crisis and friction in U.S.-Israel relations. Throughout the PCC negotiations, the United States contended that Israeli generosity vis-à-vis the refugees (accepting the principle of repatriation and letting a substantial number return as a goodwill gesture, paying compensation for abandoned property, and unblocking bank accounts) would predispose the Arab side to negotiate. Washington also persisted in adhering to the Jessup formula, that is, that any change in partition lines to Israel's advantage would have to be offset with Israeli held territory ceded to Arab sovereignty.

Israel felt too vulnerable to make the concessions on refugees of a magnitude demanded by the United States, and it suspected that the PCC was becoming the Trojan horse for securing territorial concessions—reversing the outcome at Rhodes, which reflected Israel's military gains achieved in the summer and fall of 1948. At the Lausanne Conference in the spring of 1949, Israel resisted U.S. pressure on both these issues, in particular that it accept the primary responsibility for solving the refugee problems by taking back a large part of the 750,000 refugees displaced during the fighting without regard to its effect on Israel's security.

The controversy came to a head at the end of May 1949. President Harry Truman sent Ben Gurion a strongly worded message that the United States was "seriously disturbed" at the attitude of Israel with respect to a territorial settlement in Palestine and to the question of refugees. On territory, Israel appeared to contemplate not only the retention of territory then held "under military occupation," which was "clearly in excess of the partition boundaries" but possibly an additional acquisition of further territory within Palestine (in all probability referring to Ben Gurion's proposal that Israel acquire the Gaza Strip, held by Egypt, along with its inhabitants). The U.S. government position remained that "it is necessary for Israel to offer territorial compensation for territory which it expects to acquire beyond the boundaries" set in the November 29, 1947, resolution of the General Assembly. On refugees the United States urged the acceptance of the principle of substantial repatriation and the immediate beginnings of repatriation on a "reasonable scale."¹⁴

Israel was prepared to consider accepting repatriated refugees, but Jerusalem and Washington (and the other commission members) remained far apart on numbers and conditions. Israel was "willing to cooperate in the solution of the refugee problem . . . if this solution is seen organically as part of a final settlement";¹⁵ the United States insisted that Israel must first accept the "principle" of substantial repatriation not linked to an overall settlement. This policy divergence was never significantly narrowed.

The gap was never bridged between the Arabs and Israel over the key issues of refugees and boundaries as well as over the role of the commission. Persistent diplomatic efforts in the

commission, particularly by the U.S. delegation to the PCC, proved fruitless.¹⁶ At the beginning of the summer of 1951, the Department of State commiserated with Ambassador Ely E. Palmer (who had succeeded Ethridge as the U.S. representative on the PCC) about the "lack of positive accomplishment during two and one-half years," including the failure to bring the parties into direct contact and to obtain support for its proposals on repatriation, territorial adjustments, and compensation or release of blocked accounts.¹⁷ Though far from sanguine about prospects, the department proposed a renewed effort to break the deadlock in the form of a "more direct and formal approach of mediation" within the framework of a conference.

A U.S. plan for energizing the PCC and strengthening its "authority to mediate" was initiated in a letter dated July 27, 1951, from Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Ambassador Palmer, which was to serve as a guideline for the conference. Solutions were to be sought for specific problems including the repatriation of refugees, territorial adjustments, compensation, the release of blocked accounts, and the use of Jordan waters. Palmer was asked to explore three peacemaking proposals some of which had been advanced earlier: a multilateral nonaggression pact between Israel and the Arab states, an "approach" to repatriation that would start with the return of those who could bring benefits to the Israeli economy, and an agreement on the principle of compensation. The Acheson plan also proposed a "PCC-fostered agreement between the parties for the elimination, partition, reduction or delimitation of the demilitarized zones, or the definition of the armistice lines . . . as *de facto* national boundaries pending [a] final settlement."¹⁸

Differing views soon emerged on the scope and agenda of the conference, which opened in Paris on September 10. Cairo accepted the invitation to participate but expected the conference agenda to include (1) repatriation of all refugees wishing to return, (2) internationalization of Jerusalem, and (3) rectification of boundaries on the basis of the 1947 partition plan.¹⁹ Jordan wanted clarification on specifics, such as the valuation to be put on Palestinian property.²⁰

The procedure of the conference varied from trying to get negotiations started along the Acheson guidelines on a nonaggression declaration and refugees to more ambitious proposals for a comprehensive settlement. There was little accord, and within weeks the conference was adjourned. Rather than bringing the parties closer, the conference sharpened the differences. At a meeting with the commission on October 26, the Israeli delegation reaffirmed its desire to collaborate with the commission and to examine any question that could be an appropriate subject for the PCC as an organ of the United Nations; but it had to be understood that "any question implying negotiations, direct or indirect, with the Arab states must be postponed until Arab states had unequivocally subscribed to the armistice agreements, the decisions of the Security Council and the provisions of the UN Charter."²¹

Three weeks later, in mid-November, in a lengthy formal reply Israel accepted a revised form of the commission text on nonaggression, though decrying the fact that Arab opposition had prevented this taking the form of nonaggression pacts. Israel found it impossible to discuss the question of damages resulting from the war undertaken by the Arab states without speaking of Arab "aggression." Bearing in mind this history and the present conditions, Israel could not be expected to open its frontiers to the masses of refugees; their integration into the normal life of Israel was incompatible with the realities of the situation. The question of territorial adjustments should be discussed as part of the overall territorial issue, including demilitarized zones, control of the waters of the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers, and port facilities at Haifa.²²

The parallel Arab reply made no reference to declarations of nonaggression but addressed the

specific proposals.²³ Egypt stated that responsibility for Palestine hostilities and resulting war damages was shared by the mandatory power, Jewish terrorists, and the UN; mutual cancellation of war damage claims would not contribute to a just and durable settlement and was not within the competence of the PCC. Jordan added that Palestine hostilities were not war in the ordinary sense but political war, and responsibility was shared by the mandatory power and the UN. Syria said it was useless to pursue the question of hostility although it was obvious the Jews were responsible. On repatriation, all agreed that no limitation should be placed on return of refugees, so that in making its proposal (for partial repatriation and for resettlement of those not returning) the PCC contravened paragraph 11 of the 1948 resolution, which set no limit on the "right of return."

On November 16 the commission concluded that the Arab and Israeli positions were irreconcilable. Four days later, in a letter to the opposing delegations, the PCC confessed failure: "[S]ince neither party indicated a willingness substantially to recede from their rigid positions and to seek a solution through mediation" the commission regretfully decided to terminate the conference.²⁴

What the PCC experience demonstrated, and what had already become clear to Israel's leaders during the first year, was that UN peacemaking intervention posed a classic security dilemma: The steps that might make a settlement possible—retreat from the armistice lines and substantial refugee repatriation as a *precondition* of the negotiation of peace—put the country's security at unacceptable risk. A settlement could be had, but only at the price of increasing Israel's vulnerability.²⁵ Neither could legitimacy be assured except through face-to-face bargaining with Arab adversaries. The UN process appeared to discourage this. Moreover, in Israeli eyes, the direction taken by UN intervention was becoming not only an obstacle to Rhodes-type encounters with the Arabs but also an instrument of pressure for risky concessions on territory and refugees. Israel's concern was not so much that UN mediators and peacekeepers were biased. It was that the entire third-party involvement offered a counterfeit currency of assurances instead of the real coinage of security and a durable peace.

Writers sympathetic with the Arab position, notably Malcolm Kerr, attributed the failure of the peace talks to "Israel's obsession with security, its preoccupation with territorial possession and military advantage, . . . its great distrust of outside intermediaries and its reluctance to take initiatives or show restraint."²⁶ Though writing from the post-1967 perspective, Kerr noted that in many respects the 1967 war and its aftermath "constituted a replay" of the events of the early years.

Israel's final frustration with the PCC process followed the forced retreat of its initiative in the General Assembly in the winter of 1951-1952, an initiative designed to enlist the PCC in a negotiation of the refugee problem in the context of peace and through direct talks. A strong majority in the Ad Hoc Committee (later Special Political Committee) adopted the resolution but this was overturned in the plenary as the Arab bloc mustered the necessary majority. The amended resolution (512-VI) of January 26, 1952, reaffirmed the PCC's responsibility for reaching a settlement but omitted mention of a peace settlement.²⁷

In any event, the experience with the PCC reinforced Israeli distrust of any form of UN intervention and, when the conciliators and mediators faded from the scene, the UN peacekeepers became the focus of Israel's concern.

[The Armistice Regime](#)

In its November 16, 1948, resolution the Security Council called for an armistice "to facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine"; the parties were to negotiate either directly or through the acting mediator (Ralph Bunche) and conclude agreements to establish armistice arrangements and delineate permanent armistice demarcation lines (ADLs) beyond which their armed forces would not move. (See [Map 2.1](#).) The armistice negotiations, which extended over the first five months of 1949, were held in separate bilateral meetings between Israel and each of the four warring Arab states and were presided over (and largely directed) by Bunche or his representative, Henri Vigier. The first agreement was signed at Rhodes on February 24; Rhodes was also the site of the agreement with Jordan, in early April. Armistice negotiations with the other two were held in the area itself and agreements were signed with Lebanon at Ras-en-Naqoura on March 23 and with Syria at Hill 232, near Mahanayim, on July 20. In its Resolution 73 (August 11, 1949), the Security Council took note of the agreements "with satisfaction" and declared they constituted "an important step towards the establishment of permanent peace in Palestine." The council not only gave its blessing to the birth of the armistice regime; it endorsed the continuation of UNTSO to supervise "the execution of the provisions" of the armistice agreements and the participation of the UNTSO command and UN military officers in the MACs called for by the agreements.²⁸

By mid-1949, the four General Armistice Agreements (GAAs) governed Israel's relations with the four neighboring Arab states that had



[MAP 2.1](#) The 1949 Armistice Lines

gone to war in 1948. The armistice ended hostilities; the UNTSO mechanism already installed in the area to supervise the truce was given the assignment of monitoring compliance with the agreements. The main task of the observers was to man the armistice lines and "to investigate and report upon claims and complaints submitted by one or both parties to the Mixed Armistice Commission or at the request of the [UNTSO] Chief of Staff."²⁹ Under the truce UNTSO's mission was to demarcate boundary lines, establish contacts between opposing commanders and mediate differences, supervise troop withdrawals and demining, prevent buildups of fighting men and war materiel, help in exchange of prisoners, and investigate violations of the truce. These assignments were carried over into the armistice period, but with the main emphasis on investigating incidents and complaints and supervising demilitarized zones.

The major change was the establishment of the four mixed armistice commissions: Egypt-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission (EIMAC), Israel-Syria Mixed Armistice Commission (ISMAC), Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission (IJMAC, sometimes denoted HJK-IMAC), and Israel-Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission (ILMAC). These commissions became the main arena of UN involvement in the Arab-Israeli disputes over raids and reprisals, cultivation of disputed lands in the demilitarized zones, water rights, and so on. The agreements went to some length to describe the composition of the MACs (seven members for EIMAC, five for the others), to provide that the chief of staff or a senior UNTSO officer would be designated as chairman, gave him the right to vote to make the majority when unanimity was lacking (most of the time), and to empower the commission to "employ" observers. Claims or complaints relating to the provisions of the armistice were to be referred to the MAC through its chairman, who could take such action as he deemed appropriate to investigate or otherwise dispose of the complaint. Theoretically the MAC chairman reported to the parties, with a copy to the secretary general. In practice, the report went through the UN chain: to the UNTSO chief of staff, who then submitted it to the secretary general for any political action deemed appropriate. In effect, the key players in this system were the MAC chairmen and the UNTSO chief of staff.³⁰

Both the United Nations and the opposing sides negotiated on the assumption that the armistice arrangements were to be temporary, with an early transition to permanent peace arrangements. That Bunche considered Rhodes a transitional phase and of limited political significance is clear from the documentation. Writing to Reuven Shiloah, head of the Israeli delegation at Rhodes, on March 27, 1949, Bunche pressed for a "safeguard clause" in the agreement with Jordan to the effect that the armistice lines would be drawn "without prejudice in any way to ultimate territorial settlement or to the boundary lines."³¹ A few months later, Bunche was back in New York but orchestrating the Israeli-Syrian negotiations being conducted by his deputy, Henri Vigier, and UNTSO Chief of Staff William E. Riley at Mahanayim. Bunche appealed to Sharett to cooperate in clearing away obstacles to an agreement with Syria. Vigier and Riley had gone to Damascus to persuade the Syrians to accept "the fundamental and unalterable Israeli conditions," namely, withdrawal of Syrian forces from disputed positions at Samakh. Israel nonetheless balked at other conditions affecting its rights in the demilitarized zones. Bunche stressed the "imperative necessity of concluding this final armistice agreement at the earliest possible moment in order that the military phase of the Palestine conflict may be finally and fully liquidated." Israeli interests would not be damaged "considering that this is an armistice agreement and not a final settlement," and thus would not affect any "vital Israeli claim or position."³²

Similarly, in an earlier appeal to Damascus, Bunche argued that the provision for a demilitarized zone is "the most that can be reasonably expected in an armistice agreement by either party. Questions of permanent boundaries, territorial sovereignty, customs, trade relations and the like must be dealt with in the ultimate peace settlement and not in the Armistice Agreement."³³

The armistice regime was thus to be short lived and was presumed to have transitory political consequence. In his report to the Security Council, Bunche explained that the GAAs constituted the end of war from the military standpoint, but only peace would terminate war from the political standpoint. This distinction, although accepted by Israel at the time,³⁴ became a major point of contention in the Arab-Israeli relationship. The Arab side viewed the armistice as a phase in a protracted struggle, leaving unaffected the relations between the parties, which were relations of latent war and asserted all rights of belligerency short of direct attack. No recognition of Israel was implied from the signatures by military officers on the agreement. The armistice demarcation lines were nothing more than provisional and were not to be considered in any way as a point of departure for either a territorial settlement or for normal political relations with Israel.

The adoption by the Security Council of the November 16, 1948, resolution calling for armistice negotiations was greeted warmly by the provisional government of Israel. Ben Gurion noted at the time that the council had bracketed the armistice call with an order that Israel withdraw from the territory captured in battles in the Negev between October 14 and 22. In reply to a letter from Bunche demanding compliance, the Israeli Council of State declared that battle reinforcements had left the Negev after the battle and those that remained had been there on October 14 and would stay to guard against renewal of Egyptian attack. In any event, the United Nations demand for withdrawal was treated as a minor complication and did not dampen the enthusiasm over the Security Council's call for an armistice. The UN action marked a "turning point," opening the door to negotiation—directly or through intermediaries—of an armistice as a "first step" toward a stable peace. Convinced that the interests of Israel and the "just" interest of the Arab peoples were not necessarily in contradiction, the Israeli government would accord the United Nations "every help and support" in pursuing this new path to peaceful settlement.³⁵

Writing at the time, Yehoshafat Harkabi, a participant in the Israeli delegation at Rhodes, saw the signing of the armistice as the most important political event of 1949. It was Israel's first appearance on the world scene as an equal. Israel's first application for admission to the UN had been turned down, as noted earlier, and approval came only after three of the four agreements were signed.³⁶ Moreover, the Israeli delegation went to Rhodes with the instruction to negotiate an armistice with Egypt that would allow it to hold on to all the territories within the ADLs that followed the advances made in the fall of 1948. Rhodes, in the Israeli view, legitimized Israel's claims to the ADLs. As Harkabi pointed out in a retrospective thirty-five years later, the Israeli-held territory delineated by the ADLs was at the time simply a line on the map. Between those lines and Jewish settlement stretched empty expanses: Only boundaries based on "settlement facts" could give concrete political validation to them. This required time. As settlements branched out, they would convert the new boundaries into political facts.³⁷ Moreover, though Sharett at one point stated that the wisdom of agreeing to the terms of the armistice "will finally be vindicated if the armistice leads to a lasting and stable peace," the armistice itself could provide political advantage. Not only did it serve to validate Israel's claim to the captured territory. In Israel's view the armistice regime was not compatible with a state of war or an assertion of belligerent rights, if only because it was based on the mutual and reciprocal

obligations of UN members under the UN Charter.³⁸

Some Israeli leaders stretched further the significance of the ADLs for Israel's political geography, holding that the armistice agreements excluded claims to Israeli-held territory from neighboring Arab states. In particular, Abba Eban, the Israeli ambassador to the UN, argued for the maximalist interpretation. "Every inch of soil now occupied by Israel is lawfully occupied from the viewpoint of the UN," he wrote to Walter Eytan at the Lausanne Conference, where the PCC was concerning itself with the territorial question. The "crucial fact is that *our entire territorial position as it stands today* [emphasis in original] is a legitimate position so long as the armistice treaties are valid."³⁹

Others did not read the ambiguous language in the armistice agreements so unequivocally. A number of provisions, particularly in the agreements with Jordan and Syria, were explicitly left for later discussions. Only in this manner, in which each side felt free to interpret the text as it desired or issues were side-stepped, could agreement be reached. But "there lay the rub," wrote Harkabi, for the "negotiating maneuvers effective at the time afterwards generated sharp differences, and the armistice arrangements, instead of becoming a meeting ground, were turned into arenas of conflict."⁴⁰ The injunction against resort to military force in the settlement of the Palestine question, the right of each party to its security and freedom from fear of attack, the nature of the ADLs, the limits to rights of cultivation, development, and policing in the demilitarized zones (DMZs), the limits on investigation by the UNMOs—all became points of tension between the parties and between each side (notably Israel) and the UN peacekeepers.

The armistice regime, designed to be transitional, instead governed the Arab-Israeli relationship throughout the formative years—and still does in certain respects to this day. History plays its ironies. Here a double reversal in circumstance and attitudes occurred. The provisional and transitory became permanent, and Israel, which had initially hailed the Rhodes arrangement, within three or four years came to consider the armistice regime a key obstacle to a negotiated settlement. The Arab side also thought the armistice would be temporary, accepting it reluctantly under the pressure of events. Only after the PCC's failure to produce results did they realize that the armistice regime could be turned into a framework for a protracted state of belligerency.

In Bunche's August 1949 report to the Security Council, he had emphasized that the armistices were not only truces but also "real and authentic pacts of non-aggression" between Israel and its four Arab neighbors. They were also meant to last; they would "remain in force until a peaceful settlement between the parties is achieved" (for example, Egyptian-Israeli General Armistice Agreement, Article XII). To lend legal-political force to the armistice pacts, they were signed—albeit by military officers in the case of the Arab parties—on behalf of the respective governments, not of the commanders in chief of the armies as was the accepted practice in the conclusion of armistices.

As the focus of UN involvement shifted from mediation to policing a protracted condition of intermittent crisis and latent belligerency on the ADLs, UN peacekeepers became the guardians of the armistice regime with unforeseen political consequences. Three things happened to change Israel's perception of the value of the armistice agreements. Although the armistice ushered in a period of relative stability for building the nation and the army (as had been anticipated when the delegations went to Rhodes), the prolonged armistice froze the status quo and removed pressures on the Arab parties to move to a negotiated peace. Second, the armistice arrangements soon complicated Israel's security situation: Behind the shield of the armistice provision against "aggressive action by armed forces," Egypt and the other Arab signatories asserted belligerent rights of economic boycott, denial of navigation rights in the Suez Canal and the straits, political

warfare, and low-intensity violence through marauder raids and fedayeen attacks whose actions the Arab governments owned. Third, the ambiguities in the armistice provisions—for example, the authority of the MAC chairman in the DMZs—over time brought frustration, confrontation, and recriminations between the UN peace-keepers and the parties, particularly Israel.

What set the stage for the confrontations during the formative years was not so much doubt about the impartiality of UN personnel as the asymmetry in the interests and policies of the conflicting sides. This fundamental asymmetry in the armistice *situation* led UN peacekeeper s more often than not to side with the Arab position.

As Israel saw it, the situation was asymmetrical in three respects, all of them prejudicial to Israeli interests.⁴¹ First of all, the opposing sides had incompatible goals: Arab policy aimed not at a peace settlement but at redressing the defeats of 1948, with the ultimate aim of destroying the state of Israel. UN peacekeepers were required to be neutral, but in Israeli eyes this meant a neutrality between the peace-lovers and those who sought to destroy them. As Egypt, Jordan, and Syria claimed rights of belligerency, Israel felt itself at liberty to take whatever action was necessary to defend itself even though this meant taking military action that contravened the armistice. The United Nations could not, of course, accept this. Friction resulted as well as charges of bad faith.

The second asymmetry lay in the Arab desire for a fluid status quo. A military armistice that did not legitimize Israel or its territorial claims allowed the Arab states to regroup and to mobilize political support for the next round. Israel wanted to move beyond the status quo for both economic and security reasons. Much of the state was empty, the border areas needed to be settled, swamps drained, roads built, and water resources developed. Infiltration and marauding impeded nation building and fueled a sense of insecurity in border settlements. In the demilitarized zones, especially on the Syrian sector, road building and water engineering aimed at improving civilian life brought Arab charges that Israel sought military advantages, contrary to the armistice agreement. UN peacekeepers felt constrained to rule restrictively on the scope of Israel's development plans. In essence the UN peacekeeping mission was to stabilize the impasse, which fed into the Arab preference to freeze the status quo.

This clash in policy aims produced a third asymmetry. As Israel felt driven to take organized retaliatory action, which in time grew into sizable cross-border military operations, it came into open confrontation with the United Nations and world opinion. For, although Arab infiltration and marauding were initially not organized, and early fedayeen attacks were carried out by Palestinian irregulars apparently not under the direction of the military forces of any Arab government, retaliation was official, undertaken by the Israel defense forces. The United Nations acted in the face of this official reprisal policy, which could not be disclaimed. Israel was repeatedly condemned by the UN and by world opinion on the basis of investigation and reports from UNTSO that its policy of retaliation was "disproportionate" and unjustified under the armistice agreements, Israel concluded that the armistice regime and the UN peacekeeping system that enforced it were evolving in a direction harmful to its interests.

3

The Armistice Regime Erodes, 1952–1955

Even before the collapse of the conciliation effort in 1952, it was becoming clear that the Arab-Israeli relationship would be defined by an armistice with peace negotiations on hold, and the UN peacekeepers would play a preeminent role in policing and interpreting the armistice regime. Israel had to adjust to a dual political shock. It would be living in a much more dangerous world than it had hoped, marked by the prospect of persistent Arab hostility on its borders. Second, the UNTSO and its military observers would largely determine the rules of the armistice game. Their hold over Israel's destiny was therefore much more authoritative than had ever been imagined.

Israel faced the prospect of a long freeze on its expectation of becoming a "normal" state in world affairs. Now it appeared that a disproportionate share of its state-building resources and political energies would have to be devoted to security. As Yehoshua Freundlich concluded from a close study of the Israeli archives for 1950, things looked up for Israel that year. The war with the Arab states was over, the armistice agreements looked promising and "seemed to fulfill their function," and relations with the Arab states had not yet reached absolute deadlock. Israeli leaders believed that "Israel had become a nation like any other." But normalcy eluded Israel. The country was growing more dependent on external financial aid, and "the multiplying number of border incidents . . . would necessitate focussing attention on current security."¹

Israel's unhappiness with the United Nations in the years before the Suez crisis stemmed from its fears about border security. A permanent peace settlement, Israel knew, would have resolved many of the security concerns. The status quo and the UN peacekeeping presence did, however, confer certain advantages. The armistice regime provided a measure of stability that allowed Israel to consolidate its resources and build a nation. And a "fluid status quo" suited Israel as well as the Arab states. For Israel it meant a period during which it could fill in the empty spaces along the armistice borders. For the Arabs, it prevented the full legitimation of Israel and its boundaries. It was thus important for them to keep the status quo from congealing but not to provoke a military showdown that could end in another disaster. Low-level border violence carried out by marauders and fedayeen was seen as one way to achieve Arab goals.²

Political time was not on Israel's side. The demography at the UN was shifting against Israel, most evident in the Soviet Union's reaction when Israel lined up with the West on the issue of Korea.³ Israel's standing at the UN and questions about the organization's vexatious peacekeeping role vis-à-vis border incidents began to dominate debate in Israel's foreign and defense policy circles.

As Moshe Dayan explained, the Jewish state felt a "unique vulnerability" in the region because of the "fierce antagonism" of its Arab neighbors. Under the armistice regime, the country faced a "security problem of unusual complexity. . . . The term 'frontier security/' argued Dayan, "has little meaning in the context of Israel's geography. The entire country is a frontier!"⁴

Dayan emphasized that the UN was a dubious safeguard, particularly as Israel had been excluded from the network of defense systems and security guarantees granted to the Arab side. The Arab League's collective security pact of 1950, British defense arrangements with Iraq, Egypt, and particularly Jordan, and U.S. arms supplies and agreements. were "oriented

exclusively toward the Arab states."⁵

Israel's relations with UNTSO worsened as border incidents became more frequent, more destructive, and more politically motivated. Soon after the armistice agreements of 1949, a period of "innocent infiltration" began. Refugees and marauders crossed from the West Bank into Israel for family reunions, smuggling, or theft.⁶ Illegal crossings became commonplace, and Israel was unable to regulate and legalize the transit. Wholesale infiltration ensued, with a concomitant rise in thefts, robbery, and murder. Sabotage became a frequent occurrence. According to Dayan's count, from 1949 to mid-1954, clashes with armed marauders on the Jordan line totaled 1,069, and incidents of theft to 3,572. Livestock, seed, fertilizer, agricultural implements, and irrigation pipes were the main spoils. Sabotage of phone lines was very irksome. Dayan concluded that "unless checked [this] could bring ruin to the whole Armistice regime."⁷ By 1953, infiltration from Jordan took on a more paramilitary character; mines were set and watchmen ambushed.

Infiltration was a serious problem only on the Jordan and Egypt ADLs. The Syrian line had serious troubles of a different kind, as explained below. The Lebanese border remained the one front on which the system operated with few difficulties. Once the armistice was concluded and the machinery in place, the Israel-Lebanon Mixed Armistice Commission (ILMAC) "worked as it had been intended all MACs should." It met regularly and seldom had serious complaints on its agenda. Incidents flared up from time to time, stemming from local feuds, "innocent" infiltration, or cattle on the wrong side of the line. ILMAC therefore came to be viewed as the model mixed commission: It was a mechanism for resolving and conciliating disputes and complaints instead of apportioning blame and censure. All the armistice agreements, including the Israeli-Lebanese one, provided that, "to the extent possible," all decisions be made unanimously. In the absence of unanimity, decisions would be reached by a majority vote of the "members of the Commission present and voting." Of the four commissions, ILMAC alone operated by consensus as standard practice. The commission would meet and, for "the most part without formal procedure or resolutions," take action necessary to "discipline the offenders or prevent future trouble."⁸ The chairman tried to avoid being put in the position of casting the deciding vote. Still, in the other MACs, the United Nations did not hesitate to apply the armistice provision, allowing a quorum to make decisions whether Israel participated or not. Consequently, the UN chairman began to line up with one side or the other to break a tie, a practice that aggravated discord.

Two major circumstances accounted for ILMAC's relative success. First, the ADL coincided with the prewar frontier between Palestine and Lebanon. Both sides accepted it. No residue of territorial claims, no "galling innovation" of armistice lines drawn on a map complicated the armistice relationship. There was no demilitarized zone in which sovereignty and territorial rights were disputed, as they were on the Syrian frontier. Second, both sides had parallel security interests. Border trouble was therefore eschewed. UNTSO attributed the stability in large part to Beirut's perception of its comparative military weakness. It therefore had an interest in avoiding confrontation, snuffing out signs of fedayeen activity based in the refugee camps during the early years, and refraining from exacerbating incidents.

Border Tensions and UNTSO

Although Israeli differences with the UNTSO establishment and MAC chairmen did not become

politically consequential until about 1953, there were early signs of trouble. Indeed, even as the armistice negotiations were proceeding at Rhodes, Israel took security measures that the United Nations judged a violation of the truce. Bunche's complaint to Reuven Shiloah (then head of the Israeli delegation at Rhodes) is telling. UN observers, said Bunche, had established "conclusively" that IDF military operations in the Hebron-Dead Sea area were continuing as of March 22, 1949, in "contravention of both the Security Council truce and the Israeli-Transjordan General Cease Fire Agreement of March 11." Bunche also listed numerous complaints from Egyptian and Transjordanian officials and from "fleeing Arab civilians" in the area.⁹

Bunche was concerned that such violations and charges of noncompliance not impede armistice negotiations. In his reply to a Syrian request to suspend negotiations, citing truce violations, Bunche argued that if the criterion for participation in armistice negotiations was full compliance with previous agreements, neither side would qualify. "Moreover, I must challenge the intimation in this [Syrian] note that the UN would not prove capable of carrying, out its part of an agreement. In any case, the hurling of recriminations in the midst of negotiations is not likely to help."¹⁰

Still, in the first two years or so (1950-1951) none of the complaints and countercomplaints brought before the MACs disturbed the armistice arrangements. By 1952, however, the situation had perceptibly deteriorated. Harassing raids, mainly from Jordan, provoked retaliatory raids by Israel. The border situation worsened, dampening hopes that a more orderly relationship could emerge. The deterioration in relations with UNTSO officers was gradual. Israel saw no distinct shift from the phase of "innocent infiltration" to that of politically motivated raids, which Shimshoni and others dated from the months preceding Qibya (October 1953). As yet, there were no misgivings in Israel about the armistice arrangements and the UN peacekeeping mechanism. Starting in January 1952, however, markers along the route pointed to Israel's growing frustration with UNTSO's unresponsiveness to Israeli concerns.

Beit Jala

On January 6, 1952, an Israeli military unit raided Beit Jala (Beit Jolla), a village near Bethlehem, in retaliation for the rape-murder of a young Jewish woman the previous month. (See [Map 3.1](#).) A number of villagers were killed and several houses were demolished. UNTSO investigators found no evidence linking Jordanians of the area to the killing, and one of the UN investigators intimated that the Israeli police would have a better chance of finding the killer than the Arabs. Israel was charged with a serious breach of the armistice agreement in the IJMAC, under the chairmanship of Comdr. Elmo H. Hutchison (USNR). Official Israel believed the ruling had failed to take account of the provocation, and the UNTSO command concluded that Hutchison had no choice but to vote with Jordan in condemning the act, which could not be judged as reasonable retaliation.¹¹

The Beit Jala attack "soon lost its singular importance," wrote Comdr. Hutchison, "among the numerous incidents" that followed in its wake.



His account pictures Israel as mainly responsible for the escalation of violence. Many Arabs were killed inside Israel, he observed, just trying to retrieve items from their former homes. Instead of cooperating at the local commanders' level, Israel "stepped up her policy of retaliation and intimidation."¹² The infiltrators responded by arming themselves and returning for revenge. Beit Jala thus inaugurated a series of incidents and complaints. According to UNTSO count, in the last week of January alone, Israel complained of six instances of infiltration and two of firing across the border by Jordanian police and national guardsmen. Six Arabs from Jordan were killed during the resulting clashes with Israeli forces. Over the same period, Jordan alleged that Israeli security forces had fired across the border on eight occasions, resulting in the deaths of five Jordanians. It also complained that three Israeli patrols had crossed into Jordan and opened fire on Arab villages, killing three Arabs. Counter-complaints were lodged in most instances.

A local commanders' agreement (LCA) was concluded on February 1, 1952, and for three months the complaints were handled by the local commanders. In May the LCA "fell before the constant criticism of the Israeli delegates to the MAC. They claimed it was ineffective, and yet their own local commanders spoke highly of the arrangement."¹³ By the end of May, incidents became more frequent and more serious.

The documentary record suggests that Israel's case (that it was more victim than perpetrator of border incidents) did not convince UNTSO. In fact, as Israel stepped up its complaints to IJMAC, some saw this as further evidence of the country's chicanery. Thus, in July 1953, two Jordanian complaints were countered by two Israeli complaints. Foreign Minister Sharett warned during a press luncheon that Jordanian authorities should understand the situation would likely "recoil on them . . . unless they do their share in . . . arresting the chain of violence," The U.S. consulate-general reported that the border was comparatively quiet and that the Israeli reaction was another instance of countering complaints with two of its own for the record. "If Jordan's sincere efforts to check infiltration [are] scorned and ridiculed by Israel," the consulate-general commented, "Jordan may cease making them. It appears evident [that] important sections [of] Israel officialdom [are] not averse to border friction."¹⁴

As border incidents became more frequent and more severe, however, so did confrontations between Israeli security forces and UN observers engaged in investigating the incidents. The UN effort was considered ineffective in finding the perpetrators and as interfering with Israel's security measures. A growing antagonism between UNTSO and Israeli officials and officers, with political reverberations in New York and Washington, centered around five points of friction. Israel was accused of "noncooperation" with UNMOs carrying out their UN-mandated functions. Senior UNTSO officers were indignant over what they perceived as Israeli ruses to circumvent the armistice rules. And on a broader scale, it was UNTSO testimony that set off worldwide condemnation of Israel for its large-scale retaliation in such incidents as that at Qibya. Jerusalem, for its part, felt it was being unfairly judged and often pilloried in UNTSO's reports and MAC rulings and that the UNTSO operation was not even handed. All of this, as will be noted later, spilled over into instances of personal antipathy.

Israeli "Noncooperation"

From the perspective of UN observers and MAC chairmen, the success of the peacekeeping

operation depended largely on the cooperation of the parties. The way the armistice lines were drawn, particularly on the Jordan frontier, invited trouble. From the point on the Jordan River south of Lake Tiberias to where it joins the Dead Sea, the western edge of Jordan-held territory (the West Bank) wound around a perimeter of rocky hills and fields, sometimes dividing villages and separating them from once-cultivated groves and fields. At some points the line left Israel a coastal strip of less than 14 kilometers (km) (9 miles). Villagers were not prepared to respect the new demarcation. On the Israel side, "nonpolitical" infiltration posed a security problem, especially as mere raiding gave way to killings and sabotage.

After an incident, the offended party would enter a complaint in the MAC. In many cases, both sides lodged complaints. The MAC then decided whether to initiate a joint investigation with both sides taking part, or a one-sided investigation, with observers leading the inquiry. Cooperation in gathering evidence and taking testimony of witnesses was crucial. The case was then filed for a hearing before the MAC. In the event the chairman classified it as an emergency (or both sides so agreed), the case would be heard at once. The chairman thus had the power to determine the urgency of a complaint and wielded the deciding vote.

UN observers found it easier to investigate allegations involving Israeli security forces because their acts were designed to be not only punitive but also demonstrative, that is, to serve as a deterrent against future Arab raids and to persuade the Arab authorities to take action to curb them. Israeli complaints against Arab acts were more difficult to investigate. Evidence of theft or sabotage would often be unavailable or inconclusive and perpetrators hard to identify. Israeli soldiers and potential witnesses therefore saw the entire process as ineffective, especially on the Jordan line. Within a year or so, the Gaza frontier and the Syrian sector's DMZ also became troublesome. UN observers began to encounter Israeli resistance rather than the cooperation they were trained to expect. They correctly perceived that many local Israeli authorities and security personnel judged what they were doing as ineffective and preferred direct retaliatory action. Only retaliation, they thought, would convince Arab authorities of their responsibility for the raiders.

"Bad Faith" and the Barrel Incident

UNTSO officers also believed that the Israeli side felt free to circumvent the armistice rules and UN peacekeeping procedures. Israel's stance was that the IDF had to take what it considered as vital security measures in its border war. The barrel incident is illustrative of this difference in perspective. The circumstances were these. A fortnightly convoy from the Israeli side bound for Mount Scopus (an Israeli enclave in Jordanian-held territory) would pass through the checkpoint at the Mandelbaum Gate for UN inspection. The enclave was demilitarized, though Israel was allowed to maintain police guards and the convoy was to bring only supplies and a change of guard. The armistice agreement, in Article VIII, called for a special joint committee to formulate plans and provide oversight for arrangements that would assure freedom of movement on vital roads and resumption of the normal functioning of the cultural and humanitarian institutions on Mount Scopus (the campus of Hebrew University and the Hadassah Hospital were both located there). Except for an arrangement to resume operation of the railroad to Jerusalem, Article VIII had not been implemented, but certain arrangements for access to Mount Scopus had been agreed on.

On June 4, 1952, the regularly scheduled convoy was being checked through the Mandelbaum

Gate when one of the UN guards dropped a test rod into an oil drum, striking a metal object in the center of the drum, indicating a false bottom that might conceal contraband arms. The UN observer in charge ordered the barrel rolled off the truck and sent for tools to open it. Before the cutting tools could be obtained, the driver turned the truck around and sped into Israeli territory. Israeli soldiers moved into no-man's land and demanded the return of the suspect oil drum. A confrontation with nearby Arab soldiers appeared imminent.

To calm matters, Maj. Gen. Bennett L. de Ridder, the IJMAC chairman, had the barrel stored in the MAC office to await the return of Lt. Gen. William E. Riley, the UNTSO chief of staff, then in New York. The Israelis demanded the return of the barrel unopened; the Jordanians claimed it was UNTSO's duty to check it before it went on to Scopus or back to Israel. On Riley's return, the tests showed a false bottom in the barrel, but before it could be cut open, Riley declared: "There is extraneous matter in this barrel and . . . I am therefore returning the barrel to Israeli control."¹⁵ Riley's intent was to forestall the worsening of a difficult situation, and so ruled that the barrel was not part of the convoy since its contents did not conform to the manifest. The Jordanians immediately protested, and in the eyes of Hutchison and other UN observers, Riley was seen as having "cleared the way for unrestrained smuggling."

The UN observers were also offended by what many considered the brusque, ill-mannered behavior of the Israeli officers and men during the incident, and Hutchison contrasted this with the unfailing good manners of the bedouin chiefs with whom he dealt and the cooperativeness of the Jordanians. How widespread this feeling was at the time among UNTSO personnel cannot be known, but one can surmise that Hutchinson's reaction was not idiosyncratic.

The barrel incident of 1952 elicited strong Arab denunciations of "pro-Israel partiality" on the part of UNTSO, Lt. Gen. Riley in particular. UN peacekeepers and U.S. diplomats saw it as a blow to UN prestige. In a protest to Secretary General Trygve Lie, Jordanian foreign minister Azmi Nashashibi accused Riley of "bias in favor of the Jews" and said the incident had caused bitterness among Arabs. It made a "travesty of the Mt. Scopus Agreement" (an agreement of July 7, 1948, which had been kept in effect by the parties at the urging of Riley, pending the special agreement called for by the armistice agreement, and served as the basis for authorizing Israeli convoys to the Hebrew University-Hadassah enclave on Mount Scopus). Moreover, Nashashibi accused Riley of "complete indifference if not of positive connivance" in the face of repeated breaches of the Scopus agreement.

This was strong stuff, but it was more than matched by the outcry from other parts of the Arab world. The U.S. Legation in Damascus, for example, reported that Syrian officialdom regarded the incident as demonstrating a pro-Israel bias and that widespread disillusionment was caused by the barrel incident. Several newspapers suggested a joint Arab protest of Riley's "betrayal."¹⁶

In the end, UNTSO found that neither side was mollified by its handling of the Mount Scopus affair. On the broader issue, Israel disagreed with Riley that UNTSO was "in command" of the demilitarized zone on Mount Scopus under the agreement of July 1948 (which remained in effect), and was displeased that he had induced Washington and London to press Israel to abandon "legalistic" objections to the assertion of UN authority there.¹⁷

Retaliation at Qibya

The friction with UN peacekeepers over Israeli retaliation for border infiltration, as at Beit Jolla, and encounters such as the barrel incident paled in comparison to the large-scale reprisal action

at Qibya in the fall of 1953. Whether Qibya marked a "turning point" is debatable, but it unquestionably resulted in a major escalation in border tension on the Jordan line, complicated the Israel-UN relationship, and harmed Israel's world reputation.

By mid-1953 many Israeli leaders had become frustrated with the armistice arrangements. Ben Gurion's purpose was not only to deter cross-border aggression by demonstrating to Arab governments the cost of failing to control infiltration but to show the Israeli settlers (many of them newly arrived immigrants) that their deaths would not remain unavenged. His policy faced opposition at home. Sharett did not share Ben Gurion's view on the efficacy of retaliation. With the strong support of Washington, Dag Hammarskjöld spoke out often and loudly against retaliation as both inhumane and self-defeating. Nevertheless, it remained Israeli policy for lack of a better alternative. Protests to the MACs were ineffectual since the UNTSO mechanism merely established blame and issued censure. As Eytan noted ruefully after a MAC meeting, "the raids would start again, setting off another futile round of accusation, investigation, discussion and censure."¹⁸

In any event, Qibya was the first large-scale operation directed at a presumed marauder base under the policy of large-scale "punitive" as well as retaliatory action. On October 13, 1953, a mother and two infant children were killed at Moshav Yehud (Yahudia), deep inside Israel, apparently by Jordanians who threw a bomb into the house. A UN investigating team discovered tracks leading back to the Jordan village of Rantis, where they were lost. Gen. John Bagot Glubb, British commander of the Arab Legion of Jordan, personally took charge of the investigation and assured Israeli chief of staff Mordecai Makleff that "he was doing everything possible to apprehend the perpetrators and that when found they would receive appropriate punishment." At an emergency session, Jordan was condemned in the IJMAG and was asked to inform the chairman of steps taken to find the perpetrators. Press comment on the Yehud affair was especially bitter even by otherwise moderate papers like *Ha'aretz*.¹⁹

The next night a half-battalion of the IDF attacked the villages of Qibya and Budris about a mile inside Jordan. Forty-two persons were killed, including children (later accounts put the dead at fifty-three); some forty dwellings were destroyed. A strongly worded resolution in the MAC condemned the Israeli regular forces for the raid, which it found to be a breach of the armistice agreement, and told Israel it must act vigorously to prevent a recurrence. Jordan held the United Nations "responsible for these revolting brutalities" because it had decided on partition and "imposed and guaranteed the present armistice."²⁰ And, the MAC ruling was strongly supported by Maj. Gen. Vagn Bennike, who had succeeded Riley as UNTSO chief of staff in June 1953.

World condemnation rapidly followed. A British diplomatic protest expressed horror at the attack and declared that it rendered "empty and meaningless" Israel's protestations of its desire for peace. In a public statement, Washington declared that "those responsible should be brought to account and effective measures taken to prevent such incidents in the future." Along with Britain and France, the United States sponsored a Security Council resolution censuring Israel and declaring the incident "prejudicial to chances of peaceful settlement."²¹

Security Council Resolution 101 (November 24, 1953) declared the Qibya action in violation of the cease-fire of July 1948 and inconsistent with Israel's obligation under the armistice agreement and the UN Charter; it strongly censured the attack as prejudicing chances for peace and called on Israel to prevent such actions in the future. It also enjoined Jordan to curb infiltration. The UNTSO chief of staff was asked to consider Israel's request for convening an Israel-Jordan conference with a view to revising the armistice agreement.²²

Israel strove hard to convince the world that in the border war it was more victim than

perpetrator. Lt. Col. Aryeh Shalev, general staff officer (GSO) in charge of Israel's delegations to the MACs, submitted to the IJMAC chairman figures to back up Israel's case. From January 1 to October 15, 1953, Jordanian infiltrators had killed 49 Israelis and wounded 79, and committed 34 armed robberies; the count from May 1950 to the end of August 1953 was 421 Israelis killed or wounded, 128 cases of sabotage and mining, 866 armed incursions, 122 armed robberies, and 3,263 thefts and robberies of various kinds.²³

Some within the UN establishment, notably Gen. Burns, appreciated Israel's predicament. Arab governments could deny responsibility for acts of irregulars, and they needed to realize that if infiltration were allowed to continue they would suffer the consequences. Burns later observed that Israel may have been "right in their contention that the Arab governments could stop infiltration if they wanted to," noting that "from September 1954 until March 1956 there was no serious trouble on this score between Israelis and the Jordanian authorities." Yet Arab governments knew it would be politically dangerous for them to severely repress infiltration. Moreover, Israel could not use the evidence it gathered through espionage in the proceedings of either the mixed armistice commissions or the Security Council without compromising its intelligence system. The Arab governments would deny all knowledge of the acts and insist that determined infiltrators were practically impossible to stop.²⁴

By the end of 1954 even Gen. Burns came to characterize Israel's reprisal policy as "unreasonably tough." During a visit to Damascus, he told U.S. ambassador James S. Moose, Jr., that Israel had violated the armistice agreement with Jordan and told its soldiers not to be concerned about capture during raids since it would obtain their release by capturing Jordanians for purposes of prisoner exchange.²⁵ The UN observers, in particular, faulted Israel for escalating border tension.

From the start Israel worried about how its retaliatory policy would affect its reputation. Arriving at the Foreign Affairs Ministry the morning after the Qibya attack, Sharett received the first news (thirty houses destroyed, no word on casualties). He determined to propose at the next day's cabinet meeting that any retaliations must have advance approval from a ministerial committee for foreign and security affairs.²⁶

After Qibya, Israeli policy professed to have suspended punitive action as such.²⁷ Retaliatory operations were targeted against "military bases," but the world did not appreciate the distinctions. The condemnation that followed Qibya and other retaliatory raids began to preoccupy the Israeli Foreign Ministry. A post-Qibya memorandum to the director general concluded that Israel's *hasbara* (public information) had failed to show the world how dangerous its border situation was. The data and explanations disseminated to diplomatic missions appeared to make little dent; the perception remained that Israel was blameworthy in most incidents and obstructive of UN efforts to keep the peace.²⁸

Scorpion Pass and Nahhalin

Condemnation of Israel's retaliatory policy on the Jordan front and a consequent heightening of tension with both the UN and the United States reached a new high in the early spring of 1954, following an Israeli strike against the Jordanian town of Nahhalin as retaliation for a particularly bloody attack on a bus of holiday travelers in the Negev. In the course of these events Israel became convinced that it could not get a fair hearing in the IJMAC and it walked out.

The circumstances were these. On March 17, 1954, a bus carrying holiday travelers returning from Elath was ambushed at Scorpion Pass (Maale Akrabim), located in the Negev about twelve miles from the border. Eleven people were killed. Israel claimed the attack was an organized military operation conducted by Arabs from the Jordanian side. UN military observers, working with Israeli police, expert trackers, and dog handlers, joined by experienced bedouin trackers from Jordan, carried out a most "intensive investigation," but according to Hutchison's statement at the IJMAC meeting on March 22, "the evidence brought out is far from being conclusive." It was more than likely that bedouins carried out the raid, but the United Nations could not discover where the perpetrators came from. Consequently, Hutchison abstained on a resolution condemning Jordan for the attack. Both in the report and in his book, Hutchison faulted Israel for supplying flimsy evidence. In the report, he regretted Israel's "refusal to allow the Mixed Armistice Commission the opportunity to completely investigate Israel's claim of knowledge concerning the actual perpetrators of this crime."²⁹

Dismayed at what was considered a gross miscarriage of justice, the Israeli representative read a prepared statement at the end of the IJMAC meeting: "The Israel delegation is not in a position under these circumstances to continue its participation in the Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission." Scorpion Pass reinforced Israeli doubts about the UNTSO operation and the mixed armistice commissions. The mood in Israel was tense. In a diary entry, Sharett described the horror felt in the country on hearing the gruesome details of the massacre as told by the few who survived by playing dead. Some Knesset members demanded a raid into Jordan to "seize the murderers," but the government decided not to retaliate. Instead, "political" steps would be taken, including an approach to the powers to convene the Security Council. The cabinet agreed that if the MAC ruled not to "put the collar" on Jordan as a consequence of the chairman's abstention, the Israeli representative would walk out of the MAC. But the Cabinet was sharply divided as to how politically consequential such a move would be.³⁰

In addition, Israel got no satisfaction at the Security Council, which backed the UNTSO judgment and the ruling of the MAC chairman that no conclusive evidence implicated Jordan. The United States regretted the Israeli delegation's "refusal to allow [the] MAC [the] opportunity to completely investigate Israel's claim of knowledge of [the] actual perpetrators of this crime."³¹ Particularly painful to Jerusalem (and seen as a sign of an anti-Israel bias among some observers) was that Hutchison had expressed doubt that the killers were, in fact, Arabs and was reported to have suggested the possibility that they were members of a Jewish terrorist group!³²

Israel felt itself driven to retaliate for the Scorpion Pass massacre. On March 27, an Israeli force raided the Jordanian town of Nahhalin. Nine persons were killed, nineteen wounded. The IJMAC condemned the raid in the strongest terms. (In accord with the recently declared policy, no Israel representative participated.) A few days later a draft resolution by Lebanon (on behalf of Jordan, which was not yet a UN member) was introduced in the Security Council. Strongly condemning the attack on Nahhalin, it demanded that Israel pay compensation for the loss of life and damage to property, and it called on members to take measures (in accord with Article 41 of the UN Charter's sanctions chapter) to prevent the repetition of such action. U.S. ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge proposed that Israel's countercomplaint against Jordan for the Scorpion Pass bus attack be discussed at the same time because both cases revealed the gravity of the border situation. But he forcefully reiterated that such retaliatory raids deserved condemnation.

Israel's persistence in this policy was viewed as an affront to the Eisenhower administration, which had cautioned Israel against reprisal. Assistant Secretary of State Henry A. Byroade warned Israel to "drop the attitude of conqueror" and the "conviction that force and a policy of

retaliatory killings is the only policy that your neighbors will understand."³³ For Israel, what had transpired in the "double standard" treatment of the two cases—Scorpion Pass and Nahhalin—exposed how unresponsive, ineffective, and even "clearly hostile" the UNTSO-MAC system could be when Israelis were victims and how judgmental when they were perpetrators.

The bad blood between Israel and UN peacekeepers was aggravated by Israel's growing conviction after Qibya, Scorpion, and Nahhalin that the UN observer corps—and its senior officers at that—were the main source of the adverse publicity it was getting. Concern over the harm to its international reputation from biased UNTSO reporting and the ill will of some senior UNTSO personnel was expressed with particular force in a letter of protest from Israeli ambassador to the UN, Abba Eban, to Arthur Hays Sulzberger, president and publisher of the *New York Times*. A "grave misrepresentation" had been "repeatedly" spread, he wrote, by Kenneth Love, the paper's correspondent in Jordan. On March 24, 1954, Love cabled that the Israeli IJMAC representative had "warned" the commission's chairman, Comdr. Hutchinson, that his abstention on an Israeli resolution to condemn Jordan for its failure to bring to justice the perpetrators of the Scorpion Pass massacre would mean "the end of Commander Hutchinson and the United Nations in the Middle East." According to Love, Col. Aryeh Shalev had given warning that the Israeli government "would have a hard enough time holding her people in restraint after this crime [the bus massacre at Scorpion Pass], even with a favorable decision." The story was a complete falsehood, Eban wrote, and Love's "libel"—that Shalev had uttered such a warning—had been denied by both sides. But the "very libel" had been repeated by Love two days later: that UNTSO had asked the Arab Legion to place a 24-hour-a-day guard over Hutchinson. Eban emphasized how important it was for the world press to assist in reducing tensions by avoiding inaccuracies or exaggeration and reasserting the need for a negotiated peace settlement.³⁴

The resentments and recriminations bred during the confrontations in the spring of 1954 were never completely laid to rest, and Scorpion Pass—along with Israel's withdrawal from the IJMAC and its disengagement from ISMAC later in the year under circumstances described below—was perceived by UNTSO as a none-too-subtle attempt to downgrade the MACs and disparage the UNTSO.

Bennike complained about Israel's boycott of IJMAC throughout the spring of 1954. As he argued in a letter to Sharett, it "deprived Israel of the opportunity to avail itself of the observation and investigation machinery" of the commission. Israel's refusal to engage the UNTSO mechanism was not depriving the other side from resorting to the MAC. After Shalev's walkout, UNTSO acquiesced in an arrangement restricting meetings of the MAC to emergency occasions in the hope that the Israel government would see its way clear to resume participation.³⁵

The Harassment of UN Observers

Particularly troubling to UN observers and the UNTSO leadership was that Israeli security forces interfered with their freedom of movement during investigations and border patrols. Freedom of movement was seen as vital to successful peacekeeping, even before it was codified by Hammarskjöld as a key tenet of international peacekeeping at the time UNEF I was established after the Suez War. When Israeli personnel prevented UN observers from moving around to carry out an investigative assignment, friction was inevitable and each side asserted its rights. Israel contended that observers could not move about freely as this was an infringement of its

sovereignty, while the UN insisted that its mandate could not be effectively carried out without such freedom.

In UN eyes, Israel's calculated interference (which some attributed to an anti-UN bias) added to the inherent dangers of fulfilling its mandate in the region. The issue was important enough for Hammarskjöld to call Lodge's attention to a statement issued by Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns of Canada, who had succeeded Bennike as UNTSO chief of staff in August, at two press conferences held on Sunday, September 26, 1954. The authority for such free movement, he explained, was derived from the Security Council resolution of August 11, 1949, which had endorsed the armistice agreements and reaffirmed the "order" of an unconditional cease fire in the July 15, 1948, resolution. UNTSO did not wish to pry into military secrets, Burns observed, but if its observers

are riot free to move at all unless accompanied by an officer of the party concerned, and then only to go where he says they may go, it is probable the outside world will conclude the party has something to conceal. We ask to be allowed to come and go freely where the civil population comes and goes freely.³⁶

Burns's concern about interference with the free movement of his observers had apparently been heightened by several flagrant encounters earlier in the year—when Burns's predecessor, Gen. Vagn Bennike, was head of UNTSO—in which UN observers carrying out an investigation in plainly marked white jeeps were brought under fire and otherwise threatened. Two incidents had been particularly distressing. On May 9 three observers were investigating a Jordanian complaint that an Israeli patrol had crossed the ADL; two members of the patrol were killed during an ensuing skirmish 120 meters inside Jordan, at Khirbitt Ilin, which is west of Hebron. The senior UN observer, Capt. G. Svedlund, reported that during the course of the investigation, the observers came under fire from a mortar barrage laid down from Israeli positions. Caught in cross-fire from both sides, the observers barely escaped.

In his exchange with Israel's then chief of staff Moshe Dayan, Bennike had insisted that while investigating incidents, UN observers had the right to expect cooperation from both sides, and "such cooperation includes in the first place the protection of freedom of movement and the access of the observers." If the denial of access to Israeli territory in the Khirbitt Ilin incident was based on Israel's decision "not to cooperate in the observation and investigation machinery of the Israel-Jordan Mixed Armistice Commission," then UNTSO claimed that right apart from the armistice agreement. Its authority derived, Bennike stated, from "the unconditional cease fire ordered by the Security Council in its resolution of 15 July 1948."

Another incident about which Bennike complained occurred on June 19 at Mevuot Betar. An Israeli unit, returning from an operation across the ADL, ran into Jordan National Guardsmen. Three Israeli soldiers were killed. While investigating the incident on the Jordan side the UN observers were caught in fire from the Israeli side and two other observers setting up radio contact on the Israel side were threatened by the local military commander. Bennike complained about Israel's calculated interference with UNTSO's freedom of movement and concluded that Jordan was cooperating and Israel was not.³⁷

Many in UNTSO felt the threats and harassment could not be dismissed as the conduct of undisciplined soldiers. Although a number of Israeli officials and officers were courteous and cooperative, this did not obscure a pattern of noncooperation, disdain, and hostility to the UNTSO operation. They suspected Israel of attempting to undercut UNTSO by ignoring the MACs and refusing to cooperate in investigations. An anti-UN atmosphere was perceived by some observers and blamed on a hostile press.

Things improved when Burns replaced Bennike. But Israeli cooperation with UN investigations still left much to be desired from UNTSO's point of view. In September Burns wrote Dayan, who had contended patrols by UN observers were "exclusively" those defined in the armistice agreements and required the agreement of the parties. Burns challenged Dayan's position. In line with Bennike's stand the previous spring, he claimed independent responsibilities under the Security Council resolution of August 1949, which had reaffirmed UNTSO's mandate to observe and maintain the cease-fire apart from the authority obtained under the armistice. UNTSO had failed, he said pointedly, "to secure Israeli cooperation in investigating these incidents," although "as a rule" no objections were raised to UN observers operating in the area. "Nevertheless, the Observers have met with deliberate non-cooperation and hostility in certain defined areas." Moreover, he hoped Israel would soon return to IJMAC, "which will put an end to such unhappy relations between Israeli Authorities and the representatives of the International Organization of which Israel is a member." In a veiled warning, Burns reminded the Israelis that, in the hope of ending the present "abnormal situation," he would not now "insist" on applying the armistice provision that allows a MAC quorum to make decisions by a majority of members present and voting, whether Israel participates or not. He recognized that UNTSO and its observers could function effectively only when they met with the cooperation and goodwill of the parties.³⁸

Hamarskjöld–Ben Gurion Exchange on UNTSO

Hamarskjöld devoted much time to overcoming Israeli resistance to full participation in the MAC. Thus, in a characteristic diplomatic maneuver, Hamarskjöld had a long talk with Ben Gurion, who had made a request to the UN secretary general to convene a meeting of the two parties for the purpose of "reviewing, revising, or suspending" provisions of the armistice agreements. (Article XII made it obligatory for the secretary general to convoke such a conference on demand of either party.) Hamarskjöld countered with a "personal and tentative" proposal whereby Israel would at once resume full participation in the MAC and a special subcommittee of the MAC would be set up to serve as a forum for discussing Mount Scopus and other problems. Ben Gurion gave his assent on condition that such a subcommittee would be mutually recognized as the Special Committee on Mount Scopus problems stipulated in Article VIII of the armistice agreement.

Hamarskjöld urged Jordanian prime minister Samir Pasha Rifai to agree. The secretary general finessed the issue of "mutual recognition" of the subcommittee. A meeting under Article XII, explained Hamarskjöld, would start a "most undesirable chain of reactions difficult to maneuver from your side in such a way as to avoid appearing in the eyes of many as rigid and unreasonable." On the other hand, he reasoned, "the return of Israel to the MAC would not be a small thing . . . as it would give us again an appropriate machinery" through which difficult issues (for example, Jordanian access to a certain footpath to the Scopus area) could be handled in a "normal and businesslike way." For Jordan, the subcommittee would form part of the normal MAC machinery and open possibilities of restoring MAC activities that both Jordan and the United Nations sought.³⁹

It is ironic that within five years of the signing of the armistice, Israelis were becoming disillusioned with the very aspect of the arrangements—the mixed commission—that provided for face-to-face contacts with Arab representatives, while the United Nations viewed it as a vital

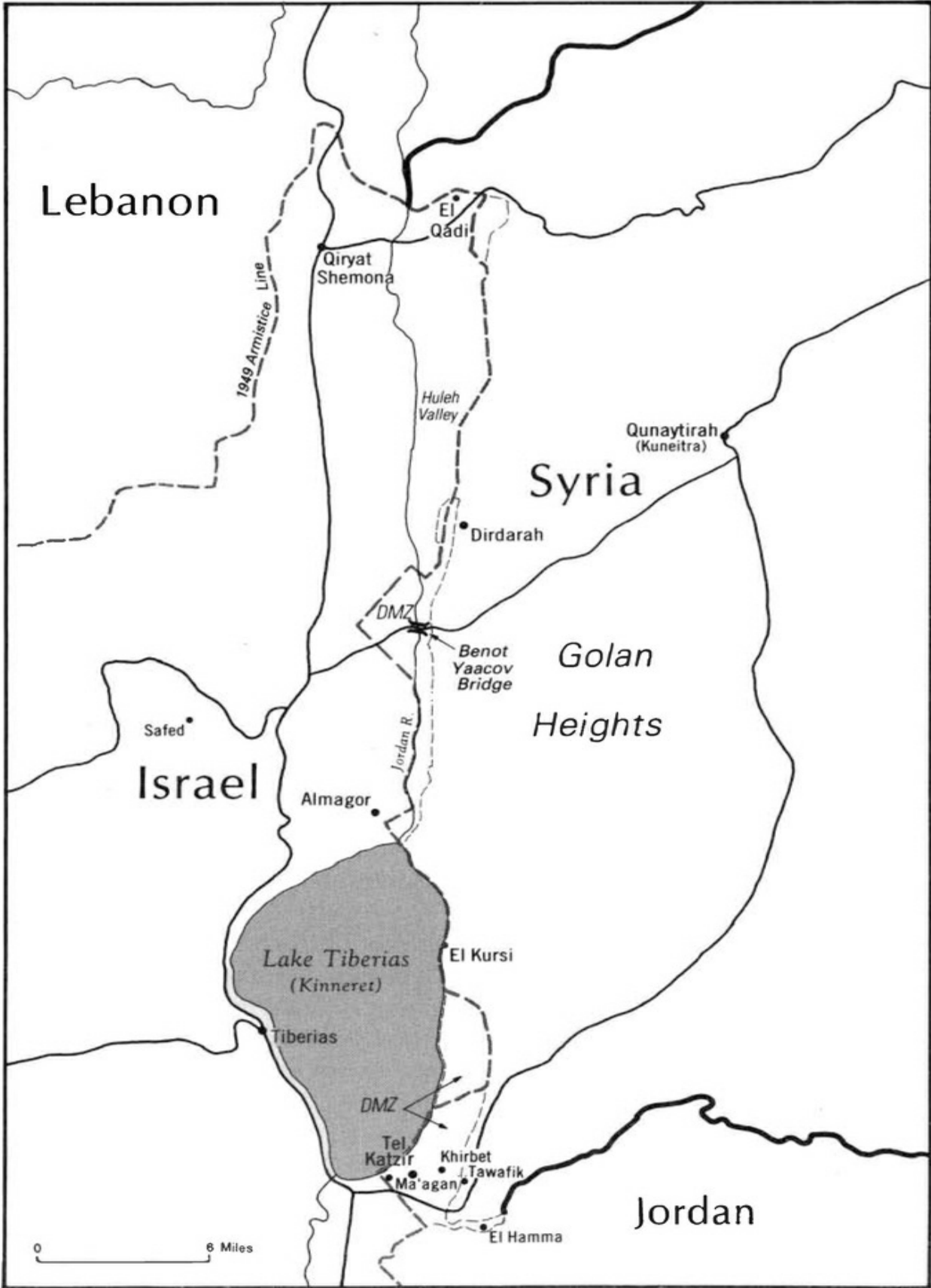
component of the peacekeeping structure. Even as Israel turned its back on the MACs, the Arabs came to value them as a mechanism for getting UN attention. Resolutions both in the MACs and in the Security Council were increasingly going in their favor, and the United Nations shielded them from the need to iron out differences directly with Israel.

The Demilitarized Zone and Israel's Walkout from ISMAC

On the Egyptian and Jordanian fronts, particularly the latter, the core problem was border security and Israel's disenchantment with the UNTSO/MAC operation. In 1953 and 1954, as the retaliatory policy was accelerated, the perceived bias of the UNMOs and the mixed armistice commission had become irksome and politically costly for Israel. As we have seen, the break came in 1954 over the Scorpion Pass incident. Thereafter Israel withdrew from regular participation in IJMAC.

That same year, 1954, Israel also walked out of the Israel-Syrian Mixed Armistice Commission (ISMAC), but over another issue altogether. As noted, border infiltration was not a serious concern along the ADL with Syria. (See [Map 3.2.](#)) Civilian activities in the DMZ were the main worry. Israel insisted on the withdrawal of Syrian forces behind the international frontier. Syria contended there was "no international border between Israel and Syria," only a "political border between Syria and Palestine," marked by a temporary ADL. Bunche's formula, written into the armistice agreement, had created a DMZ between the ADL and the international boundary, both to safeguard the territorial claims and interests of both sides pending a final territorial settlement and to separate the Israeli and Syrian forces. Bunche intended "to minimize the possibility of friction and incident, while providing for the gradual restoration of normal civilian life in the area of the Demilitarized Zone, without prejudice to the ultimate settlement." The chairman of the MAC was to be "responsible for ensuring the full implementation" of the arrangement.⁴⁰

"Restoration of normal civilian life" in the DMZ became the key issue. Nissim Bar-Yaacov wrote: "[T]he Syrian view was that the demilitarized zone would not belong to either Israel or Syria and that the United Nations would assume considerable powers of control and administration, including policing." Israel insisted that the area was its territory and that Israel therefore exercised sovereignty over it. Bunche explained



to both that the provision set forth in Article V was the most that could be reasonably expected. In any case, questions of permanent boundaries and sovereignty would be dealt with in the peace settlement.⁴¹

Despite Bunche's optimism, ambiguities in the armistice provisions bedeviled the UNTSO operation on that front throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the language of the agreement was subject to widely disparate interpretation. Thus, internal security issue within the zone was to be on a "local basis" without raising the question of sovereignty; but Israel exercised administrative authority. The armistice agreement provided that "the armed forces of both Parties shall be totally excluded" from the zone and "no activities by military or paramilitary forces shall be permitted" there; yet Israel could provide a limited number of zone police for internal security. Nor were economic projects such as land clearing or swamp drainage prohibited, but such activities could not alter the military balance or prejudice ultimate sovereignty over the zone in a peace settlement. The MAC chairman and, by extension, the UNTSO chief of staff had "supervisory" authority to ensure that economic undertakings would not infringe on ownership rights of Arab villagers in the zone.

Between 1951 and 1953 Israel embarked on two development projects that entailed work in the zone. Syria challenged Israel's rights to undertake such projects as an illegal assertion of sovereignty and as altering the military balance in Israel's favor. Israel challenged Syria's *locus standi* in matters affecting the zone. Disputes also arose over fishing rights in Lake Tiberias (Lake Kinneret in Israeli usage), with Israel claiming its sovereign right to prohibit fishing without permits issued by Israeli authorities. And Lake Tiberias, particularly along the northeastern shore, became the scene of heavy fighting in the late 1950s and 1960s, to be described in a later chapter.

The status of the zone thus lay at the root of the Israeli-Syrian conflict in the MAC. Syria's view was that any change, whether land cultivation or hydroelectric projects or swamp drainage, altered the military balance. For Israel, the crux of the issue was whether the MAC, in which Syria had an equal voice, could place restrictions on its economic development activities in the DMZ. Syria insisted that ISMAC was the competent body to discuss not only border incidents but also all matters affecting the Arab inhabitants of the zone. Israel held that the MAC chairman alone had the competence to address these issues.

The two key cases affecting the demilitarized zone—drainage of the Huleh marsh and the diversion of the Jordan River waters at Benot Yaacov Bridge—brought to a head the issue of UN authority in the zone and revealed how difficult it was to apply the armistice provisions in the face of strong interests and political pressures from both sides. These two cases preoccupied the United Nations in 1951 and again in 1953 and 1954. The outcome explains why Israel concluded that UNTSO's supervision of the armistice was working against its interests.

Huleh Reclamation Project

In February 1951 Syria complained to the ISMAC that the drainage works of the Palestine Land Development Company in the Huleh (Hula) marsh area on the western bank of the Jordan River, both inside and outside the DMZ, were giving Israel a military advantage, contrary to the armistice provisions, and constituted an unwarranted exercise of Israeli authority in the zone.

This reclamation project was designed to bring some 6,075 hectares (15,000 acres) into

cultivation and to channel waters for use in irrigating the rest of the country. The first stage would broaden and deepen the Jordan riverbed, the second would drain swamps so that two new channels could be constructed north of the lake and smaller drainage canals dug to lead remaining stagnant waters into new river channels. Although the lake and marshes were outside the DMZ, the first stage involved work on a stretch of Arab-owned land in the central part of the zone. The main issue was whether Israel was entitled to undertake in the zone the works planned in the first stage, and, if so, whether the armistice agreement imposed restrictions on the execution of the work and whether Israel was allowed to expropriate Arab lands in the zone against the will of the owners. Each side defined the issue in different terms. Syria questioned Israel's right to undertake such works in the zone or to expropriate Arab lands, but Israel questioned the commission's authority to deal with civilian activities, which raised questions of its sovereignty.⁴²

The MAC sought Riley's opinion. And in a memorandum of March 7, Riley ruled against Syria's complaint but recommended that operations cease until the parties could reach a mutual agreement. Israel challenged the ruling, which questioned its sovereignty in the zone and called for suspension of work.⁴³

From mid-March into early April a number of encounters between workers and armed Syrians erupted and ended up on ISMAC's agenda. An informal agreement was reached on March 19 that the chairman, under the power given him by the armistice agreement, should handle the matter; Israel opposed a resolution requiring that all work stop until the chairman reported back to the commission. When work resumed on March 24 (after a week's suspension), armed Syrians again fired at civilian workers. On March 26, the deputy chiefs of staff of Israel and Syria discussed the situation for five hours but came to no agreement. Israel held that the chairman could demand a work stoppage for only a limited period of time in order to determine compensation levels. Syria demanded that work cease unconditionally until the chairman could find a solution.⁴⁴

On April 4 seven Israeli policemen were killed by soldiers of a Syrian outpost overlooking the road to El Hamma (al-Hamma) in the zone. The following day Israeli planes bombed the village in retaliation. Israel meanwhile notified Lt. Gen. Riley that its delegation would attend no further meetings with the Syrians "while Syrian forces are firing on United Nations observers and on the police responsible for the security of the demilitarized zone." The Israel delegation also announced that it would not take part in any meeting under the chairmanship of Lt. Col. Georges Bossavy, who had turned down a request that the commission immediately proceed to the scene of the incident.⁴⁵

This was the state of affairs when the Security Council met on April 17. Its deliberations over the next month focused not only on the security situation and the Huleh drainage scheme but also on the implementation of the armistice provisions in the demilitarized zone. The outcome was far from satisfactory either to Israel or the Arabs.

Israel's request that the council confirm Syria's responsibility for the killing of the seven policemen at El Hamma on April 4 was turned aside, and the council's resolution of May 18—approved by a vote of 10 to 0, with the USSR abstaining—ruled that Israel's retaliatory air attack was not justified and inconsistent with the armistice agreement. The council had called for a cease-fire on May 8 (which went into effect on May 14), but the May 18 resolution did not single out Syria for blame. In neutral and subjunctive wording, the council declared that "any aggressive action by either of the parties in or around the demilitarized zone," which "further investigation by UNTSO might establish," constituted a violation of the cease-fire provision of its resolution of July 15, 1948, and was inconsistent with the terms of the armistice agreement.

Displeased. with the wording, Israel's UN ambassador, Abba Eban, observed that by "camouflaging Syrian participation" the resolution implied that the balance of responsibility or guilt for the military actions lay generally with Israel, not Syria.

On the substance of the dispute, the resolution endorsed Riley's ruling that the Huleh concession was "in abeyance" and that Israel should cease all reclamation operations pending an agreement. The issue of sovereignty in the zone was neither directly addressed nor did Israel get any satisfaction on its contention that disputes affecting civilian activities in the zone must be kept off the agenda of ISMAC. At the ISMAC meeting on May 28, Riley summarized his understanding of the council's resolution of May 18. The Huleh project itself was outside the competence of either the MAC or the chairman, but work should be suspended until the chairman could make arrangements satisfactory to the Arab landowners and the land development company. The chairman and not the MAC addresses this problem, but the commission, he stated, "may interpret the meaning of articles of the Armistice Agreement."⁴⁶

Israel was initially not too pleased with this Solomonic judgment but was somewhat mollified by Riley's statement to reporters on landing at Lod airport in Israel that he had never opposed the drainage of the Huleh swamp, just that work be suspended until the whole matter had been investigated.⁴⁷ On June 5 the Palestine Land Development Company suspended operations until agreement was reached with Riley in the fall to resume operations in certain portions of the Huleh area, on land clearly understood to be non-Arab-owned property.

Riley was fiercely attacked from the Arab side. The Syrian minister to Washington, Faiz el-Khoury, criticized his failure to implement fully and completely the Security Council resolution on the Huleh. The resolution, he wrote the State Department, was intended to end the conflict by returning the Arab inhabitants of the zone to their homes and stopping the drainage works. "But the action of General Riley in this matter was restricted to appease the Jewish side and order the resumption of the drainage works without taking any interest in the other side which is the victim of this new aggression."⁴⁸ Other Arab countries were mobilized against Riley. In a conversation with Jordanian prime minister Rifai, the U.S. minister was told that Riley invariably submitted to Jewish pressure on both the Syrian and Jordan MACs and wondered about Riley's impartiality.⁴⁹

In response to Arab pressure that Riley ensure compliance with the Security Council resolution, throughout the summer he prodded Israel on the issues of returning the expelled Arabs and of "Arab property rights in the DZ, [which] constitute an obstacle which must be removed" before the project could be resumed. Riley also insisted that Israeli complaints about the penetration of Syrian forces into the EI-Hamma area should be discussed in the MAC and that failure of the MAC to meet since the end of June required an urgent decision so that "this paralysis of the armistice machinery will not be prolonged any further."

Riley was particularly annoyed with Israel's restrictions on the UN observers' freedom of movement, citing an incident on August 6 in which three observers were denied access to the citrus grove on the Arab-owned Khoury farm. "It is of the utmost importance," he concluded in his letter to Eban, "that the responsibility of the Chairman in the Demilitarized Zone should be fully recognized if the hopes which you express . . . are to be fulfilled."⁵⁰

The United Nations was thus not insensitive to Arab concerns. With the change of guard at Government House—Bennike, as it will be recalled, replaced Riley in mid-1953—and an increase in the number and severity of disputes, UNTSO took an even more restrictive attitude toward Israel's activities in the zone. How much of the change was due to the person of the chief of staff and how much to circumstances on the ground cannot be measured. In the Israeli Foreign Office, Bennike was seen as less pragmatic and sensitive to Israeli concerns. But at the same

time, it was clear that the curve of history was moving against Israeli interests.

Benot Yaacov (Banat Ya'qub) Project

The Benot Yaacov project, started early in September 1953, was to build a power station at the southern end of a new canal to extend from the Jordan River, south of the Benot Yaacov Bridge in the central DMZ, to Lake Tiberias. By far the greater part of the canal would lie to the west of the zone. The power station was to be driven by that portion of the Jordan waters that was diverted south of the bridge by the new canal; the rest of the Jordan waters would flow in their original bed into the lake. Sponsored by the Israel Government Water Planning Authority, the project was to be carried out under a concession granted in March 1926 to the Palestine Electric Corporation. Bearing in mind the difficulties encountered in the Huleh dispute, Israel made it clear that the project would not involve the use of Arab-owned land in the demilitarized zone.⁵¹

Still, Syria complained in the ISMAC that the project contravened the armistice agreement, and UNTSO chief of staff Bennike (having become the chairman in the commission) requested Israel to stop work on the project "so long as art agreement is not arranged." Acting under his "general supervisory authority" over civilian activities in the demilitarized zone, he ruled that the work undertaken in the zone affected the property rights of Arab residents, the operation of certain Arab water mills along the Jordan River, and the irrigation rights of a farm in Syria. Moreover, in a finding most disturbing to Israel, he held that the diversion project changed the nature of the zone in such a way as to alter the value to Syria of an area whose ultimate disposition should not be prejudiced.

Israel insisted that the issue of military advantage did not arise and refused to comply. Work on the project was expedited. However, as debate began in the Security Council in October (and, not coincidentally, when U.S. aid was suspended) work was stopped. As it had in the Huleh case, Syria argued that its consent was necessary for any Israeli undertaking in the zone that affected Syria's irrigation rights and also gave Israel a military advantage. Contending that under the armistice agreement Syria had no veto over projects in the DMZ, Israel nonetheless offered to satisfy private claims and to work out arrangements with the chief of staff for restarting the project.

The main interest of the United States (as of Britain and France) was that the UNTSO chief of staff receive the council's strong support and the parties abide by his decisions when he acted under the authority granted him by the armistice agreement. A Western draft resolution endorsed Bennike's decision to halt the diversion project and called on him to explore the possibilities of reconciling the interests of the parties while safeguarding the irrigation rights in the zone and the rights of the residents. Because of Soviet opposition no vote was taken, but clearly the draft resolution expressed majority opinion in the council.⁵²

When debate resumed in January 1954, positions had not changed. Syria insisted that its consent was necessary, while Israel countered that Syria had no veto over Israeli projects and repeated the offer to satisfy private claims and to work out arrangements with the chief of staff. The United States, while reiterating its position that the parties must abide by the chief of staff's decision, stated that Washington "did not look unfavorably" on projects designed to improve the general economic wellbeing of the area. The council majority voted for the amended Western resolution of the previous month, but it fell to the Soviet veto. It was on the Benot Yaacov matter that the USSR for the first time used the veto to block Security Council action on an Israeli-Arab

issue. Israel, nonetheless, held off on the hydroelectric project during 1954.⁵³

In the end Israel was persuaded not to complete the Benot Yaacov canal. The change in policy was intended to facilitate U.S. efforts to negotiate a regional water-development plan drawing on the Jordan and Yarmuk rivers. Israel apparently realized that its larger national irrigation scheme, in which the Benot Yaacov project was to have played an important part, would be jeopardized if it persisted in building the canal in the demilitarized zone. With the failure of the joint plan, Israel proceeded with its own water project, which went into operation in June 1964.⁵⁴

Israel Walks Out of ISMAC

The issue of ISMAC's competence to intervene in matters affecting the zone came to a head at its sixty-eighth emergency meeting on June 3, 1954. The formal agenda focused on four complaints, two submitted by each side (a pattern that had marked ISMAC proceedings for years). The meeting never got around to dealing with substance. Lt. Col. Aryeh Shalev, head of the Israeli delegation, opened with a challenge to the competence of the commission to address the matter. Recalling the position of Lt. Gen. Riley and the U.S. statements to the Security Council in May 1951 and the subsequent discussion of the Benot Yaacov project in the fall of 1953, Shalev insisted that the UNTSO chief of staff, and under him the chairman, constituted "the responsible authority with respect to questions affecting the DZ under Article V of the GAA."

The chief Syrian delegate challenged the Israeli reading. The MAC "is competent," he declared, "to supervise the application of all the articles of the GAA and all its paragraphs." Conceding that the chairman "has special powers in the DZ as far as the civilian aspect of it is concerned," the Syrian delegation nevertheless declared that the chairman, "on his own, . . . cannot do very much in the DZ. He needs an executive organism and that is the commission as a unity."

On this procedural issue, the commission split. The chairman, Col. Van Hooren, and the Syrian delegate moved to put the issue of the MAC's competence aside and to proceed with the complaints on incidents. Shalev demurred and pressed for a vote on his resolution affirming the chairman's competence to deal with zone matters outside the MAC, while accepting that if the chairman finds Israel at fault for deaths resulting from firing across the line, the families of the victims would be compensated. The chairman refused to put Israel's motion to a vote or to postpone the meeting so Shalev could consult his government, insisting that the substance of the complaints had to be addressed. The Israeli delegation walked out. Shalev summed up Israel's position: The MAC cannot deal with matters connected with the DZ, which are beyond its competence and within that of the chairman; as the Israeli resolution was prevented from being put to a vote and his request to postpone the meeting was turned down, the delegation would "now [be] leaving to report to our Government."⁵⁵

Israel's decision to walk out was obviously not just a procedural quarrel but an important political gesture. By the end of the year, at an emergency meeting to discuss a Syrian complaint, Israel was no longer participating. The Syrian resolution was therefore adopted "unanimously," according to the UN records. Syria's charge that a regular Israeli police force in the southern sector of the zone had fired on the civilian Arab population was substantiated, and Israeli action declared violations of the GAA. Israeli authorities were told to discontinue such "hostile and aggressive acts," and the chairman was "instructed" by the MAC to ensure that the illegal work was discontinued. The UN chairman, Lt. Col. Castonguay, explained that in the absence of a

"different interpretation" that Israel might have presented, he considered the incident as within the purview of the MAC and that "the results of the investigations and this debate" justified his vote.⁵⁶

Israeli Policy on MACs

By 1954 Israeli participation in both the Jordan and Syria MACs had become sporadic, largely limited to emergencies where Israel wanted to lodge complaints and for informal contact. Israel tended to bypass the MACs and to approach UNTSO headquarters on both major and minor concerns. Thus, when a flock of sheep was stolen from Kibbutz Ein Hashofet, the appeal went directly to UNTSO—and got results.⁵⁷

Israel's policy on participation appeared inconsistent. At times its nonparticipation was a principled position and, indeed, pointed toward a policy of disengaging totally from the armistice machinery and renouncing the regime. At other times, it took the position that the "existence" of the Jordan commission was "in abeyance"; Israel would resume participation in the work of IJMAC "as soon as a change is made in its chairmanship," that is, when Comdr. Hutchison was replaced.⁵⁸ Israel had thus dug itself into a position where it was challenging, not the effectiveness or fairness of the armistice monitoring *system*, but the professional integrity of senior UNTSO officers. This position was hardly likely to endear Israeli officialdom to the United Nations, or to Washington, for that matter.

The policy of nonparticipation in the mixed armistice commissions (except on a sporadic basis) had trapped Israel. Its underlying policy had always been to minimize the role of the United Nations, and particularly UNTSO, in the Arab-Israeli relationship. In Israeli doctrine, the MACs were precisely the vehicle, established by the parties themselves, whereby armistice disputes could be resolved by the protagonists directly in face-to-face meetings, albeit in the *presence* of a UN chairman. Yet, as the chairman asserted more and more decisionmaking authority, he became the dominant force in the commission and, with his tie-breaking power, the deciding vote. And he could usually count on the support of the UNTSO chief of staff and the secretary general—and the backing of the Security Council. As the MAC chairmen were perceived as pro-Arab, Israel found itself abandoning precisely the international mechanism that offered the best opportunity for direct diplomacy with its Jordanian and Syrian protagonists.

Israel and the UN: Political Friction and Personal Animosity

By 1954 Israel (without completely disengaging from the MACs and the armistice machinery) had come to view the UNTSO presence as marginal and, at times, even incompatible with its interests. Policy planners were considering renouncing the armistice agreements when it became clear that the Arab states were not prepared to see them radically revised and the UN did not press them to be so.

The "unhappy relationship" Burns had noted would from time to time show up as personal antagonism between the UNMOs and Israeli security personnel. Such animosity left layers of ill feeling and complicated the task of the peacekeepers.

Although we cannot accurately gauge the political impact of such ill feeling, it undoubtedly

had an effect on the armistice machinery. As Michael Brecher has observed, every decisionmaker has a psychological predisposition originating in societal and personality factors. These factors, in turn, affect perceptions of reality and have political consequences. On the UN side, the observers and staff came to perceive Israeli officials and military as noncooperative and scornful, not out of simple misunderstanding or policy differences but out of malice. On the Israeli side, the UN officers came to be judged not only as ineffective and ingenuous about Arabs, but too ready to direct their animadversions to Israel, operating out of a cultural bias and even anti-Jewish prejudice.⁵⁹ Though this mutual antagonism was not as widespread as some imagined, it produced an atmosphere of resentment and recriminations on both sides and left a political residue in the broader Israel-UN relationship.

Israel's Diplomatic Pressure on UNTSO Officers

The UN attributed the behavior of some Israeli officials and military officers to the country's "siege mentality." And the "bruising" and "peremptory" way in which the IDF dealt with the UN observers created "terrible problems" at UN headquarters. Observers would proceed to the area as neutrals and were generally sympathetic to Israel. Their unpleasant encounters with IDF officers tended to turn them against Israel especially when they were exposed simultaneously to the plight of the refugees. The Israeli tendency to disparage their operation and question their impartiality reinforced the bias they developed.⁶⁰

Of perhaps more political significance during the formative years was the resentment at Israeli pressure to get rid of senior UNTSO officers seen as partial to the Arab side. Such pressure was particularly resented because it was often accompanied by what the UN Secretariat saw as a malicious campaign against the United Nations. Thus, soon after Maj. Gen. Vagn Bennike's arrival in Jerusalem as UNTSO chief of staff in the summer of 1953, the U.S. consul there, S. Roger Tyler, alerted Washington to Israeli attempts to pressure Bennike to remove Gen. de Ridder as chairman of IJMAC.⁶¹ Obviously, more was involved than discourtesy and friction between Israeli officials and Bennike. The rulings of Bennike and the MAC chairmen on border questions, the U.S. consulate-general reported, had led Israel to launch a campaign to get rid of the offending officers. Israel's "long battle against Gen. de Ridder" finally ended in the summer of 1953 with his removal, to the displeasure of his colleagues in UNTSO and of the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem.⁶²

The "long battle" directed against de Ridder and his successor, Comdr. E. H. Hutchison, preoccupied and embittered the UNTSO establishment from mid-1953 to the end of the following year. In a private conversation with Tyler, Bennike also expressed bitterness over his own removal as UNTSO chief of staff in the summer of 1954, attributing it to Israeli pressure in the United States. He was especially upset, according to Tyler, because he was returning to Denmark a "failure ." The Jordan and Arab Jerusalem press vehemently criticized the United Nations for letting Bennike—a man who had tried to be impartial—go "as a result of Jewish pressure."⁶³

The third case stirred up even more ill feeling and became a cause célèbre both in UNTSO and in diplomatic circles. Comdr. Hutchison, chairman of IJMAC, it will be recalled, earned the hostility of Israel because of his ruling on the Scorpion Pass case, which led to the Israeli walkout from the IJMAC. Bennike requested the secretary general to extend for another year Hutchison's tour as the IJMAC chairman, due to expire in July 1954. Hammarskjöld was inclined

to approve and asked Washington to extend his term of service with the UN. The State Department endorsed the extension and asked the U.S. Navy to take the necessary steps. Meanwhile, in responding to Bennike's proposal that Israel return to IJMAC, Sharett took the occasion to sharply attack Hutchison as "prejudiced and unjudicial" and opposed the extension. Bennike supported Hutchison. And, as the UN under secretary Andrew Cordier told the story, Hammarskjöld entered Cordier's office during the discussion and said "we must not let Sharett get away with this attack."⁶⁴

Hutchison adroitly marshaled the support of influential Americans such as Harry F. Kern of *Newsweek*, whom he convinced that he had dealt fairly with incidents on the Jordan line and that the disturbances had been "stimulated from the Israeli side." Kern wrote Secretary Dulles that Hutchison was an "extremely able, diligent and conscientious man," and his withdrawal from UNTSO "would undo a great part of the goodwill that has been built up for the United States among the Arab states during your term of office." He also relayed Hutchison's suspicion that unknown "forces or agents within the Department of State" were conspiring against him, and they had succeeded in removing from the diplomatic pouch a letter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on renewal of his appointment.⁶⁵ In the end, when Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns succeeded Bennike as UNTSO chief of staff in August 1954, he realized that Hutchison could no longer serve as IJMAC chairman in the face of Israel's hostility; Hutchison soon departed.

Arab Rancor

It is important to recall that during the first years the relationship between the United Nations and the Arab world was not all rosy. It was marked by instances of friction and recrimination. The received wisdom among UN professionals to this day is that the Arabs accepted without complaint verdicts that went against them, behaved with magnanimity toward UN peacekeepers, and were cautious about accusing them of partiality. Brian Urquhart, reflecting this folk memory, recalled that the Arabs expressed no resentment about Bunche's intervention and pressure to accept the July 1948 cease-fire even though the Israeli military was close to defeat. They also accepted the armistice terms, he says, with the expectation that the injustices written into some provisions would be corrected at the final settlement.⁶⁶

Somehow blotted from history, however, are the Arab ad hominem attacks on Lt. Gen. Riley and the aggressive diplomatic campaign to jettison him, a story that Hutchison and others omitted. During this period the Arabs freely criticized UNTSO for bias and mobilized a diplomatic and media offensive against perceived UNTSO partiality. Ironically, just as Israel came to perceive that the UN information machine was prejudicing world opinion against them, so the Arabs (not without reinforcement from certain UN observers and UNTSO staff) inveighed against the "Zionist" political pressures and media influence.

Arab resentment and recriminations burst forth in the spring of 1953 when Riley was about to depart. The Arab world debated petitioning the United Nations to dismiss Lt. Gen. Riley and replace him with someone "whose neutrality might be less suspect"; the diplomatic grapevine had it that Bunche himself had charged Riley with "partiality towards Israeli interests in the performance of his duties."⁶⁷ The Arab group at the UN was mobilized under Syrian leadership. The Syrian representative to the United Nations, in the company of his Egyptian colleague, told the U.S. mission that he was instructed in strong terms to oppose Riley's staying on, adding that the main quarrel with the United Nations was Secretary General Lie's mishandling of the Riley

situation, as the Arabs had been promised that he would be replaced.⁶⁸ UN under secretary Andrew Cordier was pressed on the point and a Dutch or Belgian replacement was urged.

The issue brought to light a long-standing Arab dissatisfaction with UNTSO during the Riley term (1949-1953). In an unusually blunt dispatch, the U.S. ambassador, James S. Moose, Jr., explained the resentment against Riley. Given the Syrian belief that the United States was primarily responsible for the creation of Israel and sustained it with financial and other support, Moose wrote, Riley was "automatically considered by the Syrians to be pro-Israeli" (and therefore anti-Arab). Under him UNTSO was regarded as "a tool of the leading Western powers." Riley was never able to convince Syrian authorities of his impartiality. Under the circumstances, Moose recommended the appointment of a competent Norwegian or Belgian to demonstrate to the Arabs that UNTSO is a UN, not a U.S., organization.

Moose went beyond giving Riley an unsatisfactory report card. He said that neither the United Nations nor the United States had gained prestige with the Syrians through the UNTSO operation; Riley just confirmed the Arab belief, that Washington "always took the Israeli side." Somewhat disingenuously, he suggested that Syrian opposition was based not on "unfavorable" decisions, as the State Department had indicated, but on alleged "unfair and biased" decisions, citing the barrel incident of June 1952, which "should puzzle," he wrote, "even Riley's most enthusiastic supporters," and the handling of the Huleh affair in the spring and summer of 1951, which marked "the vanishing point of Gen. Riley's prestige and value."⁶⁹

Not all U.S. diplomats shared Moose's view. On Riley's departure, the U.S. consul in Jerusalem, S. Roger Tyler, Jr., observed that his going "leaves a gap" not easily filled. Tyler noted that, despite their protests, Riley was aware that, privately, many Arab leaders held him in regard, although "political considerations prevented their saying so publicly." Tyler also forwarded a copy of Ben Gurion's letter to Riley on his departure, praising him for his "tireless and persistent efforts to achieve a harmonious relationship with our neighbors" and expressing admiration for his integrity, understanding and ingenuity, which "added stature and dignity to the UNTSO," which he represented.⁷⁰

Despite this amply documented record of Arab ill feeling toward the United Nations and on Riley, in particular, none of the subsequent accounts of the period recalls this animosity. Israel alone was charged with pursuing a consistently scornful anti-UN campaign.⁷¹

Part of the discrepancy in accounts may be a simple matter of contrasting styles and manners—Israeli candor and brusqueness contrasted with the Arab courtesies and indirectness. Most of it, though, must be attributed to the political tides, which by 1954 had shifted. Although rejecting the legitimacy of the territorial boundaries and viewing the armistice agreements as codifying an unjust status quo, the Arab states came to welcome UN involvement and its peacekeeping presence on the ground. This was particularly true at the time of Qibya, when Israel stepped up its retaliation, and world sentiment perceptibly moved against Israel. The Arab side perceived that the UN peacekeeping machinery could be enlisted to constrain Israel. After Israel started boycotting the MAC machinery, the United Nations in effect became "available," to use a term favored by both Bennike and Burns, to Syria and Jordan to get a sympathetic hearing of complaints and to focus on Israeli misdeeds.

The UNTSO operation was thus creating for Israel serious public relations problems for which it found no ready answer. As the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv reported in the spring of 1954, Israeli opinion was split on the government's retaliatory policy and on whether the UNTSO was a reliable "neutral" for dealing with the situation. The *Israel Economist* (independent) declared that "Israel's safety lies in immediate retaliation," which is the only way, it concluded, to deter

aggression. At the other end of the spectrum, the Progressive party's *Zmanim* was cited favorably as advocating a step-by-step diplomatic approach.⁷²

More indicative because it usually reflected the Foreign Office position was a *Jerusalem Post* editorial of June 3, 1954, which concluded that UNTSO had first tried to be neutral but "somebody" was evidently trying to drag the UN observers into the "Palestine game" to intervene politically in the conflict. "Neutral observers have no mandate to impose peace, however welcome, and when they stepped out of the four cubits of their duties there was trouble." UN observers were "being manipulated." Whose interests were they serving?⁷³

Four years after Rhodes, some Israeli policymakers were wondering if the armistice obligations, particularly the way they were being interpreted and implemented by the UN peacekeepers were compatible with Israel's security needs. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs analysis in December 1953 concluded that security had deteriorated under the armistice regime; that UNTSO under Bennike was construing the agreements in a manner damaging to Israeli interests; that Israel had inadvertently slid into a "small, hidden" war with Jordan and, at times, Egypt, and the retaliatory strategy was not working; and that Israel had been put in the dock as a violator of the armistice when it took necessary security measures. Interpreting the armistice provisions differently from that of the United Nations and the Western powers, Israel was made to look like the recalcitrant. Though not prepared to abandon the armistice as yet, the writer suggested that "perhaps there is room to consider renouncing the obligatory force" of the armistice provisions at a time when the armistice regime was being "transformed from a transitional stage (to peace) to a permanent regime in which some of the provisions, those favorable to us, are not being implemented."⁷⁴

Although the documentary evidence does not show that this line of thinking had much immediate effect, it is noteworthy that dissatisfaction was caused primarily by events on the Jordan line. This circumstance was soon to change, and the front with Egypt was to become the primary scene of confrontation. By 1954, as Israel made an effort to cooperate with Burns, the Jordan border situation improved, and UNTSO was at times more forthcoming about Israeli economic development plans in the demilitarized zones, so talk of repudiating the armistice obligations faded. Sharett pressed for the transference from the Ministry of Defense to the Foreign Office of primary responsibility for dealing with UNTSO matters. Though, because of the opposition of Defense Minister Pinchas Lavon the actual transfer did not take place until the summer of 1955, after Ben Gurion's return to the prime ministership, acceptance of the Sharett policy on this matter showed which way the wind was blowing.⁷⁵ Armistice matters were as much a political as a security concern of Israel.

Ben Gurion had even responded with some interest to the feelers from UN secretary general Hammarskjöld to the possibility of deploying a UN force on the demarcation line with Egypt, especially at Gaza. But whatever inclination there may have been to cooperate with Hammarskjöld to pacify the tense border situation at Gaza—and to accept a larger role for UN peacekeepers—was dampened with the intensified fedayeen action out of Gaza, as described in the next chapter. In retrospect, even high secretariat officials recognized that the United Nations had mishandled the fedayeen situation and that Ben Gurion "with good reason" resented the UN response to the intensified harassment and guerrilla raids by the fedayeen for which the Egyptian government disclaimed responsibility.⁷⁶

4

The Egyptian Front, 1955–1956

BY THE END OF 1954 the Egyptian frontier had become the focus of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Egypt had enlisted the fedayeen for cross-border raids, "in defiance of the Armistice Agreement," wrote Rosalyn Higgins. This "was to prove an extremely important factor," she further noted, "in the breakdown of the system which was to occur the following year."¹ By the spring of 1955 the armistice machinery was hard pressed to cope with the situation. No longer simply deterring and containing infiltration and retaliation across the ADL, UNTSO faced the prospect of a regional war. Israel saw the increased harassment on the Gaza line as part of a larger strategic threat of blockade and belligerence.

The Fedayeen

From the start the Egyptian challenge took two forms: (1) a blockade of Israeli shipping through the Red Sea (and, later, the Straits of Tiran), and (2) cross-border raids by marauders and fedayeen from the Gaza strip.

The blockade of the Suez Canal to Israeli shipping had been in place since 1948. It was extended in December 1953 to Israel-bound shipping in the Straits of Tiran. Air as well as sea transport was blocked, choking off commercial ties with Asia and Africa. In 1951 the Security Council called on Egypt to lift the blockade. Egyptian interference with Suez shipping to and from Israel did not cease, however, and in February 1954 Israel returned to the Security Council. Despite the personal efforts of the secretary general and the UNTSO chief of staff, Egypt was immovable.

Israel resigned itself to the situation even as the blockade tightened in 1955. But the UN lack of clout was disillusioning to the Israeli leadership. The UN machinery was of marginal use in dealing with Egypt's claims of belligerent rights (whether blockade, economic boycott, political warfare, or even fedayeen attack) so long as these did not openly contravene the armistice provisions forbidding hostile military action across borders by its own forces. As on the Jordanian border, the cycle of raid and reprisal worked against Israel, as Egypt could disclaim responsibility for the fedayeen.

In the early 1950s infiltration from Gaza consisted largely of dispossessed refugees who were smuggling, pilfering wheat, cattle, and irrigation pipes, or making sentimental visits to lost lands. By mid-1953, however, marauding took on political overtones. In February 1954 the UNTSO chief of staff reported that such incidents, though still small-scale, had become more common. But until mid-1954 they were not considered serious enough to warrant retaliation. If anything, the Egyptian military government tacitly collaborated in deterring infiltration, aware that Israeli retaliation would disrupt local law and order. At the time, Gaza, and indeed the Palestine issue, was a matter of secondary concern to Cairo. The important point for Israel and the UNTSO establishment was that official Egyptian policy was "to prevent Palestine infiltration, a policy

pursued without great vigilance but seriously enough to evoke complaints by Palestinians."²

By the early summer of 1954 the front had deteriorated. Israel captured spies and saboteurs who admitted being sent by Egyptian intelligence. Raids by organized gangs involving sabotage, the placement of land mines, and murder were launched against settlements near the strip, many established by new immigrants, and some were close to Tel Aviv. Sensing a change in Egyptian policy, Israel issued a warning to Cairo in September. By October, incidents had fallen off, both in numbers and gravity, but picked up again in February 1955. Higgins wrote that a "clear pattern was established of well-organized sabotage far within Israeli territory."³

Egyptian armed forces became directly involved in raids across the ADL, probing Israeli positions in the El Auja DMZ on the frontier (as will be noted below). In April 1955, Dayan wrote that the Egyptian general staff decided "to use acts of terror and sabotage as a means of warfare, and to this end set up a special formation called 'fedayun'" under the command of the intelligence branch of the Egyptian army in the Gaza Strip.⁴

Israeli leaders were convinced by the end of 1954 that Nasser, although professing peaceful intentions,⁵ was intent on advancing Egypt's hegemony in the Arab world. His claim to leadership of the pan-Arab movement therefore dictated a militant policy on the Palestine question. Nasser intensified the fedayeen raids, tightened the maritime blockade of the Suez Canal, and extended it to the Gulf of Aqaba. Still, Sharett convinced the cabinet to continue the policy of restraint.

Although large-scale reprisals were not undertaken, Israel conducted aggressive patrols, which led to clashes with the Egyptian military. In April 1954, the U.S. embassy in Cairo reported official and press agitation over three simultaneous attacks that resulted in Egyptian casualties—three dead, one wounded and abducted. Following a meeting of EIMAC, Israel was condemned for flagrant violation of the armistice, and the Cairo newspaper *al-Misri* called on Arabs to build their military strength and meet force with force.⁶

The Gaza Raid

The Gaza raid took place on the last day of February 1955. As with Qibya in Jordan, this operation was widely seen as heralding a new era in the conflict. It had a dramatic effect on Nasser, humiliating him just days after he had assured his Gaza garrison that there was no danger of war and that the demarcation line would remain quiet. Burns, too, noted that Nasser had said the previous November that he wanted no trouble on the northeastern border and that the Gaza armistice line was not going to be a battle front. After the raid, however, he told Burns that he would not enforce orders against firing on Israeli patrols along the demarcation line. (Burns himself remarked that it was difficult to determine exactly what weight to give Nasser's words.) Michael Brecher agreed that the raid had a profound psychological effect on Nasser and was a catalyst in Nasser's search for arms.⁷

Others question this post-hoc explanation, noting that by the end of 1954 Nasser had solidified his position within the Revolutionary Command Council and the army and was determined to challenge Iraq for pan-Arab hegemony. He had also terminated the Paris peace talks with Israeli diplomats, tightened the blockade, moved to integrate the Palestinian fedayeen into the Egyptian military organization, and demonstrated an ambition to become a leader of the emerging Nonaligned movement. The involvement of the fedayeen, while accelerated by the Gaza raid,

was part of his response both to the new strategy and to internal pressures for direct belligerence against Israel. Uri Ra'anan argued that Nasser's quest for arms predates the Gaza raid. The Egyptian-Czech arms agreement on September 27, 1955, grew out of Nasser's earlier approach to the Soviets. Gideon Rafael dated the turning point to the Bandung Conference in April 1955, where Nasser attended the first world gathering of the Nonaligned. Nasser led the Arab states in opposing Israel's strenuous efforts to be invited to the conference, and Israel ever after was denied Nonaligned status. At Bandung, also, Chinese premier Zhou EnLai offered Nasser assistance in obtaining arms from the Soviet bloc; on Nasser's return to Cairo, negotiations were launched through the Soviet ambassador and consummated a few months later in the Czech arms agreement.⁸

In any event, Gaza was the proximate cause of intensified Egypt-Israel hostility. The circumstances were these. On February 28 two platoons of Israeli paratroopers crossed the demarcation line east of Gaza, blew up pump installations, and attacked an Egyptian army base on the edge of town. Thirty-seven Egyptian soldiers were killed and thirty injured, more than half the deaths inflicted when a supporting Israeli unit ambushed trucks carrying troop reinforcements to the Egyptian garrison under attack.⁹ Unlike previous incidents, this was not a counter guerrilla operation but a classic military one. In that sense it marked a turn in Israeli practice, in line with the developing Dayan policy of "military reaction" against military objectives—army garrisons or police posts.

Official reaction in Egypt, Israel, and the United States to the raid presaged the historic importance later ascribed to it. In Cairo, Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi told the newly arrived U.S. ambassador, Henry A. Byroade, that this was the "first serious attack" on the border, more serious than the Qibya action as it was an attack by armed forces on armed forces. Byroade was "at a complete loss to understand the timing of the Israeli action."¹⁰ In Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Sharett told U.S. ambassador Edward B. Lawson that the principal reason for the Gaza incident was that "we had definitely traced recent acts of sabotage, espionage, and murder to the Egyptian Government Intelligence Center at Gaza." Lawson saw the Gaza action as symptomatic of a shift in Israeli attitudes and tactics on how to deal with the Arabs and "possibly with the U.S." The U.S. Embassy speculated that the action may have provided an "emotional domestic outlet" to compensate for the impounding of the S.S. *Bat Galim* when it tried to run the blockade of the Suez Canal. Perhaps more important, the embassy speculated, was growing concern about Israel's military imbalance with the Arab states.¹¹

The timing of the Gaza action could not have been worse, from Washington's perspective. Operation Alpha—a major peacemaking initiative by Dulles centered on an Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement, as described below—had just gotten underway. Washington was keenly aware of the need to reassure Nasser that Western sponsorship of the Baghdad Pact was not aimed at undermining his position in the Arab world. As part of the Alpha scenario (which called for preliminary approaches in the capitals) Dulles wrote Sharett that the United States was making "good progress" in moving the region toward settlement of differences and overcoming Israel's "sense of isolation and insecurity." The secretary of state cautioned, however, that these new efforts "must take place in a period of relative calm." Sharett was encouraged to continue the "policy of moderation you have been pursuing."¹²

Infuriated by the Gaza attack, Dulles sent a reproachful message to Sharett. The United States, he admonished Sharett, "has consistently opposed reprisal raids." Gaza had reaffirmed hatreds and could require a "reorientation" of the study he had undertaken.¹³

The tone and substance of the Dulles message to Israel carried over into the UN Security

Council, which met toward the end of the month. World reaction to the raid was overwhelmingly condemnatory. The Baghdad Pact had been signed just a few days before the raid, and the three Western powers (France, Britain, and the United States) were anxious about Nasser's reaction. Together they sponsored a tough resolution, unanimously adopted on March 29, that condemned Israel's action. A companion resolution, also adopted unanimously, called on both sides to cooperate with the UNTSO chief of staff on his "concrete proposals" to preserve border security. Egypt was commended for its restraint. Cairo was not pleased with the outcome, however. What was needed, the Egyptian representative said, was to punish those responsible for the action, warning that Egypt's "restraint" was not unlimited.¹⁴

A political outcome of the Gaza raid and the Security Council resolution was not only to depress Israel's standing at the United Nations; it embittered relations with Washington. Eisenhower believed the reprisal policy was neither right nor efficacious and personally ordered the State Department to join Britain and France in condemnation. In effect, the U.S. reaction to Gaza reinforced the position taken a year earlier following the Nahhalin raid. As noted in [Chapter 3](#), Assistant Secretary of State Henry A. Byroade had cautioned Israel to "drop the attitude of conqueror and the conviction that force and a policy of retaliatory killings is the only policy that your neighbors will understand." The Gaza raid served to strengthen the position of those in the State Department who advocated closer ties with the Egyptian leader.

By coincidence the new U.S. ambassador to Cairo was none other than Byroade. Nasser's plea for U.S. weapons therefore found a sympathetic listener. Only a strong Egypt, insisted the Egyptian leader, could risk sitting down with Israel to talk peace. Byroade was impressed with Nasser's argument that he must produce weapons soon if he was to retain the loyalty of his army, and repeatedly recommended to Washington that the arms promised the previous November be delivered. President Eisenhower had other reasons for holding off on arms deliveries, however. Britain, France, and the United States had pledged in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 to maintain a balance of power in the Middle East by restricting arms to both Israel and the Arab nations.¹⁵

In his many talks with Nasser, Byroade was convinced that he was "basically pro-West and certainly anti-Communist" and counseled against publicly condemning Nasser and thus driving him further into the anti-Western camp. But the State Department was less sanguine about Nasser's readiness to go along with Washington's plans for regional security. In a memorandum prepared for Secretary Dulles's meeting with the visiting Egyptian foreign minister, Mahmoud Fawzi, the department noted signs of Nasser's new aggressiveness.¹⁶ To many U.S. diplomats, it was becoming clear after Bandung—and as serious negotiations began for Soviet arms—that Nasser was telling the world that he was not yet ready to move away from his "technical state of war" with Israel.¹⁷

Border Tensions Escalate

The situation on the ground mirrored this growing militancy. Almost daily firings across the ADL took place. There were numerous crossings by armed parties, and Israeli command cars patrolling along the border were blown up by land mines. The Egyptian military took a more direct hand in organizing, training, and directing the raiders, and these were openly referred to as "fedayeen" (sacrificers for the cause). In the week of April 5 alone, twelve Israeli civilians were killed in fedayeen attacks. Dayan thought the April raid grew out of an Egyptian General Staff

decision to employ terror and sabotage as a "means of warfare" —part of a strategic shift in Egypt's regional policy.¹⁸

Burns judged the April incidents as more localized, a consequence of the tensions following the Gaza raid. Israel refrained from retaliating for the raid. Four months of relative quiet on the border ensued, punctuated by only occasional flare-ups. No serious incidents occurred while talks on tension-reducing measures got under way. Several measures were agreed on for improving border security, albeit on a narrow agenda. Israel opposed the idea of joint patrols or a mutual pullback of troops behind the ADL, and Egypt continued to resist Burns's proposal for a barrier or fence, which might be construed as acceptance of a border with Israel. Nasser also balked at direct phone lines between local commanders when Burns met him in Cairo toward the end of August.¹⁹

The slow-moving negotiations and the quiet interlude of summer was brought to an abrupt end on August 22 with an incident that started a chain of violence. The new round was triggered by an exchange of shots between an Israeli patrol and Egyptian border post near the UN hut at Kilo 95, located some 5 km (3 miles) east of Gaza, where the talks were being held. An Israeli motorized patrol occupied the Egyptian post and then withdrew; one Egyptian officer and two men were killed and three others wounded. Two days later, Nasser informed U.S. ambassador Byroade of his decision to terminate the talks, claiming that Israel had provoked the August 22 incident. Israel, he charged, was applying pressure to obtain its "goal of establishing direct contact outside UN auspices between the parties." Nasser would have none of that. Israel "must finally come to learn that these tactics would not work," and he would not agree to any position that "did in fact or even gave the appearance of shoving UNTSO aside."²⁰

The episode of August 22 was followed by attacks on Israeli territory that resulted in eleven deaths and nine injuries. Lt. Gen. Burns had no question that these acts of sabotage and ambush were the work of organized and well-trained groups. Investigations by UN military observers tended to support this view. But Burns concluded in his report to the Security Council that "in my view the Mixed Armistice Commission may be unable to determine which of the parties was responsible for beginning the action."²¹ Without such a remedy Israel was tempted to resume reprisals.

During the night of August 31/September 1, Israeli forces launched their biggest retaliatory operation since the Gaza raid, attacking the police station at Khan Yunis (in the southern part of the strip) where an Egyptian command post was garrisoned. Thirty-six Egyptians were killed. The operation was particularly humiliating to Nasser. The IDF simply drove down the main road from the border, fought its way into the police station, blew it up, and drove off. (Israel claimed the target was selected because fedayeen attacks were directed from it, though Burns disputed this as unsubstantiated.)²²

The raid accelerated efforts to bring about a truce. Israel would not accept a cease-fire unless Egypt admitted responsibility for the fedayeen attacks out of Gaza and guaranteed immediate cessation of all hostile acts. Byroade, after talking with the Egyptian army chief Gen. Abd el-Hakim Amer, remained convinced that Egypt was doing everything it could to bridle the fedayeen and observe a cease-fire (though later Amer admitted there was neither a way Egypt could completely control the commandos and refugees nor could Cairo take public responsibility for doing so). On September 4, both sides accepted Burns's terms for a ceasefire.

The cease-fire held, though few believed the fedayeen attacks would be curtailed. Burns reported to the Security Council that a repetition of the incidents of August could be avoided only if the Egyptian and Israeli armed forces were separated by a physical barrier along the

demarcation line, with outposts and patrols kept at least 500 meters (550 yards) behind it. The Security Council on September 8 adopted a Western-sponsored resolution noting that both sides had accepted an unconditional ceasefire and called on both to desist from further violence, cooperate with UNTSO in preserving order and tranquillity in the area, and respect the right of UN observers to freedom of movement in carrying out their assignments. Burns's proposals for measures to stabilize the border were endorsed. Israel was censured only indirectly for Khan Yunis, as was Egypt for mine-laying and the killings in Israel. The relatively mild rebuke was no doubt due to "the aversion which the *fedayeen campaign* had excited and the feeling that Egypt was as much to blame as the Israelis for the breakdown of the negotiations on border security." Brian Urquhart summed up the UN's predicament:

The UNTSO machinery was powerless to give any effective protection against this type of clandestine and ostensibly unofficial activity. Israel's massive reprisals, on the other hand, were a clear violation of the clause in the armistice agreements forbidding hostile acts against the other party, and were almost invariably condemned by the Security Council. This anomaly added to Israel's increasing embitterment with the UN.²³

[El Auja and the Sinai Frontier](#)

Following the Security Council meeting, the Gaza front quieted down and the scene of confrontation shifted to the Israel-Sinai frontier. On September 21, over the strong protests of Hammarskjöld and Burns, Israel occupied the demilitarized zone of EI Auja—Nitzana to the Israelis—the strategic key to both the Negev and Sinai. (Unlike the demilitarized zone on the Syrian front, where the conflict and incidents that came before the MAC centered on economic as well as security concerns, EI Auja's importance derived exclusively from its strategic locale at the junction of roads from the Sinai [forming a triangle with Abu Aweigila and El Quseima] and from Beersheba.) (See [Map 4.1](#).)

An Israeli military unit attacked the Egyptian detachment, which was maintained in the zone to guard the EIMAC offices there pursuant to a 1949 agreement. Two Egyptian soldiers were wounded and the rest driven out of the zone. Israel was thus seen as challenging UNTSO arrangements as well as asserting sovereign rights in the zone. Israel then established a "defensive position" in the zone consisting of some fifty to seventy men, which the Israeli Foreign Ministry explained was needed because of the continued existence of two Egyptian checkpoints shown by a survey to be within Israeli territory in the zone. Israel was determined to maintain the "defensive position" until the two Egyptian checkpoints were removed. Burns described the Israeli action as a "flagrant violation" of the armistice agreement and demanded immediate withdrawal of the military unit. At the same time, the EIMAC chairman called on Egypt to withdraw the two checkpoints and cooperate in the survey.²⁴ Neither side complied.

The status of EI Auja remained a festering issue right up to the Suez War the next year. Although at Rhodes EI Auja was not a crucial point of difference (unlike control of Beersheba, which at one time threatened the breakdown of the armistice negotiations), Israel adamantly opposed a



"UN neutral zone" arrangement for El Auja, and the Egyptians acquiesced.²⁵ In the end, the armistice agreement in Articles VII and VIII defined El Auja and vicinity as a demilitarized zone from which the forces of both sides would be excluded. On their side of the frontier, Egyptian defensive forces, limited in size and arms, were to be deployed no closer than a line from El Arish to Abu Aweigila to El Quseima, and Israeli forces were similarly restricted to a defensive line east of El Auja.

As in the demilitarized zone on the Syrian front, Israel was allowed to carry on civilian activities and maintain local police, but the provision was ambiguous and restrictions unclear. As UNTSO perceived it, Israeli policy was to test the limits, and it appeared bent on taking full possession of the strategic area. In September 1953, according to evidence before EIMAC, Israel drove out a group of bedouins and their cattle so as to establish in the zone a kibbutz later named Ketsiot.

While Cairo continued to dispute its rights in El Auja, Israel consolidated its position there and was not physically challenged. All this situation changed in the summer of 1955 when Cairo set up checkpoints in the vicinity of the roads to Rafah, Abu Aweigila, and El Quseima. Israeli patrols and Egyptian soldiers exchanged fire. UNTSO attempted to remove pretexts for firing at suspected border-crossers by marking the international frontier (IF) at El Auja, but Egypt protested that such markings would be tacit recognition that the demilitarized zone was part of Israeli territory. Egypt also revived the complaint about the civil police in the kibbutz before EIMAC, claiming they were a paramilitary force, contrary to provisions in the armistice agreement. Israel, in turn, charged that the Egyptian checkpoints were military positions not allowed in the "defensive" area west of the zone. The situation was ripe for the Israeli move of September 21 and the eviction of the Egyptian detachment from the zone.

Within days, the confrontation around El Auja escalated. An Egyptian unit attacked an Israeli police post near Bir Ain (located in the zone south of El Auja and near the frontier). It captured two prisoners, who were revealed on interrogation to be soldiers, not policemen. Burns had by this time concluded that the trouble at El Auja would go on so long as Ketsiot was maintained because it constituted a military foothold in the demilitarized zone, making conflicts inevitable. He was nonetheless disturbed by the Egyptian attack on Bir Ain as a breach of a promise to him that quiet would be maintained while he was on consultation in New York. The documentary evidence suggests that the Bir Ain operation was not intended by Cairo to spark a new round. Rather, the operation appeared to be following a two-track policy: military challenge to Israeli patrols on the frontier so as not to appear to concede El Auja to Israel, along with a diplomacy aimed at maintaining the status quo. Egypt at the time wanted a tacit understanding that, although it did not consent to the presence of the kibbutz and its "civil police," it would not press the point so long as its own checkpoints and military dispositions at the western edge of the zone were not openly challenged.

Such a tacit arrangement was not acceptable to the United Nations, which feared it would erode the armistice and in any case was unstable. Its fears were soon realized. The chairman of the EIMAC reported to UNTSO that forces in Egyptian positions along the border of the DMZ had been strengthened, while Israel moved additional troops into the zone and adjacent areas. Burns asked both sides to withdraw simultaneously, without success. As reported by the U.S. consul general in Jerusalem, Burns judged the situation "serious," though as a "favorable symptom" he noted that Israel was now allowing the UN military observers to move freely about the area, while cautioning them about mines.²⁶ Within a month, two large-scale Israeli operations

were launched. In a surprise night attack on a border police station at Kuntilla (south of El Auja) on October 28, ten Egyptian soldiers were killed, several wounded, and twenty-nine taken prisoner. U.S. sources reported that Egypt was moving troops with the intention of attacking the zone. On November 2 Israel then attacked Egyptian positions at El Sabha on the zone's western border, near Ketsiot. The largest Israeli military operation since 1948, the attack on El Sabha by a battalion-strength force of paratroopers and elements of the Golani infantry brigade all but destroyed the defending Egyptian battalion. Fifty of the defenders were killed and fifty taken prisoners. Unlike Qibya or Gaza, which were aimed more at deterrence, these raids were designed to inflict military damage, signaling a deliberate escalation in the level and form of fighting.

To Burns the escalation of violence at El Auja had seriously heightened tension, particularly in light of the recent Czech arms deal. He requested immediate measures "to remedy the dangerous state of affairs." Within days of the El Sabha incident Burns got Western backing for a plan to mark the international frontier along the extent of the Auja zone. Egypt would withdraw to the checkpoints encroaching on the zone; and Israel would pull back all troops from it as well as any civilian police that exceeded the number there before September 26, the date of the Bir Ain raid. The necessary diplomatic backing for this plan was slow in coming, and Burns undertook some shuttle diplomacy of his own in visits to Ben Gurion and Nasser.²⁷

Burns's visit to Jerusalem on November 9 (just days after Ben Gurion resumed the prime ministership as head of a coalition government in which Sharett served as foreign minister) exposed the constraints under which the United Nations was operating. Ben Gurion reviewed Israel's policy along lines taken in the Knesset days earlier: Israel wanted peace with Egypt, and if not peace then, as a minimum, strict adherence to the armistice agreement, which meant an end to belligerence in all its forms. He was ready to meet with Nasser at any time to discuss peace or an improvement in relations based on the armistice.

In line with the narrower UN mandate, Burns preferred to focus on those breaches in the cease-fire that threatened a breakdown of the armistice regime. In particular, he deplored the attacks on the Egyptians in the Auja area by an Israeli force that "had no right to be there" in the first place. Ben Gurion sounded a theme to be heard repeatedly in UN-Israel debate on the responsibility of peacekeepers: When the UN proved unable to get the Egyptians to vacate he had to authorize military action.

Burns did not wish to pursue Ben Gurion's proposal for peace talks with Nasser; this was not his brief. He ventured to observe, however, that what stood between Israel and the Arab states was a settlement of the refugee problem. Stressing his narrower mandate, Burns declared that "it was not my business to negotiate peace" but only to try to see that Israel and the surrounding Arab states observed the provisions of the armistice agreements. And if these agreements broke down, his mandate was to restore the cease-fire ordered by the Security Council in July 1948 as a "sort of second line of defence." UNTSO's agenda was to restore quiet on the frontier by pressing for implementation of the secretary general's "three points."

Burns found no more cooperation in Cairo the next day. The foreign minister and the head of the army, Maj. Gen. Abd el-Hakim Amer, first protested the diplomatic pressure from Western capitals and then declared Egypt could not accept the three points while the "civil police" remained in the DMZ. Amer was frank about the strategic problem. If the Gaza Strip was to be defended, the main body of the force to counter an Israeli attack would have to be deployed at El Arish-Rafah, with extension southward along the Auja frontier to meet any thrust from Beersheba. Negotiations on the three points went on for nearly a month. Sharett pressed Burns

for a public statement by Cairo that it would order a complete cease-fire to include fedayeen action. As this was not forthcoming, the situation remained "tense and frustrating."²⁸ UNTSO's remedy remained the separation of forces. So Burns and the UN Secretariat began to look into the possibilities of an interposing force. Conditions for an early settlement on the most important Arab-Israeli frontier did not exist, and Bunche and Burns realized that the circumstances required more assertive "peacekeeping" and that the armistice lines could not be stabilized with buffers and barriers policed by observers.

Meanwhile, the parties were beginning to conclude that such a thirdparty involvement could interfere with their security needs. Frontier security and the curbing of fedayeen raids were just part of a larger problem. Ben Gurion and Dayan thought the larger threat was a mounting Arab belligerence, led by a Nasserite Egypt, aimed at undoing Israel's gains in the defeat of 1948. The UNTSO operation and the armistice machinery were of marginal use in confronting this threat. The armistice regime was becoming irrelevant.

On a visit to Paris in October, where he was shopping for AMX tanks and Mystère fighters to counter the Egyptian armor and MG-15s, Dayan told the French chief of staff, General Augustin Guillaume, that Nasser aspired to hegemony in the Arab world by a "solution to the Palestine problem, that is, the destruction of Israel ." In the Israeli calculus, the Czech arms deal was part of Nasser's larger scheme to transform the balance of power. Moreover, Washington had persistently denied its request for U.S. arms and a security guarantee. On October 23, Ben Gurion, then minister of defense, explained to Dayan the basic premises of Israel's security policy: neither to seek preventive war nor to follow a policy of suicide. If the Arabs fail to observe the armistice agreements, "we will have to arrange things." Matters could be brought to a point of collision over freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and keeping the shipping lanes open to Elath. In such cases, Israel would have to capture the straits and be prepared for general war.²⁹

Ben Gurion Reassesses the Armistice

On November 2, 1955, Ben Gurion took control of the cabinet. The Kuntilla and Sabha operations and the steps taken to strengthen Israel's hold on the El Auja area, however, did not mean Israel had opted for war against Egypt. Ben Gurion still shared Sharett's hope that Israel's basic integrity could be secured by U.S. arms and security guarantees. He also had to take account of international realities. Both London and Washington were pressing Israel to pursue a less assertive policy and denied its repeated requests for arms. The Eisenhower administration clearly told Israel that it could not expect a favorable answer if it refused to cooperate in the Alpha operation, launched by Washington and London at the beginning of the year. There was even a possibility of British intervention on the side of Egypt should Israel strike at a time when Britain still hoped for a favorable outcome of the Suez Canal matter. Moreover, Ben Gurion had serious misgivings about the lasting efficacy of preventive war, which he was to emphasize in the Knesset in January and which, in any case, was opposed by his cabinet.

The Knesset debates, which continued into 1956, reflected at one and the same time a national anxiety about war and growing pressure on the government to meet Egypt's challenge. So the relatively large military operations from August to November 1955 were designed not to retaliate for the border harassments but to deter Egypt from proceeding with the escalation of belligerent

acts more generally. Both Ben Gurion and Dayan, Shimshoni observed, believed in the "upward convertibility of deterrence," that intensification of local retaliatory acts could help to deter a larger war.³⁰

In a major speech on security policy in the Knesset on January 2, 1956, Ben Gurion stressed that though Israel's desire for peace had not been matched by the Arab states, Egypt's challenge could be met without war. There was imminent danger of attack by Egypt, but it would be "a serious error if we assume that war against us is unavoidable and predestined." The cabinet was "firmly opposed to a war initiated by us" and the maintenance of peace was preferable even to victory in war. A victory could lead to a second and third round, and "there is no end to the business."

Ben Gurion drew two policy conclusions that were to dominate Israel's security policy for the next ten months. First, the only way to prevent war, in light of Cairo's qualitative and quantitative arms superiority, was the "speedy supply of defensive arms to Israel" of the same kinds and quality as those being supplied the Egyptian air, land, and sea forces. The other was that the armistice regime could not survive on a selective basis: All provisions had to be observed or Israel would not be bound by provisions that it judged impaired its security.

Israel was ready to cooperate with the UN peacekeepers as a first resort but was prepared to take other measures if it proved ineffective. Israel had no wish and no right to violate frontiers, said Ben Gurion, and "to contravene the obligations which we have accepted vis-à-vis the United Nations and the Armistice Agreements." But it also will not "tolerate acts of hostility against the lives of Israel's citizens and against the security of the State and the integrity of its frontiers." In case of attack against the security of its citizens or violation of its borders, "we appeal first of all to the United Nations observers to try and rectify the situation; we give them all the time required for this purpose. If they do not succeed—whether because of lack of power or lack of will—we consider it our duty to use the most effective means for the defence of the lives of our citizens and the security of our frontiers." In Ben Gurion's version, Israel had agreed to accept an absolute cease-fire, secured by the UN secretary general's proposals presented to both sides in early November. But Burns had returned from Cairo in December without having received from Egypt reciprocal commitments.³¹

To both Ben Gurion and Sharett, the UNTSO measures for solidifying the cease-fire could not ensure quiet on the border for long, let alone contain the Nasserite threat. Security demanded redressing the arms balance, reinforced by a security guarantee—and the key to both lay in Washington. Israeli diplomacy focused on turning around U.S. policy by convincing Dulles that Nasser was not only a menace to Israel and regional stability, but that by aligning himself with Moscow (on whom he was becoming increasingly dependent), Nasser had emerged as the spearhead of anti-Western forces in the area. In periodic exchanges with Dulles and senior State Department officials throughout 1955 and 1956, Israeli ambassador Abba Eban (usually in the company of embassy minister Reuven Shiloah, who brought with him unique defense and intelligence expertise) pressed for arms deliveries and for a security guarantee to counterbalance the Western alignment with Iraq through the Baghdad Pact. A major campaign to acquire U.S. arms was put into high gear in November after formation of the new Ben Gurion government, with intensified lobbying through Congress and Jewish leaders and organizations. And through the summer of 1956 every level of the Israeli government was preoccupied with the matter.

Early in 1956 Eban was instructed to accelerate his diplomacy, focusing on overcoming the delay in acquiring U.S. arms; the security guarantee was for the time considered secondary. Frustration over the closed door Israel encountered in Washington led to a growing mood of

despair and in the end a greater readiness to join France and Britain in the Suez operation in the fall. In exchanges with Dulles and Assistant Secretary of State George V. Allen in February, Eban stressed that the arms imbalance that would result from the Soviet bloc arms deal with Egypt had increased the danger of war.

It was not realistic for Israel to rely on the United Nations. The possibility of organizing a UN peacekeeping force or expanding UNTSO had been raised by Burns and briefly considered in Washington and London but this was very unlikely to materialize. A stronger UN presence, in any event, could not be considered a substitute for Israel's own strength. Besides, the Arabs enjoyed a one-way street in the UN because they could count on Soviet support there. Israel had the right under Article 51 of the UN Charter to defend itself.³²

Eban argued this brief repeatedly over the next five months. Essentially, he was voicing Israel's continuing concerns about the Egypt-USSR arms deal, which Assistant Secretary Allen had confirmed on his return from Cairo in October 1955. Allen had attempted to dissuade Nasser from consummating the Czech arms deal and to obtain Egyptian cooperation in advancing an Arab-Israeli settlement. He had to admit to Eban that his efforts had been unsuccessful: The arms deal was going through, and Nasser had become a "man on horseback" with the Arabs. Eban declared that Allen's account made "Israel's anxiety more profound" and that Israel must now invoke the Western powers' long-declared policy to maintain a balance of power in the area and to "assure her that she would not be overtaken in the quest for arms."³³

Dulles's main message in the months to come, however, was that a peaceful solution meant working through the United Nations and with-holding arms. There was no future for Israel "if it continued indefinitely as an embattled state surrounded by hostile forces. Israel had no future without a settlement with its neighbors."³⁴

Washington's policy right up to the Suez War, both on the war danger and Israel's security predicament, was articulated by Dulles in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 24, 1956. As the *New York Times* reported, the secretary of state "conceded not an inch" to criticism of the administration's conduct of Middle East affairs. Although not "excluding] the possibility" of arms sales to the region (eighteen tanks had been cleared for shipment to Saudi Arabia despite substantial congressional opposition), Dulles made it plain there was no foreseeable intention to supply weapons to Israel. Because of its much smaller size and population, Dulles argued, Israel "could not win an arms race against the Arabs having access to Soviet bloc stocks." Its hope lay in collective security, the secretary testified, not acquisition of arms.³⁵

President Eisenhower agreed, as was evident from his remarks to the press on March 7. The answer to Israel's predicament did not lie in the acquisition of arms, but in "urgent and early action" by the United Nations to pacify the Middle East. Although the president did not say what kind of UN action he meant, State Department officials "assumed" he had in mind reinforcing the Burns measures for border stabilization and calling on the Security Council to intervene.³⁶

The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv reported that the president's remarks had deepened the mood of despair in both the government and the general public. They were seen as an especially serious blow to Ben Gurion, who had long credited the president with a particular regard for Israel. (General Eisenhower, as supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe, had facilitated the departure of Jews from the U.S. zone in Germany over British objections.) Ben Gurion had been pressing for an "immediate yes or no answer" to the arms request. If denied, immediate, painful decisions would have to be taken by Israel. The embassy believed that although Ben Gurion had ruled out preventive war, he could be expected to react forcefully to any aggression and was

prepared to face the consequences of general hostilities.³⁷

Ben Gurion wrote to President Eisenhower on March 16 with an "impassioned appeal" for arms, but on Dulles's recommendation the response was handled through the State Department. Several more approaches were made to the department underscoring the Israeli leader's belief that a conflict was inevitable by early summer and the only preventive measure was the provision of air arms to Israel. Egyptian air superiority terrorized Israel's civilians and neutralized its ground forces.³⁸

To U.S. ambassador Lawson on April 5, Sharett voiced Israel's "profound shock and discouragement" at Washington's evasive and lukewarm response. The United States could prove its good faith now only by encouraging other suppliers of arms, particularly Canada and Italy, to go ahead with the sale of F-86 fighter planes to Israel.³⁹ Sharett's demarche had little impact. When he left office three months later Israel was still vainly seeking U.S. help in obtaining the F-86s from Canada.

Operation Alpha

Washington remained implacable in the face of persistent Israeli appeals for arms and a U.S. security guarantee. U.S. policy cannot be explained simply in terms of a disparity in U.S. and Israeli regional interests. The recently published diplomatic record reveals a larger policy concern of the Eisenhower administration: Giving in to Israeli demands could undermine the Alpha operation, a grand design in peacemaking initiated toward the end of 1954.

Operation Alpha was the code word for the highly confidential diplomatic exchanges, extending throughout 1955 and well into 1956, which became the centerpiece of Washington's policy on the Arab-Israeli dispute. The Eisenhower administration had invested too much in the operation to jeopardize its chances of success by acceding to Israeli requests for arms. Alpha was designed to multilateralize any security guarantee and to offer it as a major inducement for Israel's acceptance of a settlement package.

At the core of the strategy was the assumption that Nasser had to be appeased if he was to be kept out of the Soviet orbit. Apart from specific inducements, such as financial aid in construction of the Aswan High Dam and the promise of acquiring a slice of the Negev as a land bridge to Jordan, Nasser was assured that his leadership in the region was favored and that it was Washington's policy to "deflate" Israel. These blandishments were not considered to be against Israel's best interests. As the new year (1955) began, the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv reported that the Israeli government "believes rapprochement with Egypt [a] prerequisite to general Arab-Israel settlement." Sharett was seen to accept as axiomatic that Egypt was the key to any peaceful settlement. At the same time, Israeli leaders were skeptical both of Nasser's true intentions and of his ability to confront domestic and pan-Arab pressures—a sine qua non for negotiating an agreeable settlement with Jerusalem.⁴⁰

The pivotal elements of the plan were to be agreement on permanent recognized boundaries, repatriation and resettlement of refugees, and security assurances. On *boundaries*, demilitarized zones were to be divided, readjustments made in the armistice lines, and Egypt given a land bridge across the Negev, linking it to Jordan and thus to other Arab states. The *refugee* problem was to be solved by substantial repatriation and resettlement in the lower Jordan valley under the Jordan valley unified development agreement then being negotiated by Ambassador Eric

Johnston. Financing would be provided through compensation paid by Israel, the release of UNRWA funds, and Western government and private contributions. *Security assurances* would be provided Israel, then "suffering from a severe feeling of isolation," as a "prize" to be won through "complete cooperation" with the United States and Britain in concessions of territory and repatriation of refugees. Because any peaceful settlement held "little attraction" for the Arabs (particularly an ascendant Egypt—a premise preached with particular vigor by the British Foreign Office throughout the Alpha process), inducements would have to be generous. Apart from acquiring the Negev corridor, credit would be extended for the purchase of arms under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) and for other purposes, which later came to embrace assistance with construction of the Aswan Dam and with marketing cotton.

Parallel to this grand initiative, and integrated in the diplomatic strategy, was the Johnston plan for unified development of the Jordan valley, negotiation on which was already under way. Through 1955, these initiatives proceeded in tandem and were coordinated. By the end of January, Johnston reported that he hoped to get agreement in a forthcoming round among the riparian states of the Jordan watershed for water sharing, storage facilities, and enforcement guarantees, which would require some form of international control. (Israel was particularly sensitive over their sovereignty, he told the U.S. and British representatives gathered in Washington to plan Alpha, and it did not like the idea of an international agency exercising control over installations in Israeli territory.) Somewhat optimistically, he reported an Arab tentative agreement on water allocation and storage. Even Syria exhibited "genuine interest" in a workable solution for water sharing, though agreement at the technical level was subject to political decision. At this stage, the Johnston mission promised to reinforce the Alpha venture (especially as a resource to support refugee resettlement and as a model of Arab-Israeli cooperation on a vital interest they shared). Its collapse the following year had a dampening effect on Alpha's prospects.⁴¹

The secondary role of the UN in Operation Alpha was evident in the ten-page memorandum prepared by Francis Russell, Dulles's special assistant charged with managing Alpha. The United Nations was given only scant mention. It would be involved in the "machinery of the settlement, for example in supervision of frontiers and Holy Places." The UN should "take note" of the settlement at some stage, perhaps by accepting a Palestine Conciliation Commission report on it! But the U.S. and UK guarantees "would have to provide for their execution independent of UN action."⁴² Neither a reference to the future of UNTSO was contained at this stage nor was any consideration given to the future of the armistice regime once a settlement was achieved.

Initial diplomatic probes during the first half of 1955, including a visit by British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden to Cairo at the end of February, brought skeptical and unforthcoming responses from Nasser and Sharett. Tension along the Gaza border and flare-ups along the Sinai frontier diverted diplomatic efforts for a time, and by June the prospects were not promising. The U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv was not sanguine that Israel could be persuaded to accept up to 150,000 refugees or make the territorial sacrifices contemplated in the plan.⁴³ In addition, Israel did not believe that Nasser could be induced to abandon his regional ambitions. From Cairo, Byroade reported on a lengthy and "disturbing" conversation with the Egyptian president on June 9 and saw little sign that Egypt would be receptive to Alpha.⁴⁴

By the end of July, Dulles was convinced that the scenario had to be altered. To resuscitate interest in the Alpha initiative and, above all, prod Egypt and Israel into serious negotiations, he decided to go public. Speaking with the president's authority, he unveiled the key features of the Alpha plan at a Council on Foreign Relations luncheon in New York on August 26, as noted

earlier. A settlement was urgent, he admonished Israel and Egypt, and would require concessions on refugees, significant boundary adjustments, without which no security guarantees would be realistic, and generous economic incentives to Egypt.

The reaction from Israel and the Arab states during the next six months ranged from cautious to suspicious. Sharett warned of the danger of simplifying the problem of refugee absorption and had serious misgivings about linking security guarantees to territorial concessions. If Israel were asked to make concessions on territory it "was unable to offer," then "purely negative results" could be expected.⁴⁵ Sharett was particularly irked by the secretary's reference to "territory now occupied by Israel," which might give the Arabs false hopes that Israel was not here to stay.⁴⁶

If anything, Israeli misgivings grew when the State Department at year's end disclosed further details about the Alpha plan in an attempt to revive the initiative. Francis B. Russell stressed to the Israeli embassy in Washington that Egypt would not consider a settlement unless arrangements were made to cede part of the Negev.⁴⁷ The idea was anathema to the Israeli government, which reaffirmed that the make-or-break issue was the "unilateral territorial sacrifice" demanded of Israel. In a letter to Dulles in December, Sharett declared that Israel could not accept amputating itself or cutting itself in two by severing Elath from its main body. As for refugees, the solution lay in resettlement in Arab lands. Israel could not, in addition to the burdens of compensation and reuniting separated families, undertake to settle tens of thousands of Arab families in Israel.⁴⁸

Earlier Washington had left no doubt that it was not inclined to engage in bargaining about particulars. Sharett was told that the United States "does not have any plan" for an Arab-Israeli settlement, and Sharett would not be given any blueprint if he visited Washington for clarification. Instead, the United States hoped that leaders of both sides would study the issues and at an early date be prepared to identify the "concessions and contributions" they were willing to make toward a settlement. In particular, the message to Israel was that it formulate *its* position on the "numerous and complex" issues raised.⁴⁹

The department's suggestion that Israel open the bidding was in line with the advice Byroade gave Washington after sounding out Nasser. Byroade reported that Nasser's reaction to Dulles's statement was "somewhat less satisfactory than had [been] hoped." His principal points of concern were about refugees and territory. Arabs would find it difficult to accept the idea that the refugees would be scattered in many separate places. In a long discussion about the Negev, Nasser referred repeatedly to Ben Gurion's plans for settling two million additional Jewish immigrants there. (Byroade assured him this was impracticable because of the water situation.) The U.S. ambassador cautioned against reacting to the Dulles statement "prior to real analysis." Nasser should note that Dulles had "refused Israel's primary aim" of obtaining a "security guarantee of her present borders," which opened opportunities for Egypt.⁵⁰

The reaction in other Arab states was no more enthusiastic than in Egypt. Jordan was "cautious," and Prime Minister Pasha Mufti Said received it "with uncertainty and disappointment." Jordan, he felt, now had to reject Johnston's water-sharing proposals because they were tied to a political settlement. From Jidda, U.S. ambassador George E. Wadsworth found the reaction of Prince Faisal (prime minister and foreign minister) negative and bitter. "It is impossible for Jews and Arabs to live side by side as neighbors, that is as a Jewish State among Arab States," he fumed. The Arab world could accept them as individuals but never forget or accept the injustice of establishing a Jewish state "in their land."⁵¹

From Cairo, Byroade urged that the Arab states not be required to take a public position on the secretary's speech and advised a return to the highly secret discussions. He was skeptical of

achieving an Arab-Israeli settlement in isolation from other Middle East matters, thus giving the Alpha operation the character of "final registration" of the Arab "defeat" by Israel. An overall package deal was needed, addressing U.S. policy in the Middle East as a whole and the use of U.S. military and economic aid resources. Byroade agreed with Fawzi that the "next move should be with Israel," asking it to indicate the concessions it was prepared to make. The crux was to get a concession on the Negev.⁵²

Cairo-Moscow Arms Deal

Within days, however, whatever hopes Washington and London may have harbored about moving forward on the Alpha operation were deflated with the news that Egypt was accepting a Soviet offer of arms, described as "almost embarrassing in size," and that a military mission was on its way to Moscow. Byroade was instructed to advise the Egyptian government that "consummation of [the] agreement ... would create [a] most serious public reaction in the U.S. and greatly complicate our ability to cooperate." The next day, Dulles warned Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov in New York (where both were attending the UN General Assembly session) that "this action would be a disturbing element at a time when the U.S. is trying to keep a balance between the Israelis and Arabs" and that political repercussions were likely if the present balance of power in the area were to change. As Dulles later reported to the president, his "rough" exchange with the Soviet foreign minister had confirmed the news of the arms deal. The Soviets were giving a "massive lot of arms" to the Egyptians, theoretically as a commercial trade for cotton. He thought the Israelis will now "want to attack first because they can lick them easily."⁵³

Dulles proposed to respond to Nasser with a strongly worded warning reminding him of U.S. willingness to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam. With respect to furnishing arms, he promised Nasser that if he cooperated in "my August 26 effort to prevent an early outbreak of hostilities or a disastrous arms race in the area," arrangements could still be made to facilitate Egypt's purchase of arms in the United States.⁵⁴

Dulles's sharp message to Nasser was watered down in the State Department. The letter that Assistant Secretary of State George Allen carried to Cairo and read to Nasser on October 1 was a polite appeal to consider the seriousness with which the United States would view the arms transaction and "the consequent difficulty of preventing it from marring the existing good relations between our two peoples." Assuring Allen he was "even more concerned to prevent Communist activity through military technicians than Secretary Dulles," Nasser reviewed his unsuccessful three-year effort to obtain military equipment for the army. The exchange made it dear, however, that Nasser had in no way been convinced by Dulles's arguments to cooperate in advancing the Alpha negotiations.⁵⁵

When Allen and Byroade saw Nasser again two days later there was no sign of softening in his attitude. Despite a conscious effort on the part of the U.S. diplomats not to react "emotionally to the Czechoslovak arms deal," Nasser was openly anti-American. The previous day, in a public speech, he had accused the United States of intriguing to keep Egypt weak and to strengthen Israel and said the United States, Britain, and France had spread a "big lie" about him. Allen remonstrated with him, but Nasser did not back down. Although saying he was ready to relax tensions in the area, the Negev "constituted partition of Arab lands." The initiative therefore rested with Israel. The secretary's August 26 proposals were favorable to Israel since the only

benefit to Arabs might be some minor adjustment of frontiers.⁵⁶

In Israel, meanwhile, there was increasing anxiety about Egypt's demands for territorial concessions in the Negev. Sharett declared that Israel "will not sacrifice its continuity to give Arabs continuity." Of more immediate concern were press reports that the United States was planning to trump the Soviet arms deal by "offering [Nasser] large quantities of American arms on easy terms." If the Soviet-Egyptian arrangement was carried through, Eban told Assistant Secretary Allen during a lengthy conversation on Allen's trip to Cairo, Israel had no choice but to request sufficient arms from the West to maintain the balance of power. Several days earlier Eban called on the secretary of state and cautioned that the United States should not attempt to prevent the deal by appeasement, that is, giving arms to Egypt; the West should sell arms to Israel to correct the threatened imbalance; and the United States should guarantee the status quo by force. Dulles granted that the arms deal opened a "new era of mischievous activities" by Moscow in the Middle East and Africa, but he drew other conclusions. The United States had no intention of competing with Moscow in supplying arms to Egypt. Nor did Washington believe that the best way to offset the Soviet-Egyptian arms deal was to give "considerable" military equipment to Israel. Also, a U.S. security guarantee of the status quo would have an adverse effect on the Arab world as a whole. "We do not want ... [a] situation where the USSR is backing all Arabs and the U.S. is backing Israel." What about going to the United Nations? Eban replied unsurprisingly that this was unlikely to prove effective in view of the Soviet veto in the Security Council and the strength of the Soviet and Arab blocs in the General Assembly.⁵⁷

In addition to the uncertain impact of the arms deal, prospects for the Alpha operation were dimmed by a pessimistic report from Eric Johnston about Arab reluctance to face up to a definite decision on the Jordan valley plan (JVP). From Damascus, he reported on October 7 that he had encountered numerous negative arguments: The time was inappropriate because of the Gaza raid, the Dulles speech, Iraq's northern-tier alliance, and the Egyptian arms deal. All these combined to "convince Arabs that the U.S. motive in the area is Arab-Israeli peace, Israel cannot be trusted, Arabs are not as united as should be, and the U.S. opposes steps Arabs take in their own interest." Jordan wanted to accept the Johnston plan but lacked the courage to stand up for its own best interests; Syria saw itself getting all the hydroelectric power it needed from the Yarmuk plan without the "alleged embarrassing political implications" of the JVP. (In 1953, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt agreed on a plan to draw water from the Yarmuk River—a branch of the Jordan River—to irrigate the eastern banks of the lower Jordan river valley and to supply Jordan and Syria with hydroelectric power). The next day in Cairo, Johnston came away from dinner at Nasser's home with the impression that while Nasser himself continued to favor the JVP, the Egyptian leader thought the other Arab states "were not in [a] mood to accept" the plan.⁵⁸

A Dual-Track Policy

With the new year (1956) Washington embarked on a dual-track policy—to deter an arms race between Israel and Egypt while launching a special diplomatic mission headed by Robert Anderson to reactivate the flagging Alpha plan for peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Crucial to both tracks in the Dulles scheme of things was the offer of inducements to Nasser, notably Western financial assistance both directly and through the World Bank for the construction of the Aswan Dam so as to deter or at least slow down his rush into the Soviet camp.

Overshadowing the first track was the threat of an accelerated arms race and a stepped-up Israeli diplomatic and lobbying campaign to press the administration to respond favorably to the shopping list for arms submitted in November. A Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) of February 28, 1956, concluded that "virtually any shipment of U.S. arms to Israel would entail adverse effects on the U.S. position in the Arab states," in fact that it might lead to a rupture of relations. Soviet arms support for the Arabs, it concluded, had substantially increased chances of hostilities in that (a) Israel might risk or even initiate hostilities while it still enjoys military superiority, and (b) the Arabs' growing military strength may increase their militancy. Meanwhile, Eugene Black, president of the World Bank, was encountering heavy going in negotiations for the Aswan Dam loan. The Egyptians insisted on a signed loan agreement covering the entire project, while Black made it clear that the bank could not so commit itself. U.S. diplomats at the embassy in Cairo reported that Egypt feared the bank would back out later if it spent heavily on Soviet arms with a consequent debasement of its creditworthiness.⁵⁹

Francis Russell, who had been assigned the special task of exploring policy measures that might minimize the threat of hostilities between Egypt and Israel, suggested different remedies for the longer range danger inherent in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the more immediate danger that hostilities would be triggered by border tensions with Egypt and the Benot Yaacov dispute over Jordan water diversion along the line with Syria. The United Nations could not help with the long-range problem since it had no effective means of interposing between the disputants. Any lesser measures, such as creating a new "watching and reporting agency," would add little to UNTSO. Only the tripartite powers—United States, United Kingdom, and France—could hope effectively to intervene by declaring their intention to take action, both within and outside the UN, in the event of a breach of the peace.

As for the two immediate trouble spots, however, Russell concluded that the United Nations could provide remedies that the West should support. On the Egyptian-Israeli frontier, the protagonists would be prevailed upon to cooperate in implementing Burns's measures for separation of forces, stationing of UN observers within the demilitarized zone, erection of physical barriers along strategic portions of the armistice line, joint patrols along the line, direct communications between local commanders, and (in a delicate reference to the fedayeen threat) use of only regular forces in areas close to the armistice lines. Burns and his observers should also be supported in their insistence on freedom of movement and in obtaining equipment such as helicopters and communications gear to facilitate carrying out their tasks. The United States should "condition assurances and assistance to Israel on Israel's cooperation" in implementing these measures. At the other trouble spot—Benot Yaacov water diversion—the policy emphasis should also be placed on backing the authority of Burns in determining whether the water diversion works could be continued.⁶⁰

Parallel with the effort to contain tension at these trouble spots, mainly through support of the UN peacekeeping presence, the administration put its hope for progress on the longer range objectives of a mission to Nasser and Ben Gurion on which Eisenhower was sending Deputy Secretary of Defense and "personal friend" Robert B. Anderson. In his diary, the president defined Anderson's assignment as that of bringing about a "rapprochement" between Israel and Egypt, through the "frankest kind of talks with both Nasser of Egypt and Ben Gurion of Israel." If a "practicable peace treaty" —a goal more ambitious than the Alpha planners had thought possible—could be arranged, Eisenhower felt certain the necessary congressional support would be forthcoming and the arms competition contained.

At a briefing session with the president and Dulles, Anderson was advised to approach his

mission in the larger context of Egypt's regional rivalry with Iraq and of the bargaining chips available to the United States. Nasser would be willing to pay a price to get U.S. support in limiting the Baghdad Pact to its present membership (Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and the UK) so he could maintain Egypt's domination of the rest of the Arab world, obtain U.S. cooperation in selling his cotton—"where we could either destroy or help Egypt's market," Dulles noted—and in aiding the Aswan Dam as well as in building a canal parallel to the Suez Canal, to be financed by the oil companies. Egypt must take the lead in persuading Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon to accept the Johnston plan for sharing of Jordan waters and could count on the United States contributing large sums to indemnify and resettle the Arab refugees. As for the Israelis, their position had been "completely altered" by the entry of the Soviets into the picture. Until now, Israel had been strong and "somewhat arrogant," relying on its military superiority. With Soviet arms now available to the Arabs, 40 million Arabs could soon outgun 1.5 million Israelis. Israel must realize that now is its best time to negotiate a settlement while it still had military superiority. Anderson was given what amounted to an open-ended mandate.⁶¹

Anderson's talks with Nasser and Ben Gurion during the next two months encountered the same suspicions and reservations as had the Alpha mediators, who had offered the same package of inducements and admonitions. Both Egypt and Israel initially accepted the U.S. initiative out of tactical considerations but, Touval noted, both sides had other priorities and agendas. Nasser wanted to make a gesture that would mollify U.S. anger at the Soviet arms deal and sustain U.S. and British support for his regime but kept insisting he needed time to bring the other Arab states along. Israel continued to harbor the same reservations and anxieties about concessions on territory and refugees as it had during the Alpha negotiations. Above all, as Touval pointed out, "Sharett's initial reaction was one of apprehension that the American response to Israel's request for arms would now hinge on the fortunes of this mediation attempt." A summary rejection of the renewed U.S. initiative "would have damaged American-Israeli relations and rendered American agreement to supply Israel with weapons even less likely."⁶²

In the end Anderson's mission foundered within two months over the deep-seated distrust and irreconcilable differences of the two countries. Israel's concern over its security as it saw the balance of power shifting in Egypt's favor overshadowed all other considerations, while uppermost in Nasser's mind was the impact of the Baghdad Pact on his position in the Arab world.⁶³

Although Anderson pressed on with his mission for another two months, it was clear by the end of January that the Alpha operation would have to be shelved in favor of diplomacy concentrating on the more immediate concern of containing border troubles and preventing the outbreak of hostilities. As Touval surmised, even without access to the classified record, "Anderson's negotiations became intimately linked with the delay in responding to Israel's request for weapons to balance the arms Egypt was receiving from the Soviet bloc."⁶⁴ A positive U.S. reply could not be expected as long as negotiations continued for fear of angering Egypt and upsetting the talks.

By the end of March, Dulles confessed to the Israeli ambassador that the "negative results" of the Anderson mission were leading Washington to reexamine its policies. The two-track policy was to be continued, but the effort to contain tensions and avert an outbreak of hostilities would now displace the long-range objective of working for an Arab-Israeli settlement as the primary concern of U.S. policy. And, this largely explains the renewed emphasis in U.S. policy on enlisting the UN to damp down crises and enforce the armistice.⁶⁵

Turning Point in U.S. Policy: March 28, 1956

The turning point in U.S. policy can be precisely dated. Decisions taken in Washington on March 28, 1956, signaled the effective end of both the Anderson and Johnston missions as well as the initial determination to withdraw support for the Aswan Dam and for Nasser more generally. A reexamination of U.S. policy in the Near East had been undertaken earlier in the month, the first draft of a staff memorandum reaching Dulles's desk on March 14.

U.S. policy over the past three years, the memorandum noted, had followed three lines—political, economic, and military. The political track was marked by a search for an Arab-Israeli settlement as set forth in the secretary's August 26 speech, which so far had met with no success. Both sides had proved difficult, but the Egyptians had been the main stumbling block in recent weeks. The economic track consisted both of small technical assistance and economic development programs for selected Arab states and Israel, averaging \$75 million annually, and U.S. readiness to support regional development projects, notably the Johnston plan for harnessing the Jordan River and the Egyptian plan for construction of the Aswan Dam. The military track encompassed both (1) support for the so-called northern tier "collective security" arrangement (that is, the Baghdad Pact), which the United States had not joined primarily to appease Egypt and Israel, and (2) minor arms sales to the Arab states and Israel. Overall, the United States had looked to Nasser's Egypt to take the lead in solving the region's problems, but the Arab leader's behavior had been disappointing. Nasser had failed to move toward settlement with Israel, was not mobilizing Arab support for the Johnston plan, had lined up Syria and Saudi Arabia against the Baghdad Pact, set aside the U.S. offer of arms (choosing to deal with Czechoslovakia instead), and was leveling accusations against the United States and other Western nations to stir up resentment against them. There was, consequently, "little likelihood the U.S. will be able to work with Nasser in the foreseeable future."

The recommended plan of action was to take certain punitive measures against Egypt unless Nasser became more cooperative. These might include "delays" in assistance for the Aswan High Dam (ultimately leading to withdrawal of U.S. support), shipments of P.L. 480 wheat to Egypt, and issuance of export licenses for arms shipments. Also envisioned was a slowdown of the British troop withdrawal from Suez while it maintained its treaty relationship with Jordan. Hostile Egyptian broadcasts could also be jammed.⁶⁶

As approved by Dulles and presented to the president on March 28, the final recommendations were even more punitive and amplified the range of possible actions against Nasser so as to supplant his leadership position in the Arab world. Although the United States would not adhere to the Baghdad Pact, it would participate more directly in military discussions, and the United States and Great Britain would undertake certain programs in other countries in the area so as "to enhance their position and reduce Egyptian influence." Negotiations would be initiated to extend aid to the Sudan and Ethiopia and to work out "cooperative relations" with Iraq and Jordan. Steps would be taken to counter Egyptian influence in Libya and Yemen. Saudi Arabia was to be singled out for favors—"we must not permit Saudi Arabia in desperation to turn from the United States to the Soviets for arms."

Downgrading Egypt in the new policy did not mean embracing Israel. The United States would continue to deny export licenses for military items to Israel as well as the Arab states (though with special arrangements for Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and Israel would be "dissuaded" in the "most forceful way feasible" not to undertake work at Benot Yaacov on the ground that it "might precipitate hostilities and thus endanger the whole Western position in the Near East to

the direct advantage of the Soviets." Hammarskjöld's assistance in this matter would also be sought. Congress would be asked to adopt a joint resolution authorizing the president to use military force if necessary "in case of aggression by Israel or the Arab states." At the same time, the United States and other friendly countries would continue to press for "effective United Nations action to reduce area tensions," and Hammarskjöld would be supported to this end.⁶⁷

In submitting the plan to the president, Dulles stressed that the new policy flowed from a need to "adjust certain of our Near Eastern policies" and let Nasser realize "that he cannot cooperate as he is doing with the Soviet Union and at the same time enjoy most-favored-nation treatment" from the United States. At a meeting that afternoon that lasted almost two hours, Eisenhower approved the policy in all respects. He wanted two points emphasized: Focus more on Saudi Arabia so as to "develop a position of greater strength in that country" and coordinate the main lines of the program with the British. It was agreed that the United States would not formally adhere to the Baghdad Pact but would send a high-ranking military official to participate in military planning and a high civilian official to participate in the Baghdad Pact council meetings.

At the same time, it was decided to "exert upon Israel strong pressure to assume a conciliatory attitude and to do all it can to reduce area tensions and thus minimize the outbreak of hostilities."

In a diary entry that day, Eisenhower explained why he had approved the new policy. Nasser's "growing ambition" was a fundamental consideration. Some other prospective leader of the Arab world would now have to be built up, wrote the president, "in the thought that mutually antagonistic personal ambitions might disrupt the aggressive plans that Nasser is evidently developing." His own candidate for this role was King Saud.⁶⁸

Even as the United States was making drastic policy changes vis-à-vis Nasser, Dulles cautioned the Israeli ambassador earlier that day not to expect an "identity of the U.S. with Israel in antagonism to the Arabs as a whole." Although primary responsibility for the failure of the Anderson mission rested with Nasser, Israel, too, "had not given complete cooperation." Some softening could be anticipated in the U.S. opposition to the November request for a large purchase of arms, but not of major proportions. Dulles cautioned Eban "in the strongest possible terms" not to go ahead with construction at Benot Yaacov without UN approval because this could lead to an outbreak of hostilities.⁶⁹

When Minister of the Israeli Embassy Reuven Shiloah inquired the next day about the procedure Dulles had in mind for Israel's request for European arms, now that Dulles had lifted the "virtual embargo," his inquiry was met with a surprisingly truculent rejoinder by the secretary of state's special assistant Francis Russell. That "would have to depend," said Russell, "in part on the atmosphere in which the Israeli Government intended to work with this Government." Obviously reflecting Dulles's annoyance with Israel, Russell admonished Shiloah that if the United States were to "indicate safely and confidentially to other governments that we thought certain shipments of arms to Israel might be in the interest of Western objectives and area security" then it was essential that the United States not be subjected to "an atmosphere of political attack from the Israel Government ... and from its friends in this country." What particularly irked the State Department were such "intemperate remarks" as Ben Gurion's March 6 statement in the Knesset that if war came to the Middle East, it would be the result of U.S. and Soviet policies in the area.⁷⁰

Dulles's resentment at what the administration regarded as Israel-inspired political attacks, and the deterioration in the U.S.-Israel relationship, had already surfaced during a conversation with Eban, which the secretary had initiated, earlier in the month. The Israeli government appeared to be "carrying on a form of political warfare against this Administration," and its attitude seemed

to him "entirely self-centered ." Israel did not seem to consider the vital interests of the NATO countries in maintaining accessibility to oil and other resources in the Middle East.

Dulles denied that his Senate testimony differed from his earlier statement to Sharett.⁷¹ On many occasions he had said that he did not favor giving Israel a security pact until the frontiers had been fixed. With respect to arms, the United States believed that to have shipped arms to Israel as requested would have destroyed all hope for the Anderson mission. The preservation of Israel remained a goal of U.S. policy, but the United States did not intend to move toward that goal in ways that would destroy the Anderson mission and U.S. influence with Arab countries.⁷²

Washington Looks at UN Possibilities

The friction between the Eisenhower administration and Israel was never completely overcome and the disparity never bridged in their assessment of the impact of rearming Israel on Western interests in the area. Nasser's continued negativism on the Johnston plan for sharing Jordan waters and Anderson's dispiriting messages from Cairo resulted in the redirection of Washington policy.⁷³ Hopes for negotiating a peaceful settlement dimmed and renewed emphasis was therefore put on enlisting the United Nations to help contain the threat of Egyptian-Israeli hostilities.

On February 29, in a conversation with Dulles in Washington, Hammarskjöld suggested that although an overall settlement of the Palestine question was not then possible—he was convinced that Ben Gurion could not accept any substantial border changes—damping down border tension was "most urgent" and certain constructive steps could be taken. Dulles indicated that the United States was now thinking on how best to enlist the United Nations to carry out its peacekeeping responsibilities. Hammarskjöld, in a follow-up meeting in the State Department, stressed that border stabilization was the paramount issue and that Burns hoped to negotiate workable arrangements with Egypt and Israel. Security Council consideration of the Palestine question should await the outcome of negotiations on border tranquilization, which would take the next couple of months.⁷⁴

Despite Hammarskjöld's preference for delay, as part of the new direction in its Middle East policy, and in line with a decision taken during tripartite talks in Washington the previous month, the administration on March 20 requested an early meeting of the UN Security Council to deal with the trouble spots on the Arab-Israeli fronts. The next day Ambassador Lodge submitted a draft resolution requesting the secretary general to undertake, as a matter of urgent concern, a survey of the various aspects of enforcement of the armistice agreements and compliance with the council's resolutions.⁷⁵

The U.S. request for intervention by the Security Council at this time was viewed in Israel as another "delaying tactic" designed to postpone the "real solution." As one Israeli diplomat put it, this was the latest of three steps taken to justify nonshipment of arms: the U.S. exploratory talks on a settlement, the U.S.-UK-France talks in February aimed at strengthening the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, and now the call for a Security Council meeting. When the first two steps had failed, and the situation deteriorated further, the third step was taken as just another "do nothing" explanation for failing to move on the arms request.⁷⁶ This was neither the first nor last time that Israel suspected Washington of resorting to the UN machinery as a way to avoid the real issues in the Arab-Israeli confrontation, in this case the need to redress the arms imbalance

caused by the Soviet arms deal with Cairo and to prod Nasser to resume bilateral contacts leading to direct bargaining with Israel on territories, refugees, and the other items on the Alpha agenda.

Hamarskjöld Intervenes

Washington shared neither Israel's alarmist views of the arms imbalance nor the imminence of an attack by Nasser in the summer of 1956. Nor did agreement exist on what was required to move away from the road to war. U.S. interests dictated that U.S. influence in the Arab world not be jeopardized or Nasser driven irrevocably into Moscow's arms. Stability could best be restored by activating UN efforts to reduce border tensions and enforce compliance with the armistice agreements on all fronts. On April 4, the Security Council unanimously adopted the U.S. resolution charging the secretary general with examining compliance with the armistice agreements, restoring the cease-fire, and accelerating implementation of the measures Burns had recommended to reduce border tensions and preserve the security of the armistice line between Egypt and Israel.⁷⁷ The next day Hamarskjöld left on his peace mission to the Middle East.

From Israel's angle of vision, Hamarskjöld's assignment was not considered very promising. The incidents on the Gaza and El Auja frontiers tier were seen as just a part of the larger problem of Nasser's belligerence and selective observance of the armistice provisions. But given the diplomatic situation and the need for prudence, Ben Gurion and Sharett both welcomed Hamarskjöld's diplomatic foray into the area in the spring of 1956. For Israel, the challenge lay in balancing the demands of strategic security with those of "diplomatic security," which required a forthcoming response to Hamarskjöld, who was operating with the strong backing of Washington. By early 1956 Israel had strengthened its military position at the Sinai frontier and was drafting contingency plans for breaking the blockade at the Straits of Tiran. The Egyptian force in the Sinai reached 60,000 (breaching armistice limits on the size of defensive forces facing El Auja), fedayeen violence increased, and threats to destroy Israel became more frequent.

Before Hamarskjöld reached the area, violence flared up again along the Gaza line. Israel had already complained to EIMAC and the Security Council two weeks earlier about raids from the Gaza Strip—listing 180 incidents in the three months between December 5 and March 9—and the menacing buildup of Egyptian forces along the frontier. This series of incidents added urgency to Hamarskjöld's mission. On April 4, three Israeli soldiers were killed in an ambush well within Israeli territory, as established by an investigation by UN observers the next day; and Egyptian artillery shelled the Israeli village of Kissufim and other settlements. Israeli mortars responded by shelling the town of Gaza, inflicting 150 casualties (including 59 dead), mostly civilian. Though Israeli authorities expressed shock and the IDF claimed the shelling had missed intended military targets, UNTSO faulted Israel for the "unjustifiable savagery of this retaliation." Fedayeen attacks were resumed, as was an exchange of mortar fire.⁷⁸

Nasser, meanwhile, tried to reassure Israel that he had no plans for general war, that the enlarged Sinai force was defensive, and that only small forces were deployed in the forward areas of Gaza. As Shimshoni noted, it is possible he did not view the fedayeen raids as provocative a challenge to Israel as were attacks by Egyptian soldiers. Nasser was just beginning to reshape the army and absorb the new arms. According to some diplomatic observers, he was engaged in a delicate balancing act—to demonstrate belligerence to Arab audiences while

containing the risks of provoking Israel to war. To the Israeli leadership, however, the fedayeen raids were part of a growing strategic threat, adding to a feeling of insecurity produced by the tightening of the Aqaba blockade and Washington's continued stalling on Israel's arms request.⁷⁹ Except for the shelling of Gaza, however, Israeli policy remained conciliatory. On April 5, Ben Gurion agreed to Burns's request that patrols along the ADL be discontinued to allow Hammarskjöld time to work out an accord.⁸⁰

Hammarskjöld viewed his immediate mission "as permitting me to negotiate for the fullest possible compliance with the armistice agreements." On that foundation he could proceed to the next stage of dealing with the main issues—freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran, the problem of Palestine refugees, the diversion of Jordan waters, and the state of belligerency that the Arab states insisted on maintaining with Israel.⁸¹

As Hammarskjöld reported to the Security Council on May 2, 1956 (S/3594), if the United Nations were to reestablish "the legal situation on which the armistice regime" was founded, then he had to get unconditional compliance with the "fundamental clause" of the armistice agreements to refrain from hostilities. So he put at the top of his agenda the task of getting a reciprocal pledge from both sides to reestablish the cease-fire. Things soon looked promising. Ben Gurion on April 17 wrote Hammarskjöld that orders had been given for the "scrupulous implementation of the instructions prohibiting all crossing of the border by military or paramilitary forces, including non-regular forces, for any purpose whatsoever." The undertaking was given subject to full reciprocity on the part of Egypt. Two days later, Hammarskjöld, then in Cairo, notified Ben Gurion that Nasser had given a similar undertaking and that the cease-fire orders were in effect.⁸²

Hammarskjöld reported minimal success, however, on the frontier security measures urged by Burns. On the one hand, Egypt was agreeable that the forces be separated by pulling back defensive positions and patrols from the demarcation line. Israel's response fell short of the "firm arrangements" Burns had proposed: It agreed not to send patrols up to the line, except when it was essential to do so in order to protect farming operations or to prevent incursions. The United Nations reluctantly accepted the reservations. On the other hand, Israel accepted the UN idea of a barrier along the entire Gaza line; Egypt consented only to the erection of obstacles along selected portions of the line. Hammarskjöld declined to go ahead on that basis. The only measure on which both sides agreed was that UNTSO place conspicuous markers along the demarcation line surrounding the Gaza Strip. (Hammarskjöld also had to report that negotiations for a local commanders agreement were at a standstill and that the time was not opportune for establishing joint patrols.)⁸³

The secretary general found even more resistance on the El Auja situation. Both parties, he reported to the Security Council, were in violation of the armistice provisions that defined the status of the demilitarized zone and placed strict limits on the size, composition, and location of the defensive forces on the frontier. Hammarskjöld proposed simultaneous withdrawal of IDF forces from El Auja and the dismantling of Egyptian defensive positions to be verified by UN observers. Arrangements could never be worked out. Meanwhile, pending a decision by the Security Council, Hammarskjöld ruled that the Ketsiot kibbutz within the demilitarized zone could remain, together with a number of civilian police that were considered normal. By August, five Nahal kibbutzim were operating "in the Nitzana [El Auja] Demilitarized Area," according to the Jewish Agency, and the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv assumed that these were located within the DMZ itself.⁸⁴

The prospect of an accommodation on El Auja became even more remote when Nasser

announced in July 1956 that he had nationalized the Suez Canal. Burns reported at the end of the summer that an Israeli force continued to occupy the demilitarized zone and was interfering with the freedom of movement and access by the UNMOs. The periodic breakdown of the cease-fire in this area (a new one had been arranged in May) was of particular concern to the UN since it brought a "danger of a chain reaction of violence leading to open hostilities." Restrictions on the observers' freedom of movement were particularly troubling, since their very presence was "a deterrent against aggression."⁸⁵

Actually Hammarskjöld's cease-fire and border monitoring arrangements had proved shaky from the start and threatened to be upset even before he left the region. A short time after Egypt had reaffirmed its obligation to respect the armistice provisions prohibiting armed attacks, two particularly outrageous fedayeen raids had occurred. A settler was killed at Nahal Oz by an armed band from the Gaza Strip, which had crossed the frontier, dragged the body of the murdered man over into the Gaza area, and then returned it to the Israeli authorities. On the same day, a mine laid by the Egyptians on the track to Nir Yitzhak blew up a vehicle, causing casualties. If the Egyptian government failed to adopt effective measures to prevent "crimes of this nature," Ben Gurion wrote on May 15, it would be in default of the reciprocity "on the basis of which we gave our promise." Israel did not retaliate after the daytime attack on Nahal Oz, but Dayan ordered the resumption of patrols along the demarcation line. In line with his familiar diplomatic technique, Hammarskjöld used the exchange to broaden the cease-fire assurances, stating he would consider each side as obligated to take "active measures to stop such [border] crossings and will take appropriate action against transgressors and those who are guilty of acts of violence in contravention of the spirit of the Armistice Agreement."⁸⁶

The Indivisibility of the Armistice

Although agreement was reached on restoring the cease-fire and certain practical measures for containing border tension, Ben Gurion remained convinced that the armistice regime was fatally flawed by Egypt's assertion of belligerent rights, in particular to interfere with freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Tiran. Hammarskjöld did not deny that this was a serious issue, but argued that it should not interfere with solidifying the cease-fire through cessation of cross-border attacks and removing defensive positions from Sinai frontier areas.

The core of the differences between Ben Gurion and the secretary general was made clear in Israel's reaction to an aide-mémoire given to Ben Gurion as a "draft for personal use" prior to Hammarskjöld's departure for Beirut on April 20. Hammarskjöld noted that both sides had restated their adherence to complying fully with the entire armistice agreement, given full reciprocity, and had agreed to fully implement the "cease-fire clauses" in Article II on refraining from all active hostilities. Egypt also gave assurance of full compliance, given reciprocity, with Articles VII and VIII (defensive positions and forces in the EI Auja demilitarized area), irrespective of whether such reciprocity applied to other clauses of the agreement. Hammarskjöld's stand also was that compliance with these provisions could not be conditioned on Egypt's renunciation of belligerent rights, including compliance with the Security Council resolution that it stop interfering with Israeli shipping through the canal. The secretary general argued that the cease-fire clauses of the armistice agreement had a special legal standing and had to be observed, on a reciprocal basis, irrespective of any infringements of any other provisions of the armistice. Israel, on its side, stated that it regarded the armistice agreement as an integrated

whole and therefore demanded reciprocity on all provisions including cessation of interference with Israeli shipping through the Suez Canal.⁸⁷

Though debated in legalistic and doctrinal idiom, the UN-Israel disagreement over the interpretation of the armistice exposed a wide political divergence that threatened the survival of the armistice regime. Ultimately it led to Ben Gurion's repudiation of the GAA with Egypt at the time of the Suez War. The dispute focused on two issues: Was the armistice "indivisible" so that violation of one clause breached the "reciprocity" on which the maintenance of the cease-fire was conditioned? Was the United Nations itself a "party" to the armistice regime?

Was the armistice indivisible? As Hammarskjöld remarked in his May 9 progress report to the Security Council, each party accepted that compliance with the armistice agreement was conditioned on reciprocal compliance; but did infraction of any provision, perhaps in an unrelated clause, violate reciprocity? If so, Hammarskjöld warned, "the armistice regime could be nullified by a single infringement by one of the parties" (S/3596). The way out, he proposed, was to "lift the ceasefire clauses out of the armistice agreements so as to give them an independent legal status as obligations, compliance with which was conditioned only by reciprocity in respect of the implementation of the same obligations by the other parties to the armistice agreements." In his final report to the Security Council in September, Hammarskjöld concluded that the April negotiations with Egypt and Israel had "established the ceasefire obligations to be found in Article II, paragraph 2, of the Egypt-Israel Armistice Agreement" as having independent status.⁸⁸ The Israeli doctrine of indivisibility he viewed as "challenging the very armistice" and leading to the untenable position that Israel considers itself obligated to comply with the armistice only to the extent this can be done without prejudicing its security in the face of perceived threats. Such an approach could only lead to the erosion of the armistice and of the UN observer operation.

This argument led to a second, related point of difference. In Hammarskjöld's view the *United Nations itself was a "party to the ceasefire obligations."* The armistice agreements might formally be bilateral, and thus the theory of "indivisibility" might be considered valid under international law. But this case was different. For the Security Council had endorsed the agreements and had assigned a key role to the United Nations to supervise their enforcement. This "must be considered as establishing the equivalent of an international regime," observed Hammarskjöld, "with the UN as party to the obligations."

This doctrine of the uniqueness of the UN involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, although not pressed to the full by Hammarskjöld in his report to the Security Council, reflected the prevailing view in the secretariat and Western capitals that the world organization had been assigned an authoritative role with respect to the armistice, both as validator and enforcer of compliance. In no other case had the United Nations asserted this kind of independent standing as a party to an international regime governing an armistice that had been negotiated between warring states. The lack of cooperation with the UN observers, particularly restrictions placed on their freedom of movement, to which Hammarskjöld referred in his September report, reflected to a large extent Israeli suspicions about the assertion of an independent authority by the UN to judge and even enforce compliance. It was seen as both an infringement on Israel's sovereignty and an obstacle to confronting the Arabs with the responsibility of the adversaries to deal with each other face-to-face.

No Improvement in Political Environment

The "qualitative change ... in the operational environment"⁸⁹ that spring and early summer was not significantly improved as a result of Hammarskjöld's efforts, though the cease-fire did hold for longer intervals and the limited measures deterred border crossings. Neither did the political environment improve in the wake of Hammarskjöld's visit. "Reciprocity" was not evident. Nasser's bellicose speech to the Egyptian troops in Gaza, linking Israel to Western designs in the region, caused "considerable concern" in London, which depicted Nasser as playing the communist game, "determined to destroy Israel as part of [a] campaign to rid the Arab world of 'imperialist' influences."⁹⁰

Despite growing displeasure with Egypt,⁹¹ Dulles continued to resist Ben Gurion's importuning for military help. The growing estrangement of Israel and the United States and the gulf in their perception of Israel's true security needs are revealed in a briefing paper for a Dulles meeting with Eban. Israel was asking the United States to ensure the availability of weapons "either by supplying them directly or inducing other countries to do so." In addition, the paper observed, Israel wanted the United States to help pay for these arms by increasing economic assistance, enabling Israel to divert other funds to arms purchases. "We believe it would be fatal to our position in the Middle East" the paper cautioned, "for us to succumb to this Israeli maneuver. The result would be a tiny Israel armed by the U.S. opposed to the Arab world supported by the Soviet bloc, a situation we have carefully sought to avoid."⁹²

Eisenhower's adamant rejection of Israel's repeated requests for arms and a security pact marked the breakdown of Ben Gurion's security policy—that is, an alliance with the West, anchored in a security pact with the United States to supplement Israel's strengthened defense forces. Israel had hoped that such a link would provide not only a security assurance but serve to legitimize Israel's international standing and validate the armistice lines as internationally recognized borders. As noted earlier, this was precisely the basis for U.S. rejection. Dulles remained adamant against any security guarantee save on the condition stated in his August 26, 1955, statement: Only after agreement on boundaries and related problems would the president "recommend that the United States join in formal treaty engagements to prevent or thwart any effort by either side to alter by force the boundaries between Israel and its Arab neighbors." Moreover, Dulles expressed the hope that "other countries would join in such a security guarantee and that it would be sponsored by the United Nations."⁹³

To add to Ben Gurion's frustration, Washington kept pressing Israel to rely on the UN peacekeepers to stabilize the borders and on Hammarskjöld's shuttle diplomacy to help restore an armistice regime in which Israel was losing trust. But by the summer of 1956 the Israeli government had given up any hopes of relying on the world organization to halt the Arab raids and evinced little disposition to cooperate with Hammarskjöld's attempts to stabilize the borders. And by the summer of 1956 Ben Gurion had also become skeptical about trying to reach Nasser through Hammarskjöld's diplomacy.

The direction in which Ben Gurion was moving became evident on June 18 with the forced resignation of Sharett as foreign minister. Though Eban tried to reassure the State Department that "no policy question was involved in the resignation and that it was a personal clash," the event was nevertheless seen to presage a preventative war policy.⁹⁴

Border incidents continued to be reported on both the Syrian and Jordan lines. A mounting toll of Israel casualties from Jordan incursions, and the ineffective action of the Jordanians in preventing such incursions, led to repeated appeals for restraint from the United States and the UN chief of staff which went unheeded. The State Department was upset that Ben Gurion had "gone so far as to state that... Hammarskjöld's public statements against retaliation encourage

border raids" and that Hammarskjöld appeared to have become "completely disillusioned about Ben Gurion." Conditions on the Gaza line, which had improved since April, began to deteriorate by mid-July. Confrontations persisted in the El Auja area.⁹⁵

The decisive turn was the "French factor," as Brecher termed it, which unfolded that summer against a background of momentous events centering on Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on July 26. On June 27, a Franco-Israeli arms agreement was concluded, with Israel acquiring 72 Mystère IV fighters and 200 AMX-13 tanks. French arms began to arrive a month later. By the end of August Ben Gurion was thus able to reassure the Mapai party convention about the IDF's growing strength and state of readiness, hinting at "some very great things now in motion," although the time had not yet come to speak of them publicly.⁹⁶

The crisis reached boiling point in mid-July. On the 19th, the United States announced it would not proceed with the financing of the Aswan Dam project. And, on July 26, in a vitriolic anti-Western and anti-Israel speech, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. He declared that canal dues would be used to finance the dam. As Higgins notes, the "failure of the parties, in the circumstances of the second half of 1956, to put into effect the Secretary General's recommendations for the implementation of the Armistice Agreements is hardly surprising."⁹⁷

That summer world attention was focused on the Suez Canal crisis, with Washington telling Eden that other means than force should be found for tackling Nasser. The Labour Party, which in early August appeared to support the Eden government's tough line, soon reversed itself; Hugh Gaitskell wrote that he would not support any use of force not authorized by the United Nations. The French, on the other hand, were pressing for military action. The expropriation of the Anglo-French Canal Company and Nasser's support of the rebels in Algeria had convinced Paris that no solution could be reached in Algeria while Nasser remained in power. On September 12 France and Britain placed the canal issue before the Security Council, without expecting any consequential result. Dulles, fearing the imminent use of force, now urged the idea of a Suez Canal "users' association," a form of an international organization and, "it looked for the first time as if prospects existed for progress."⁹⁸

Attack in the Sinai

Despite the apparent progress toward a Suez Canal compromise, events were moving inexorably toward use of force. London and Paris considered the Dulles plan for a users' association ineffectual and bound to end with Nasser's takeover of the Canal. Strictly guarded Anglo-French talks in Paris on October 16 sealed an agreement to use an Israeli attack as the pretext for joint action to seize the canal. Meanwhile, as noted above, the French—who shared Israel's anxiety about the Czech arms deal and had evidence of Egyptian complicity in the Algerian rebellion—were shipping Mystère fighters and AMX tanks to Israel under the agreement reached in June. Reports of close Franco-Israeli cooperation in military plans against Nasser reached Washington. On October 15 Ben Gurion told the Knesset of his concern over Iraqi troop movements into Jordan and the formation of a joint Egyptian-Syrian-Jordanian command, but he also assured the members that Israel was no longer defenseless.

Following Franco-Israeli talks on October 22, at which a military plan was devised, an Anglo-French agreement was reached in London the next day. An understanding on military action was

ratified by the three at a secret meeting in Sèvres, on the outskirts of Paris, on October 24. Israeli forces would invade the Sinai Peninsula on October 29 with the aim of reaching the Suez Canal Zone the following day; the British and French would then issue an ultimatum to both Egypt and Israel to withdraw 17 km (10 miles) from the zone and accept temporary Anglo-French occupation; and, if Egypt rejected the ultimatum as expected, Anglo-French forces would move in on October 31. The Sèvres document also provided for Israeli takeover of the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba and the islands of the Tiran straits and contained a pledge by Israel not to attack Jordan.⁹⁹

On October 29 Israel launched its attack deep in the Sinai desert. Within five days Israeli forces neared the canal, stopping 10 km (6.2 miles) east of the waterway. By November 5, with Sharm-el-Sheikh and the islands of the Tiran straits cleared of Egyptian forces, all operations ceased.

The attack, aided by the "deception and collusion" of Britain and France, created a diplomatic scenario in Washington that was to propel the United Nations into an enlarged role as peacekeeper in the Arab-Israeli confrontation and as enforcer of a restored armistice. Washington's quandary on how to deal with the Israeli attack on Egypt was compounded by the fact that Britain and France were partners to the affair. The complicity of the British and French exposed their readiness to act without taking into account U.S. interests or the joint obligations taken under the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, the bedrock of the West's political strategy to block the spread of Soviet influence in the region.¹⁰⁰ Yet, Eisenhower realized that a diplomacy that could shatter the alliance (particularly the close relationship with the British, which he had come to cherish), was not in the long-range interests of the United States.

The administration broke out of the dilemma by a diplomatic strategy that became crystallized early in the game—to protect U.S. interests through invoking the Tripartite Declaration but to do so in the framework of the United Nations. At a White House conference that evening (October 29) it was decided to take the initiative in the Security Council. The president recalled that he had pledged U.S. support for the victim of aggression in the Middle East. Despite the Anglo-French involvement, he declared that "we cannot be bound by our traditional alliances, but must instead face the question of how to make good on our pledge." The United Nations "might be the most valuable course to follow." Dulles advocated going to the UN "with the British and French if they wish to join us, but otherwise alone." It was imperative to get in ahead of the USSR.¹⁰¹

The next day the scenario projected in Washington was played out. At the Security Council meeting in the morning, Lodge declared it was imperative that the council act promptly in determining that a breach of the peace had occurred and calling on the Israeli armed forces to withdraw behind the armistice lines. Before the Security Council met that afternoon, when the U.S. resolution was to be formally introduced, an Anglo-French ultimatum had been sent to Egypt and Israel, as planned, calling on both sides to stop all warlike action and withdraw their military forces to a distance 10 miles (17 km) from the canal. Egypt was requested to agree that Anglo-French forces move temporarily into key positions at Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez in order to separate the belligerents and guarantee freedom of transit through the canal by ships of all nations. The combatants were given twelve hours to answer.

The United States pressed ahead with its draft resolution, which called on Israel immediately to withdraw its armed forces behind the established armistice lines and on UN members "to assist the United Nations in ensuring the integrity of the armistice agreements" and to "refrain from giving any military, economic or financial assistance to Israel so long as it had not complied with this resolution." The resolution got the necessary seven votes (China, Cuba, Iran,

Peru, the USSR, the United States, and Yugoslavia), but with France and the United Kingdom against, the draft resolution failed of adoption. (Australia and Belgium abstained.) With the Security Council deadlocked, the matter was transferred to the General Assembly under terms of the Uniting for Peace procedure (GA Resolution 377-V).¹⁰²

Egypt rejected the Anglo-French ultimatum, and during the early evening of October 31, British and French forces began their bombardment of Egyptian airfields in the vicinity of the Suez Canal Zone. Passage through the Suez Canal was effectively blocked the following day when Nasser ordered that the Egyptian ship *Akka* be sunk in the canal near Lake Timsah. Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued to advance to the prearranged line in the Sinai Peninsula and on November 1 began their movement in northern Sinai toward El Arish. That same day Egypt recalled most of its forces from the Sinai to defend the Canal Zone.

5

After Suez: Conditions of Withdrawal

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF the Suez crisis brought an expanded and redefined mandate for the United Nations, isolation within the UN for Israel, and Israel's further estrangement from the United States. Nearly all UN members, including many of Israel's tested friends, thought the resort to force had been unjustified. A return to the status quo ante, no matter how unsatisfactory, was seen as the only realistic basis for stability. And the consensus was that stability in the region could be achieved only with a restoration of the armistice regime.

Washington Enlists the United Nations

Two major shifts occurred in the Eisenhower administration's outlook in the wake of the Suez crisis. First, the grand Anglo-American peacemaking effort, the Alpha operation, had been sidetracked in the spring of 1956, but the intention had been to reactivate it when the political atmosphere improved. Now it was silently dropped so as not to compromise negotiations on the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the deployment of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF).¹ Second, the administration began to pursue its political strategy more vigorously through the United Nations. The ill-starred Anglo-French assault on the Suez Canal Zone meant that the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, although not formally repudiated, had become a dead letter. As Dulles remarked in the National Security Council on November 1, the "recent events ... mark[ed] the death knell of Great Britain and France" in the region, the implication being that Washington could no longer base its policy there on a shaky three-power alliance.²

Under the circumstances, Eisenhower felt convinced that there was no substitute for enlisting the United Nations as peacekeeper, manager of a restored armistice, and focus for Middle East diplomacy. With the decline in British influence the UN offered the optimum setting for countering Soviet penetration and safeguarding U.S. interests without the need for direct intervention. (Eisenhower was to follow the same course in the Congo crisis of 1960.)

Sanctions Against Israel

The administration's strategy was to move quickly into the United Nations, with or without allies, for two reasons. One was to preempt Moscow and control any proceedings in the Security Council. The urgency of countering Soviet political maneuvers was to become dramatically clear within days, as will be described below. Another reason for acting through the UN becomes evident from a reading of the diplomatic files. The administration, particularly Dulles, was initially bent on imposing sanctions against Israel if it failed to withdraw its forces without delay. A UN seal of approval, giving international legitimacy to such action, could help minimize the domestic political fallout in an election year. To this end, a key provision in the U.S.-sponsored

resolution introduced in the Security Council on October 30—within hours after the attack on the Sinai Peninsula—called on UN members "to refrain from giving any military, economic or financial assistance to Israel" so long as it had not complied with the injunction to stop fighting and to withdraw. In accordance with his "understanding of U.S. policy in connection with Israel's invasion of Egypt," the director of the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), John B. Hollister, issued instructions the next day "to cease all aid to Israel at once."

The Hollister memorandum, listing the economic and financial sanctions, however, was withdrawn. The reason can only be conjectured. Doubts about sanctions against Israel were raised at a meeting in Secretary Dulles's office that day (October 31). Was it wise or appropriate to take such measures against Israel "in the absence" of Security Council authorization (the resolution having fallen to the British-French veto) and "in the presence" of British and French armed attack on Egypt? If against Israel, would punitive measures have to be taken also against the Western allies? Dulles felt that the United States "must do something" and advocated the adoption of measures that "would disrupt their activities and show we mean business."³

The president began having second thoughts. "We should not do anything that makes us look as if we are trying to get an excuse to pick on Israel," he counseled Dulles. If action were taken against Israel, then something would have to be done against France and Britain. Dulles worried that U.S. inaction would impair the nation's credibility: "If we give aid to Israel when she is an aggressor," he wrote, "it makes a mockery of everything." At the National Security Council meeting on November 1, convened to determine strategy for the General Assembly emergency session beginning that afternoon, he pursued this argument. Failure to impose even "mild sanctions"—suspending economic aid but not freezing bank balances—would undermine the U.S. ability to exercise leadership in the United Nations and open the way for the Soviets. The president agreed it would be a "complete mistake" to continue any kind of aid to Israel, "which is the aggressor," though he observed that it had not yet been branded as such. A number of participants, notably Secretary of the Treasury George M. Humphrey and Harold E. Stassen, special assistant to the president, counseled delay. In the end it was decided that Dulles would propose a "mild resolution" calling for a cease-fire and withdrawal and at the same time declare that the United States was suspending military shipments to the region as well as governmental programs to countries in the area that might prolong hostilities.⁴

Dulles left Israel in no doubt about U.S. sentiments. Later that day, he informed Israeli ambassador Abba Eban that, as he "must have surmised," recent events made it necessary for the United States to "review projects for assistance for Israel" and inquired whether he had anything to say that would "have a bearing" on this matter. Avoiding a direct response, Eban stated that Israel appreciated the "moral and economic assistance" it had received from the United States despite recent "differences of judgment." Israel had acted only because of the mortal threat from Egypt.⁵

The General Assembly Resolutions of November

The evening of November 1, acting on the political strategy of preempting the Soviets in the United Nations, Dulles personally introduced a draft resolution at the first emergency session of the General Assembly calling for a cease-fire, prompt withdrawal of all forces behind the armistice lines, an end to cross-border raids, and scrupulous observance of the provisions of the armistice agreements. All UN members should refrain, the resolution stated, from introducing

military goods in the area of hostilities and, more generally, from any acts that would delay implementation of the resolution. The threat of sanctions for noncompliance had been reduced to an assembly recommendation that arms be kept out of the area of hostilities. And none of the parties to the conflict had been singled out for reprobation. But the message was clear: An overwhelming majority of the assembly (64 in favor to 5 opposed, with 6 abstaining) demanded (in Resolution 997-ES I) a cease-fire and prompt withdrawal, even as Israeli forces continued to advance in the Sinai.

The U.S. action in the United Nations was meant to lay the groundwork for bringing a rapid end to the fighting and accelerating the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai and the Anglo-French military units from the Canal Zone. It was also to be the prelude to the rapid formation and deployment of a peacekeeping force of unprecedented size and mission. In the discussion that followed the adoption of Resolution 997 during the small hours of November 2, Canada's external affairs minister Lester Pearson explained his country's surprising abstention. The resolution had two flaws: (1) It did not provide for a UN effort to bring about a peace settlement, (2) and it failed to follow through on Canada's proposal that the secretary general proceed with arrangements for a UN force of sufficient size to keep the peace along the contested borders while a settlement was pursued. The Canadian purpose, as its ambassador to Washington, Arnold Heeney, explained to the U.S. secretary of state, was to help get the British and French "off the hook" so as to restore as quickly as possible the U.S.-UK alignment. In effect this pioneer peacekeeping venture, which set the pattern for its successors, was designed to provide a graceful exit for allies from a politically embarrassing predicament. For, the UN "police force" would replace both the Israeli force in the Sinai and the Anglo-French units in the Canal Zone.⁶

By the evening of November 3, under U.S. leadership, the General Assembly was moving along two tracks in a direction that would determine the extent of UN involvement in the Arab-Israeli relationship over the next decade. Although the United States, along with like-minded NATO allies (notably Canada and Norway), had succeeded in heading off the Soviet drive to punish the "aggressors," an Afro-Asian group, expressing the sentiment of the emerging Nonaligned movement, pressed for stronger action. A draft resolution—tableted by Afghanistan, Burma, Ceylon, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Thailand, and Yemen—demanded an end to the fighting and a halt to the movement of military forces and arms into the area not later than twelve hours from the time of the adoption of the resolution. Hammarskjöld was requested to obtain compliance with the provision that all forces withdraw behind the armistice lines. Adopted as Resolution 999 (ES-I) by a vote of 59-5-12, the Nonaligned resolution was the first in a series designed to bring international pressure on Israel to withdraw without condition and without regard to the issues that had precipitated the conflict. Two days later, the same nineteen-power Afro-Asian group pushed through a resolution that called "once again upon Israel immediately to withdraw all of its forces behind the armistice lines"; Britain and France were asked immediately to withdraw all their forces from Egyptian territory. Hammarskjöld was mandated to report on compliance. The resolution was adopted on November 7 as Resolution 1002 (ES-I) by a vote of 65-1 (Israel), with 10 abstentions. In the face of sharp protests from London and Paris, the United States helped to mobilize a substantial Western majority for the resolution so as to preclude Afro-Asian defection to the Soviet side. Israel affirmed to Hammarskjöld that "Israel agrees to an immediate ceasefire provided a similar answer is forthcoming from Egypt," also stipulating that it would withdraw only after "satisfactory arrangements" had been made for its

future security.⁷

Many nations in the West, including the United States, supported the nineteen-power resolution not only to avert a breakaway of the Nonaligned nations but to assure support for a UN force. The structure and mandate of UNEF was quickly put into place. By a vote of 57-0-19 on November 4 the General Assembly (Resolution 998 [ES-I]) requested the secretary general to submit to it within forty-eight hours "a plan for setting up, with the consent of the nations concerned, of an emergency international United Nations Force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities." On the structure and composition of the force, Hammarskjöld consulted with Pearson and the UN ambassadors of Norway, India, and Colombia, who were emerging as the leaders of a middlepower peacekeeping caucus. It was agreed that no contingents from the permanent members would be accepted; this was done to obviate any Soviet offer and to finesse Eden's continued attempt to link the peacekeeping venture to the Anglo-French "police action" in the zone. Discussions were begun with prospective troop contributors from the middle powers, including Denmark, Sweden, Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, Iran, and Ethiopia. U.S. participation in the form of an airlift was agreed on, to ensure rapid deployment of the force.

The next day the assembly in Resolution 1000 (ES-I) authorized the establishment of a UN command for an emergency international force to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities, appointing Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns, the UNTSO chief of staff, as "Chief of Command," with authority to recruit a nucleus of officers from the UNTSO observer corps, excluding officers from the permanent members. In a separate resolution, provision was made for an advisory committee composed of representatives from Brazil, Canada, Ceylon, Colombia, India, Norway, and Pakistan (the troop-contributing countries) and chaired by the secretary general. The committee would "undertake the development of those aspects of the planning for the Force and its operation not already dealt with by the General Assembly and which do not fall within the area of the direct responsibility of the Chief of Command."

Thus, a week after the assault on the Sinai and the Canal Zone, the international peacekeeping structure was well on the way to formation and the nucleus of UNEF in place. The administration's strategy was to forestall Soviet intervention by deploying the UN force rapidly and excluding the Anglo-French force from any part in the venture. President Eisenhower did not leave Eden in any doubt about this. The cease-fire and the entry of the UN force must be accepted without conditions, the U.S. president insisted, "so as not to give Egypt with Soviet backing an opportunity to quibble." Moreover, since "it was vital [that] no excuse be given for Soviet participation in [the] UN force," all the big five had to be excluded as Hammarskjöld had proposed. The "immediate consummation" of the UN plan was of the greatest importance; otherwise, Eisenhower said, he feared developments of "the greatest gravity."⁸

The Soviet Gambit

The need to operate within the UN framework became dramatically clear following Moscow's proposal for joint U.S.-USSR military intervention to drive out the Anglo-French force. Dismayed by Washington's success in harnessing the world organization to its purpose—as it had six years earlier in Korea—and in mobilizing a coalition not only from the West but also from among the Nonaligned, Moscow soon moved to thwart Washington's strategy. In a letter to President Eisenhower on November 5, Chairman Nikolai A. Bulganin proposed that the United States and the Soviet Union join forces "within the framework of the United Nations" to halt the

aggression against Egypt. At the same time, sharp and threatening notes were sent to Britain and France (and circulated as an official UN document) declaring that the Anglo-French assault was an act of aggression affecting the interests not only of Egypt but also of other states, and containing strong threats of military action against Britain, France, and Israel. An even more intimidating note, with the implied threat of using nuclear weapons, was sent to Israel. Ben Gurion was infuriated by the difference in tone of the two letters. The letter he received used terms of scorn and threatened Israel's very existence.⁹

At the same time, Moscow moved to bring the issue back to the Security Council. Foreign Minister Dimitri T. Shepilov requested an immediate meeting to consider "the non-compliance by the United Kingdom, France and Israel with the [General Assembly] decision" and to take "immediate steps to halt the aggression ... against Egypt." All member states, "especially" the United States and Soviet Union, wrote the foreign minister, would be urged to give military and other assistance to Egypt by sending naval and air forces, military units, volunteers, and other forms of assistance if Britain, France, and Israel failed to cease all military action against Egypt within twelve hours of the adoption of the resolution and to withdraw their troops from Egyptian soil within three days. The Soviet government, for its part, was "ready to contribute to the cause of curbing aggressors" by sending to Egypt air and naval forces. And, in the letter to President Eisenhower, Bulganin made clear what he had in mind by "especially." The two superpowers, "possessing all contemporary forms of armaments, including atom and hydrogen weapons," had a special responsibility to adopt measures to terminate the aggression. Otherwise, Bulganin cautioned, the United Nations would lose its prestige and collapse. In forwarding the letter to Washington, U.S. ambassador Charles E. Bohlen commented that the Soviet "spectacular" proposal for joint action was intended to divert world attention from the Soviet assault on Hungary. Still, it would be imprudent to dismiss it, for action against Hungary signaled a readiness to risk more hazardous action in the Middle East than would normally be the case.

At a White House meeting that day, the president also did not rule out the possibility of Soviet armed intervention. Its policy failing in the satellites, Moscow was scared and furious, and "there is nothing more dangerous than a dictatorship in this state of mind." A clear warning to Moscow was in order: The United States would oppose any effort to violate the UN plan. And in his reply the president cautioned Bulganin that with the fighting brought to an end through the efforts of the United Nations, neither Soviet nor any other military forces should now enter the Middle East area, "except under United Nations mandate."¹⁰ At the same time, Nasser was cautioned against playing along with Moscow's offer of help and pressed to cooperate with Hammarskjöld.¹¹

By the end of the first week in November, Washington was thus operating on the same premises as Hammarskjöld. If the international consensus was to be held together against the threats and blandishments of Bulganin and the "highly tentative and brittle" cease-fire sustained, the UN force had to be introduced into the region with the greatest possible speed. Intelligence estimates that "further Soviet support and assistance" might induce Nasser to breach the cease-fire added to the urgency in Washington's eyes, as did evidence of "the intransigence of the Israelis in respect to the Sinai and the danger of this attitude hardening with the passage of time."¹² On a visit to the ailing Secretary Dulles at the Walter Reed Hospital on November 7, President Eisenhower underscored the extreme importance of getting the British and French troops out of Egypt and UN forces in as soon as possible. Dulles agreed that if this were not done within a week's time the "fire will go on burning" and it might be impossible to put it out. He also agreed with the president that "we should begin to put pressure on Egypt and Israel," and the

Israelis should be told to get back to the armistice line in compliance with the UN resolution.¹³

By then Hammarskjöld had sent Lt. Gen. Burns and ten officers from the UNTSO observer corps to Cairo; within a week the first units of the UN force would be on the way. The U.S. administration set to work in tandem with the United Nations to overcome hurdles raised in London, Cairo, and Jerusalem to the rapid deployment of UNEF. For the strategy to succeed, Eden had to abandon both his conditions for the Anglo-French departure from the Canal Zone and his insistence that Britain participate in clearance of the canal; Nasser had to agree to the immediate entry of the UN force on Egyptian soil and to cooperate with its deployment even before all foreign forces had withdrawn; and Ben Gurion had to retreat from the policy enunciated in the Knesset on November 7 that Israel no longer recognized the validity of the Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement nor intended to withdraw from the Sinai until peace had been negotiated directly with Egypt (later modified to read until "satisfactory arrangements" had been agreed on for the operation of the UN force).

At this stage, the mission of the UN force was twofold: (1) to secure the Canal Zone as the Anglo-French units withdrew and (2) to police the Israeli withdrawal. Two weeks later the conditions for withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces had not yet been negotiated, but on Hammarskjöld's visit to Cairo to work out arrangements for UNEF's arrival, Nasser agreed that the UN force could proceed to Port Said "even if British and French had not yet left because he recognized that with UN forces there, British and French would not undertake new action." He also agreed to United Nations assistance in clearing the canal "in cooperation with Egypt" and accepted the secretary general's formula for settlement of the canal question through "negotiations." The canal issue did not affect the long-term arrangements for UNEF's deployment and functioning because, in agreement with the Egyptian government, UNEF would not function in the Canal Zone after the withdrawal of the foreign forces.¹⁴

Israel Sets Conditions for Withdrawal

The conditions Israel placed on its withdrawal, its insistence on "satisfactory arrangements" governing the deployment and duration of the international force, and its repudiation of the prewar armistice regime dominated post-Suez diplomacy for the next four months and determined the UN role over the next decade.

For Israel, the Sinai campaign was a stunning military victory and signaled its emergence as a regional power. But the operation proved politically frustrating and costly. Castigated in the United Nations for the assault on Egypt and feeling let down by its partners, the Israelis "were both resentful of demands for their withdrawal and fearful of the restoration of the status quo ante."¹⁵ The UN peacekeeping force signified that the international community was reconciled to an equilibrium in the Arab-Israeli conflict based on an open-ended armistice and would not press for a peace settlement. At the core of the consensus to strengthen the UN's peacekeeping role was a concordance of policy throughout the Suez crisis between Washington and the United Nations. The Eisenhower policy, as noted above, presupposed that containing the Arab-Israeli dispute and protecting U.S. interests in the area demanded a strengthened United Nations to serve both as forum for diplomacy and peacekeeper in the postbellum period. Beyond this was a determination that the post bellum situation could be most effectively managed by granting the UN authority and policing capacity to restore the armistice regime, as the only workable legal-

political structure for containing the Arab-Israeli conflict. Dulles might concede that some attention needed to be paid to Israeli grievances about fedayeen raids and Egyptian blockade, but both Washington and Hammarskjöld kept insisting that these could be dealt with only after unconditional withdrawal and the deployment of UNEF at strategically sensitive points on the Israeli-Egyptian front.

On three key issues—the conditions of withdrawal, the restoration of the armistice regime with Egypt, and Israel's refusal to let the international force be stationed on its territory—Israel came into confrontation with both the United Nations and United States. These three points of difference, never resolved, became the foci of friction and mistrust between Israeli officials and soldiers and the UN Secretariat and UN peacekeepers. The personal bitterness can be traced primarily to these political differences, although individual incivilities and prejudices continued to mar Israel-UN relations. The difficulties, although less pronounced than in the early 1950s, reinforced Israel's preference for "managing without the UN" both at this time and later.¹⁶

The core difference over the conditions of withdrawal first emerged in the contradictory approaches taken by Hammarskjöld and Eban in the slow-moving talks at United Nations headquarters, which lasted from November 1956 to February 1957. At the General Assembly session that first debated the withdrawal issue, Eban had explained Israel's concerns. Whatever was demanded by way of "restoring Egypt's rights and respecting Egypt's security," he argued, must be accompanied by "equally binding Egyptian undertakings to respect Israel's security and Israel's rights Egypt's obligation to abstain from acts of hostility, to liquidate its commando activities, to abolish its illicit discrimination against Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal and in the Gulf of Aqaba, is equal and identical in law to Israel's obligation to respect the established armistice lines."¹⁷

At the time (November 1), despite the pressure for a cease-fire and unconditional withdrawal, Israel's position left room for accommodation. Neither had Israel, which continued to drive into the Sinai and awaited the planned Franco-British assault on the canal area, yet repudiated the armistice agreement with Egypt or spurned the presence of UN troops on the captured territory pending peace negotiations with Egypt. Within a week the political situation had been transformed: All the warring parties accepted the cease-fire, the British and French within thirty-six hours of their assault on the canal area; an international emergency force had been authorized to secure the cease-fire, take over the Egyptian territory evacuated by Israel, and stand guard on the frontier; the political temperature had been heightened by Bulganin's threats, making quick UN action urgent; and, world opinion turned almost unanimously against Israel as a result of the provocative speech by Ben Gurion in the Knesset on November 7.

Ben Gurion's "Victory" Speech Backfires

In a mood of exhilaration at the "greatest and most glorious military operation in the annals of our people" Ben Gurion laid down the principles of Israeli policy:

1. The armistice agreement with Egypt was "dead and buried" and, as a consequence, the armistice lines between Israel and Egypt had no more validity
2. Israel was ready to enter into direct negotiations for a stable peace, cooperation, and good-neighborly relations with Egypt
3. If Egypt was unprepared for permanent peace, so long as it observed the armistice

agreement Israel would also do so.

He added a fourth principle, which was to prove an irritant in UN-Israel relations for the next decade: On no account would Israel agree to the stationing of a "foreign force," no matter how called, "in her territory *or in any of the areas occupied by her*" (emphasis added).

The general reaction to Ben Gurion's announcement was "confusion and consternation." Greater pressure was placed on Israel to withdraw. Noting Pearson's chagrin at the "offensive speech," one Canadian commentator concluded that whatever sympathy for Israel's grievances existed at the United Nations, Ben Gurion almost threw it away.¹⁸ News of the "victory speech" reached Washington on November 7, where it was judged provocative. That afternoon Eisenhower wrote Ben Gurion that he viewed with deep concern his statement that Israel did not intend to withdraw from Egyptian territory, recalling that the General Assembly resolution demanding that Israeli forces withdraw to the armistice line had been introduced by the United States. Any such decision by Israel would "seriously undermine" the efforts to restore peace to the Middle East and "could not but bring about the condemnation of Israel as a violator of the principles as well as the directives of the United Nations." It would be a "matter of the greatest regret to all my countrymen if Israeli policy on a matter of such grave concern to the world ... should in any way impair the friendly cooperation between our two countries."

In transmitting the letter to Israeli Minister Reuven Shiloah, Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr., was even more blunt. Speaking for Dulles, then in the hospital, Hoover warned that refusal by Israel to withdraw its troops "would lay it open to the charge that it was gravely endangering world peace and rendering it difficult or impossible for the United Nations to accomplish its purposes." It was "virtually inevitable" that Israel's refusal to comply with the assembly resolutions could lead to sanctions or even its suspension or expulsion from the United Nations.¹⁹

Deeply concerned by Bulganin's letter, Eisenhower's blunt warning, and the near-unanimous adoption in the General Assembly (only Israel voted against) of a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire and unconditional withdrawal, Ben Gurion backed off. A formula was drafted for acceptance of the General Assembly's resolution whereby the government of Israel declared its willingness to "withdraw its forces "from Egypt immediately upon conclusion of satisfactory arrangements with the United Nations in connection with the emergency international force."²⁰ To Eisenhower, a chastened Ben Gurion pledged that Israel would "willingly" withdraw its forces upon the conclusion of "satisfactory arrangements" for the entry of the international force to the Suez Canal and begin the negotiations with Hammarskjöld on the modalities and conditions of withdrawal. But, despite this yielding, Ben Gurion never retreated from two key points in his victory speech: that the armistice agreement with Egypt was null and void and that Israel would not allow the UN force to operate on its side of the line. Further, in a lengthy exchange with U.S. ambassador Edward Lawson, Ben Gurion spoke in "serious and often sharp tones" about the strong words Hoover had used with Shiloah, and seemed upset and resentful over the threats of sanctions and expulsion from the United Nations.²¹

The Talks with Hammarskjöld: Slim Expectations

Against this background of unreserved U.S. support for the UN resolutions, negotiations with Hammarskjöld commenced toward the end of November. By then the secretary general had been

to Cairo to arrange for UNEF's arrival, deployment, and functioning on Egyptian soil. An Israeli aide-mémoire submitted to Hammarskjöld on November 21 in preparation for the talks affirmed that the Israeli forces would be withdrawn for various distances along the entire Egyptian front, and it reaffirmed the November 8 pledge to Hammarskjöld that all its forces would leave Egypt upon the conclusion of "satisfactory arrangements" with the United Nations.²² Far from appeasing majority sentiment in the United Nations, the partial withdrawal of the foreign forces and Israel's conditioning complete withdrawal on "satisfactory arrangements" precipitated another Afro-Asian resolution. Adopted by the assembly on November 24 by a vote of 63-5, with 10 abstentions, Resolution 1120 (XI) noted the "limited compliance" with the withdrawal resolution and called on France, Israel, and the United Kingdom to withdraw "forthwith." Again the United States voted for the Afro-Asian resolution and even abstained on a Belgian amendment that would have noted that all three countries had withdrawn part of their troops; the Belgian gesture, the Americans explained, would have created the impression that the United Nations was wavering in its determination that there must be immediate withdrawal.²³

By early December Israel was committed to an immediate pullback from the canal area and a total withdrawal from Egyptian territory. It would not withdraw, however, without safeguards and assurances for border security and navigation through the Gulf of Aqaba and "satisfactory arrangements" for the UNEF operation.

The Hammarskjöld-Eban talks of December 5 and 12 produced an agreement to coordinate Israel's troop withdrawal with UNEF's deployment. But Hammarskjöld could not provide assurances on the Gulf of Aqaba or on the UNEF takeover of strategic points on the Sinai frontier. Neither could he guarantee that the Egyptian civilian administration (or even the army) would not return to Gaza. But, as Eban told the State Department, Israel's primary concern was the duration of UNEF's stay. Under Egyptian pressure, UNEF could be forced to leave "before its mission was accomplished." The U.S. delegation responded that it had confidence in Hammarskjöld and "was giving him its full support." As for UNEF, the secretary general had said that withdrawal of the force was not a unilateral matter to be determined by Egypt. An attack on UN troops would be an attack on the world.²⁴

Hammarskjöld continued to be pressed by the Arab bloc on Israel's immediate withdrawal. Following earlier meetings of the Israeli delegation to the General Assembly with Hammarskjöld and Bunche (January 14, 1957), Dayan presented a new withdrawal plan to Burns, stipulating that all of the Sinai would be evacuated by January 22 except for Sharm el-Sheikh. The Israeli cabinet endorsed Ben Gurion's three proposals: that IDF units remain in the western coastal strip until free passage was assured in the straits and the canal; that UN observers, but not UN forces, be assigned to Gaza; and that the United Nations demilitarize all, or at least the eastern half, of Sinai. This policy line was approved by the Knesset on the 23rd.²⁵

Tension between Israel and the United Nations mounted in late January when Hammarskjöld moved away from his earlier stand that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway. He also refused to separate the Gaza and straits issues, appearing to view the free-navigation question as leverage to induce Israeli agreement on Gaza. As Hammarskjöld's biographer notes, the secretary general was torn between his sympathy for Israel's reluctance to withdraw without adequate assurances and his obligation to proceed according to the resolutions of the assembly, which demanded unconditional withdrawal. Israel's sticking points were the very reasons it had gone to war: Egyptian coastal batteries dominated the Straits of Tiran and access to Eilat; the Gaza Strip, placed under Egyptian administration in the armistice agreement, had been used as a base for the fedayeen raids; and Egypt continued to avoid commitment on the future freedom of

navigation for Israel through the Suez Canal. Israel was "naturally unwilling to withdraw," wrote Brian Urquhart, "without serious guarantees on these points."²⁶

Standoff in UN-Israel Negotiations. The sharp differences between Israel and Hammarskjöld were dramatized toward the end of January. Ben Gurion reverted to earlier, tougher demands: UN guarantees on Gaza, Aqaba, and the canal as a condition for Israel's withdrawal as well as a continued Israeli presence in Gaza. An Israeli aide-mémoire submitted on January 23 (A/3511) stated that Israeli forces would be withdrawn from the Sharm el-Sheikh area when UNEF forces took up positions there. UNEF must stay in the gulf area until a peace settlement was achieved. Although no Israeli forces would stay in Gaza, some formula was sought that would exclude Egypt and involve the United Nations, local administrators, and Israeli elements, "particularly in the field of internal security," in administering the strip.²⁷

Ben Gurion's toughened stance ran directly contrary to the UN premises. In an extensive report to the General Assembly the next day (January 24) Hammarskjöld set forth basic principles not readily compatible with Israel's position. Military action could not be allowed to change the existing *status juris*. Any solution required "scrupulous regard" for General Assembly decisions and respect for international agreements such as the armistice agreements, which had given Egypt control of Gaza and provided the only legal-political basis for a new settlement. Use of a UN peacekeeping force (other than for enforcement) required the consent of the states on whose territory the force was to operate; it could not be used to force a settlement. UNEF would be placed on the Egypt-Israeli border to prevent the cycle of raid and reprisal. When Israeli troops withdrew from Sharm el-Sheikh, UN troops would follow them in, as elsewhere in the Sinai, and might stay if necessary.

But the UNEF operation was a peacekeeping, not an enforcement, action. As for Gaza, it would continue to be governed under the provisions of the Egypt-Israel Armistice Agreement. Israeli control over the area, whether administrative or military, was out of the question. At the same time, the report observed that, to be effective, UNEF must be stationed on both sides of the armistice lines. It might also be "desirable" to determine the legal status of the Gulf of Aqaba and to ask the parties to give assurances that they would not assert belligerent rights. Withdrawal, however, could not be made contingent on such assurances.²⁸

The February 2 Resolutions. In the face of the apparent deadlock in the Hammarskjöld-Eban talks, the United States and Canada contrived a double-barreled formula: (1) calling on Israel to complete withdrawal of its armed forces behind the armistice lines without further delay while (2) approving the measures proposed in the secretary general's report of January 24 to make arrangements ("after consultations with the parties concerned") for UNEF's deployment on both sides of the armistice line and in the Gaza Strip. To avoid linking the two components of the plan, separate resolutions were adopted on February 2. Resolution I (as it was designated) deplored Israel's noncompliance with repeated requests to complete its withdrawal "without further delay." Resolution II called on Egypt and Israel scrupulously to observe the provisions of the armistice agreement and "considered" that the maintenance of the armistice agreement required placing UNEF on the Egypt-Israel armistice line and implementing the measures proposed in the Hammarskjöld report. The first resolution (1125—XI), backed by the Afro-Asian bloc, was adopted by an overwhelming vote of 74-2 (France and Israel opposing), with two abstentions (Luxembourg and the Netherlands). The second (1126-XI) garnered a much smaller majority of 56 in favor, with the Soviet bloc and the Arab countries among the 22 abstentions.

Neither Israel nor the Arab states were completely happy with the outcome. Israel complained that Resolution II had been watered down to ensure maximum support at the cost of withholding

from Hammarskjöld a specific mandate for UNEF's functions, while Egyptian foreign minister Mahmoud Fawzi objected to any linkage of the two resolutions, which ran the risk of making the withdrawal conditional. Yet Jerusalem was heartened by Ambassador Lodge's statement in the General Assembly on February 2. The United States was now on record declaring that, to be effective, the UN force "must serve as a restraint against any attempt to exercise belligerent rights or to engage in hostile actions" contrary to the armistice agreement or UN decisions. Reaffirming the U.S. position taken in the General Assembly on January 28, Lodge stated that it was "essential" that UNEF units be stationed at the Straits of Tiran "to separate Egyptian and Israeli land and sea forces." Such separation was essential, he argued, until it was clear that "the nonexercise of any claimed belligerent rights has established in practice the peaceful conditions which must govern navigation in waters having such an international interest."²⁹

An Arab Challenge. The Arab side was troubled by Lodge's declaration, enlisting the Nonaligned leadership to plead their cause even before the resolutions were adopted. India's foreign minister Krishna Menon admonished Lodge that the only purposes of the resolutions were to achieve total withdrawal of Israeli forces and "restitute full observance" of the armistice agreement. UNEF could not go anywhere, he argued, except with Egypt's consent, and the status of the Tiran straits was a separate issue. If UNEF went anywhere in Sharm el-Sheikh, it could be only on the same basis as in the Sinai, that is, "to remove aggressors" or to "secure and supervise withdrawal." Egypt's foreign minister Fawzi added that UNEF's mandate was subject to Egyptian will and could be placed "only and exclusively" on both sides of the armistice line and only with the approval of Egypt and Israel according to the case. Menon backed him up. Indian troops in the UN force would not go anywhere without Egypt's consent, and the function of the force at Sharm el-Sheikh would be the same as for the Sinai: to supervise and secure the evacuation. Lodge agreed with Fawzi: UNEF should not be used to settle any question, and wherever it went it did so with the consent of Egypt.³⁰

Still, Lodge did not back off on the two essentials in his January 28 statement: nonexercise of belligerent rights and the international character of the Gulf of Aqaba. He did agree, however, to state publicly that withdrawal "without delay" meant "immediately" or "at once." So, while Israel appeared to win the round, the Arab challenge reinforced elements in the State Department that urged narrowing the scope of any assurances given to Israel with respect to free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba. These elements were strengthened during the spring and summer by Saudi Arabia's repeated challenges to the principle that the gulf was an international waterway and that Israel was entitled to exercise free navigation, as will be noted below.

Meanwhile, the new resolutions were far from bridging differences between Israel and the United Nations. Hammarskjöld told Lodge that at a forthcoming meeting with the Israelis he would demand a "clear-cut declaration" from Israel that it would implement the first resolution. Should Israel refuse unless Egypt agreed to a UNEF presence in Sharm el-Sheikh, he would point out that the sponsors of the second resolution intended for UNEF to be deployed in Sharm el-Sheikh, but that this was subject to the consent of Egypt. "As a matter of principle," Israel should agree, said the secretary general, to accept UNEF on its side of the line. Moreover, Israel must withdraw its civil administration as well as its military from Gaza. In view of the "slipperiness" that had characterized past discussions, he told Lodge he would now insist on "record discussions" that would be attended by a representative from the Advisory Committee.³¹

Israel gave no sign of backing down. The Israeli cabinet on February 23 reaffirmed the policy of holding on to the Sinai's east coast until freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba was guaranteed and of retaining the Gaza strip. Israel's unyielding stance brought a strongly worded

message from President Eisenhower admonishing Ben Gurion to comply with the UN resolutions, which, he stressed, had been sponsored by the United States and other nations "deeply and directly interested in the establishment of peaceful conditions in the Near East." The "essential first step must be the completion of the withdrawal of Israel forces ... without further delay."³² The president's message signaled a renewed campaign of pressure from Washington and the United Nations, including a transparently veiled threat of sanctions if Israel persisted in delaying the withdrawal of its forces.

Ben Gurion stood his ground. In a reply that Dulles termed "disappointing" he reiterated that Israel would withdraw its troops from Egypt upon the conclusion of "satisfactory arrangements" designed to "ensure for Israel security against acts of belligerency by land or sea." In conveying the Ben Gurion message, Eban told Deputy Under Secretary of State Murphy that Israel also deplored statements threatening sanctions. In addition, it still awaited Hammarskjöld's replies to two requests: that Egypt agree to "mutual and full abstention" from belligerent acts on withdrawal of Israeli troops, and that UNEF be deployed along the western shore of the Gulf until another means was agreed upon for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation.³³

The Scene Shifts to Washington

Although these demands were advanced as essential, it became clear that what Israel sought above all were assurances, not from the United Nations, but from Washington that would effectively keep the Gulf of Aqaba open and deter fedayeen raids from Gaza. Ben Gurion made it quite clear to Eban that he distinguished between "UN guarantees" that were "worthless" and U.S. guarantees that "might satisfy our basic interests." Particularly vital to Israel were assurances that the UN presence would remain at Sharm el-Sheikh until more permanent arrangements could be made and that the United States would commit itself to Israel's right to free and innocent passage.³⁴

With the Hammarskjöld negotiations deadlocked, the center of activity shifted to Washington. The administration was caught in a dilemma. At the UN and within the administration there was talk of sanctions to force Israel to withdraw, and the administration was fully committed to support the United Nations. But domestic opinion was turning favorable to Israel. Israel was attracting widespread support for its demand for free passage in the gulf and security against renewed Egyptian hostility. The administration was not unaffected by these sentiments, and sought a compromise.³⁵

While supporting Hammarskjöld on the basics, the administration was already working on a formula to break the deadlock. The next day (Saturday, February 9) Dulles phoned Eisenhower (then vacationing in Thomasville, Georgia) to lay out the department's line of reasoning: Vital for Israel was assured access to the Gulf of Aqaba. Jerusalem would not be satisfied, said the secretary, with "such hopes as we may hold out for UN action," so "we have to give them assurance outside the context of the UN." Such assurances might take the form of a declaration by a group of maritime nations that the gulf was an international waterway and if the straits were blocked these nations would consider it an act of aggression. As for Gaza, under the armistice agreement it had been "turned over" to Egypt for administration and policing. The United States would like to see UNEF go in and control it but this had to be worked out on a voluntary basis. In any event, "we don't think this is vital from the standpoint of the Israelis."³⁶

The Aide-Mémoire of February 11

The U.S. formula to break the deadlock was embodied in an aide-mémoire handed to Eban by Dulles on February 11. It defined the U.S. position and the limits on U.S. assurances to Israel. Despite Israeli misgivings, which were partly met in an understanding Dulles reached later that month with Foreign Minister Meir, it was on this basis that the Israelis evacuated the last of its military forces from both Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza on March 5. But more than two weeks of hard bargaining and political confrontation lay ahead before an understanding was reached. The document made no concessions on Gaza: Israeli withdrawal must be "prompt and unconditional, leaving the future of the Gaza Strip to be worked out through [the] efforts and good offices of the United Nations." With respect to the Gulf of Aqaba, the U.S. aide-mémoire was responsive to Israeli concerns, declaring that the Gulf "comprehends international waters and that no nation has the right to prevent free and innocent passage in the Gulf and through the Straits giving access thereto." Dulles also pledged that, in the absence of some overriding decision to the contrary, as by the International Court of Justice, the United States, "on behalf of vessels of United States registry, is prepared to exercise the right of free and innocent passage and to join with others to secure general recognition of this right." All this depended on prior withdrawal in accordance with the UN resolutions.³⁷

The U.S. aide-mémoire went a long way to meet Israel's basic demands, but Israel's first reaction was that the document did not meet some of Israel's key concerns. On Aqaba, Israel needed a "simultaneous liquidation by withdrawal and by cessation of blockade." Israel would put forward its "counterproposals," based on Israeli withdrawal, together with an affirmation of free navigation through the straits, an exchange of affirmations of nonbelligerency, and withdrawal of its military forces from Gaza with "discussion" of the strip's future. Israel remained apprehensive about Hammarskjöld's position.

Dulles was patently put out that Israel did not appreciate the extent of the administration's commitment and the wizardry Dulles himself had displayed in finding a formula that would break the deadlock and at the same time meet Israel's vital needs. Arrangements for Aqaba and Gaza had to be worked out through the United Nations, he insisted, and Washington "continue[d] to support the Secretary General in his handling of the matter." Dulles tried to deflect Israel's demand for a pledge of non-belligerency from Egypt, which he was convinced could not be achieved and was of small value anyway. Statements couched in generalities resulted in complications. Besides, to place greater reliance upon Egyptian assurances than upon U.S. assurances seemed to be grasping shadow rather than substance. He "hoped" Israel would not reject the "American suggestion," which had serious and far-reaching implications,³⁸

Dulles's exasperation with the Israeli reaction to the U.S. aide-mémoire mounted with Ben Gurion's response in an Israeli aide-mémoire delivered four days later. Although Israel acknowledged the value of the U.S. position—in particular the affirmation that the Gulf constituted international waters and that as a precautionary measure UNEF should move into the area as Israeli forces withdrew—the aide-mémoire fell short of meeting Israeli concerns. UNEF units should be stationed along the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba until a peace settlement was achieved. Failing such an arrangement, Israel wanted a "precise guarantee" for the specific protection of Israel-bound shipping, including a public declaration of U.S. policy embodying the guarantee of free navigation and similar declarations by other maritime powers. As for Gaza, the essential point was that if Egypt reoccupied the area it would be disastrous and pose a grave threat to Israel, and this was a major Israeli preoccupation.³⁹

Before his meeting with Eban, Dulles had reported to the president that the Israeli reply was "extremely unsatisfactory and seems to misapprehend the nature of our aide-mémoire." The Israelis assumed that "we are acting for all the world and all they have to do is sit down and negotiate with us." The aide-mémoire could only state the U.S. position as a maritime power and declare it in the United Nations, but everything was predicated on Israel's getting out first.⁴⁰

Now, as later, there was a profound divergence on the extent of U.S. power in the United Nations. Israel believed that Washington called the tune in the United Nations and what Dulles wanted could get done; the real decision was made in Washington and that is where the "negotiations" should take place. Dulles, on the other hand, was sensitive to the U.S. need to bring along a UN majority to give international credence to any solution and provide the political underpinning for an international peacekeeping operation. In particular, the United States must avoid being seen as unresponsive to Arab political needs and thus driving them into Moscow's arms. Leaving the matter in the hands of Dag Hammarskjöld held the advantage also of limiting U.S. commitments, and thus helping mollify Arab opinion.⁴¹

Dulles felt that the United States had gone as far as possible "to make it easy and acceptable to the Israelis to withdraw" and to go any further would almost surely jeopardize Western influence in the Middle East. On Saturday morning, February 16, Dulles, Lodge, and Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey met with President Eisenhower in Thomasville. If nothing were achieved over the weekend, the United States faced the necessity of dealing with the problem in the General Assembly early the following week. The prospect was that the Arab countries in association with the Soviet Union would take things into their own hands. Eisenhower concluded that to convince Ben Gurion to change his policy, the United States must support the Arab resolution calling on states to suspend not merely government aid but private assistance to Israel. Such a move, the president wrote later, "would be no hollow gesture." At the same time, Eisenhower suggested that the entire text of the aide-mémoire of February 11 be made public—parts had already leaked to the press— together with an explanatory statement. Dulles and Humphrey would get in touch with American Jewish leaders to mobilize Jewish sentiment in support of the president's position.⁴²

Shortly after his return from Thomasville, Dulles met with Eban at the secretary of state's residence, and a follow-up meeting was held there the next day (Sunday, February 17). Israel wanted "some suitable form of assurance" on Aqaba, apart from the declaration of U.S. policy. Israel had no lack of trust of the United States but a deep distrust of Nasser. The "missing link" could be provided by a General Assembly endorsement of UNEF's functions in accord with Lodge's January 28 statement and a statement of intentions by the United States and other maritime powers setting forth clearly their commitment to freedom of passage for all nations. On Gaza, Israel wanted a staged withdrawal of Israeli forces and arrival in Gaza of a UN mission to decide Gaza's future.

The secretary did not conceal his impatience with the Israelis. There could be no material modifications in the aide-mémoire of February 11. The United States had gone as far as it could "without encroaching upon the authority" of the UN and the secretary general. And if withdrawal did not take place, there would be a "multiplicity of trouble affecting our relations officially with the Government of Israel." Dulles even conjured up "grave developments," such as "divisions along racial and religious lines" at home, and the possibility of the Soviet Union injecting itself into the area ostensibly to assist the United Nations. Israel had "gravely miscalculated" if it thought that there was a chance of negotiating and settling these issues prior to withdrawal.⁴³

Eisenhower was caught between his commitment to a policy that saw compliance with the UN

resolution as crucial to solution of both the Suez problem and "Israeli-Arab feuding," and the widespread pro-Israel feeling in Congress and the country. He decided to mobilize congressional and public support for the tough policy decided upon in Thomasville: to back UN sanctions against Israel if withdrawal were delayed any longer.

On February 20, he cut short his vacation and returned to Washington for a two-and-one-half hour meeting with a bipartisan group of congressional leaders that night. His message was that Israel would soon withdraw if the United States stood firm. Israel's noncompliance with the UN resolution was the obstacle to the return of peace to the Middle East. Unless the United States backed the UN, Soviet influence in the Arab world would expand. He conjured up the consequences: interruption of the flow of oil, continued blockage of the Suez Canal, a serious crash of the French and British economies, and an increased possibility of a general war. He was aware of the congressional opposition to sanctions against Israel, but sanctions could take various forms. Restrictions had been applied on trade with Russia and Egypt and the flow of oil to Britain and France delayed until it was certain they would withdraw from Egyptian territory. Dulles argued that U.S. firmness was crucial "since much of the world, including the Israeli government, believed that Israel could in crucial moments control U.S. policy." Moreover, to allow Israel to defy the withdrawal resolution would "involve the breakdown of the whole world order we are trying to create through the UN." If the United States refused to go along with the UN, a serious blow would be dealt the organization and the chance of future war increased. Under pressure Israel would withdraw. Some in the group raised concerns about the "double standard" in applying sanctions to Israel and the possibility that Egypt would become stubborn after an unconditional withdrawal. The consensus, however, expressed by Sen. Francis B. Russell and Speaker Sam Rayburn was that the United States had to speak with one voice, and that was the president's.⁴⁴

The congressional endorsement strengthened the administration's resolve. The president left the meeting to broadcast the same message to the American people: The UN had no choice but to exert pressure on Israel to withdraw. Nor did he exclude sanctions nor did he specify whether these might be moral, economic, or military. Although he cautioned Egypt that the world community would deal firmly with it if Cairo failed to respect the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement or other international obligations, such violations by Egypt "constitute no justification for the armed invasion of Egypt by Israel which the United Nations is now seeking to undo."

The president reaffirmed the assurance of February 11 that the United States regarded the Gulf of Aqaba as international waters. No nation had the right to prevent free and innocent passage there, and the United States was prepared to exercise this right itself and join with others to secure general recognition of this right. His central theme was the same as that conveyed to the congressional group earlier that evening "If the United Nations once admits that international disputes can be settled by using force, then we will have destroyed the very foundation of the organization and our best hope of establishing world order." Eisenhower repeated the same offers that Israel had already found wanting: the use of U.S. influence in and out of the UN to give Israel the security it sought against raids from Gaza and shipping blockades in the Gulf of Aqaba. But he refused to commit the United States to any absolute guarantees as a policy incompatible with the UN charter. And in an open denial of Israel's demand for advance assurances, he stated: "Should a nation which attacks and occupies foreign territory in the face of United Nations disapproval be allowed to impose conditions on its own withdrawal?" and concluded "the United Nations must not fail."⁴⁵

At the same time he sent a stern warning to Ben Gurion that unless Israel announced "the

intention immediately to comply with the withdrawal resolution," there could be "no assurance that the next decisions soon to be taken by the UN will not involve serious implications." He appealed to the prime minister to rely on "our national assurances reinforcing the assurances of the United Nations" on the future of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gaza Strip. The United States fully supported the UN in this matter, and he concluded: "I would greatly deplore the necessity of the United States taking positions in the United Nations, and of the United Nations itself having to adopt measures, which might have farreaching effects upon Israel's relations throughout the world."⁴⁶

The pressure on Israel mounted. On February 22, the Afro-Asian group introduced a resolution that called on all states to deny any military, economic, or financial assistance and facilities to Israel in view of its continued defiance of the assembly's call for withdrawal.

Still, the U.S. administration was sensitive to congressional sentiment that Israel was justified in seeking stronger assurances, and Dulles agreed that the United States "could work toward assurances" provided Israel first withdrew. The tactical problem was to rein in the UN General Assembly majority, which was pressing for sanctions. Ben Gurion urged a postponement of the General Assembly session for a few days to allow time for the cabinet to meet and hear Eban's report.⁴⁷ Both the British and French also counseled against any course that would result in sanctions.⁴⁸

Breaking the Deadlock: February 24 to March 2

On February 24 Hammarskjöld read into the record a statement supplementing his report to the General Assembly of February 11 (A/5327). UNEF would, "in the first instance," take over Gaza from the military and civilian control of Israel. Egypt was willing and ready, he declared, to make arrangements for UNEF's deployment on the armistice line at the Gaza Strip and for the "effective interposition of the Force between the armed forces of Egypt and Israel."

That day Eban returned from Jerusalem with an amended Israeli position. It was not realistic for Israel to expect firm guarantees on Aqaba, that is, that UNEF stay until a permanent settlement was achieved or international guarantees given for Israeli shipping through the straits. Israel now wanted a declaration of intent by the United States concerning U.S. rights in the gulf and that U.S. flag vessels, in fact, use the straits for commerce. Also desirable would be a clearer definition of "free and innocent passage." With respect to Gaza, the only "indispensable condition" was that Egypt not return. But it was clear that in the end Israel would have to swallow this as well.

Secretary Dulles welcomed the revised Israeli position as a "sincere and constructive" effort to find a solution. Israel was assured the United States would defend its shipping rights in the Gulf of Aqaba, though the U.S. government could not impose its will on shipowners or compel U.S. ships to go to any particular place. The government could just allay apprehensions. As for the definition of free and innocent passage, the United States endorsed that of the International Law Commission, which Eban said was satisfactory. (As recited by the legal adviser, Herman Phleger, the definition read: "Passage is innocent so long as the ship does not use the territorial sea for committing any acts prejudicial to the security of the coastal state or contrary to ... other rules of international law.") Dulles did not see any obstacle to U.S. "recognition" of a declaration by Israel of its inherent right to protect its own ships, and that an attack on ships carrying out peaceful missions through the straits would give rise to the right of self-defense under Article 51

of the UN Charter. With respect to a joint declaration of the maritime powers of their intention to exercise the right of passage, Dulles said it might be better for each nation to make its own declaration because of preferences in wording. On two points, Dulles directed the Israelis to the secretary-general of the United Nations: any arrangement for including naval units in the UN force and including assurances that UNEF would not leave the straits area until the General Assembly had been given notice would have to be worked out with Hammarskjöld. More generally, Dulles bade Israel to trust the United States: Israel would have no cause to regret its decision to withdraw under circumstances that "involved an act of faith in the U.S. and the UN."⁴⁹

On Gaza, however, Dulles would have none of the Israeli proposal. The future of Gaza, he said, had to be worked out on some basis that would involve Egyptian consent. The General Assembly could not rewrite the armistice agreement.

To Israel, the secretary general's responses to the vexing problems raised at a meeting the next day (February 25) were far from reassuring: After Israeli withdrawal, would UNEF prevent acts of belligerency? Yes, but UNEF would never be used to force a solution to a controversial political or legal problem. Would the secretary general give notice to the General Assembly before withdrawing UNEF from Sharm el-Sheikh? The indicated procedure would be for him to inform the Advisory Committee, "which would determine whether the matter should be brought to the attention of the Assembly." Would a naval unit be added to UNEF to ensure free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba? The question was beyond the authority given to the secretary general by the Assembly. On Gaza, Hammarskjöld would not budge.⁵⁰

Though the arrangement for UNEF's deployment at Sharm el-Sheikh was more responsive to Israeli concerns (partially allayed by Dulles's aide-mémoire of February 11) Hammarskjöld could not provide formal reassurance that the force would remain. He was determined to proceed pragmatically, Urquhart observed, "without raising in the Assembly problems on which both Israel and Egypt would be compelled to take intransigent and conflicting positions."⁵¹

A solution would have to take the form of a U.S.-Israel understanding. Dulles's staff prepared a draft resolution that balanced: (1) a demand that Israel withdraw or face sanctions, with (2) international recognition that no claim to belligerent rights could be exercised in the Gulf of Aqaba and that a UN administration would be established in Gaza "with the acquiescence of Egypt." Dulles sent the draft to the president along with a memorandum embodying certain assurances to Israel and an "understanding" on what would follow withdrawal. With respect to Aqaba, the United States gave assurances that upon withdrawal of Israeli forces: (1) UNEF would move in to restrain any exercise of belligerent rights that would interfere with free passage; (2) the principal maritime powers would issue a declaration recognizing the right of free passage through the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba and that this freedom would, in fact, be exercised; and (3) the United States and others would acquiesce in an Israeli declaration that the use of armed force to prevent passage of Israeli ships would be regarded "an armed attack" within the meaning of Article 51 of the Charter, giving rise to the right of self-defense. With respect to Gaza, the United States gave its assurance that upon Israeli withdrawal, UNEF forces would move in to prevent violations of the armistice line and that, with Egypt's acquiescence, a UN administration would be established for an undefined period. The enjoyment of Israeli rights in Aqaba was conditioned on a solution of the Gaza problem; both issues "require the continuance of the 1949 Armistice Agreement."⁵²

At meetings with Eban that day (February 26) and Foreign Minister Meir the next, Dulles outlined the plan. He stressed U.S. reluctance to give any assurances on Aqaba if Israel failed to

comply with resolutions relating to Gaza or asserted rights seen as incompatible with the terms of the armistice agreement. A solution had to be found for the *whole* problem involving withdrawal of forces from both Aqaba and Gaza. He envisaged a gradual withdrawal of administrative elements from Gaza and their replacement by UNEF and by a UN administrative machinery. Israel could have confidence in the secretary general's statement of February 22, which envisaged a long-term arrangement for the area. (This was to prove a vain assumption.) At this point, Dulles did not go into detail, anticipating the meeting that afternoon of President Eisenhower with Prime Minister Guy Mollet and Foreign Minister Christian Pineau of France at which he proposed a U.S. formula for breaking the deadlock by parallel statements in the General Assembly by Israel and the United States as well as by like-minded UN members.⁵³

The Dulles-Meir Understanding: Assumptions and Assurances

Ben Gurion's initial reaction, Foreign Minister Meir told Dulles the next day, was favorable. Still, the cabinet would need two or three days to work out details and two or three points needed clarification. The secretary pressed for a quick decision. The UN could not be held off further unless there was at least agreement in principle to Israeli withdrawal. Dulles proposed that Israel announce the withdrawal in the General Assembly and then state what Israel "would expect to happen" afterward. That would not need assembly action. But it was important that what was said not be inconsistent with the factual situation and to avoid a situation in which Hammarskjöld would feel compelled to "throw a spanner into the machinery."⁵⁴

An understanding was reached, with which Hammarskjöld was to be "associated," setting forth the scenario to be followed and the assumptions on which Israel would withdraw. Parallel statements by Israel and the United States (along with like-minded states reinforcing the U.S. declaration) would stress a commitment to free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba and the expectation that UNEF deployment would not be transitory. The United States would express its hope that the UN force would not be suddenly withdrawn without "appropriate notification" to the United Nations. But no binding commitments were undertaken. At a meeting in the State Department to discuss "arrangements and procedures," Eban presented a copy of Israel's proposed statement on the right of passage through the Gulf of Aqaba, and it was agreed that the outstanding points discussed three days earlier might be covered in a bilateral exchange of notes.

But it was already clear that the two sides were recalling and interpreting the understanding being reached in a manner that suited their respective interests. The U.S. manner was to limit the scope of the assurance and of its commitments. Legal adviser Herman Phleger pointed out a number of "inaccuracies and clarifications" in the Israeli version of the February 24 conversation on Egyptian rights in Gaza (which varied considerably from an account prepared for Dulles by Assistant Secretary Rountree). With reference to innocent passage through the straits, the United States would reaffirm views set forth in the aide-mémoire of February 11, and if Lodge elaborated on this point he would do so on the basis of the definition of the International Law Commission. Phleger emphasized that the United States "might take note" of the proposed Israeli declaration concerning its rights in the Gulf of Aqaba, but "of course could not subscribe to the Israeli statement."⁵⁵

The Department of State was concerned that an Israeli "concerted propaganda campaign" would slant the negotiation on arrangements for withdrawal in a manner that "would not accord with our policy objectives." It was important that messages be sent to the Middle East to set the

record straight. No matter what commitments Israel had sought in return for leaving the Sinai and Gaza, the understanding was that Israel would announce the withdrawal based on UN resolutions and without conditions, though it would reserve its freedom of action if peaceful conditions did not continue to exist in the Gaza area. And, the administration emphasized—as it would repeatedly in coming months—that "no commitments or secret undertakings had been given by the U.S."⁵⁶

The diplomacy during the twenty-four hours prior to the statements made in the General Assembly on March 1 revolved around the administration's resistance to Israeli attempts to stretch the scope of U.S. assurances and UN responsibilities after withdrawal, in particular with respect to the UN mandate and the UN role in civil administration in Gaza. In a review of the text of the Israeli declaration, Dulles suggested certain modifications and corrections. An "agreed draft" of Meir's statement to the assembly emerged, and at a follow-up meeting at the secretary of state's residence that evening (February 28) Dulles declared that the draft "represented a scrupulous effort to conform to our understanding," requesting only that reference to UN resolutions be direct and not by reference to the U.S. memorandum. But throughout, the Americans took the view that the Israeli declaration was a unilateral statement of Israeli expectations that did not necessarily bind the United States beyond the positions taken in the February 11 aide-mémoire.⁵⁷

The State Department record of the meeting does not indicate that Lodge received instructions to "note favorably" the Israeli statement, as Brecher suggested. In a telephone exchange with Lodge following the meeting, Dulles said the Israelis might hope that the United Nations alone would carry out administrative functions in Gaza, but "undoubtedly" Egypt would become involved. Lodge expected statements from the Arabs and their supporters contradicting the Israelis. Would they then renege? Dulles did not think so, but trouble could ensue if Hammarskjöld repudiated previous statements or if the Egyptians would not let UNEF into certain areas. World opinion might then turn against the Egyptians. The important thing, Dulles stressed, was to "dispel the thought that we have made a secret deal. There is nothing that is not in the aide-mémoire or the President's speech."⁵⁸

In the same vein, the U.S. diplomatic missions in Arab capitals were assured that the United States had "made no unpublicized commitments to Israel regarding Israeli withdrawal and given Israel no guarantees." Any rumors of secret U.S.-Israel understandings or commitments, the U.S. missions were assured, "may be vigorously denied."⁵⁹

Still, it was clear that the Arab side would not be easily mollified. Even before the statements were delivered in the General Assembly on Friday afternoon (March 1), Arab objections were "vociferously voiced." Dulles alerted his senior staff to the "real danger if Egypt repudiated" its earlier assurances to Hammarskjöld on UNEF. The U.S. Mission in New York reported that Egyptian foreign minister Fawzi insisted that no declaration by Israel or other governments could be binding on Egypt. Fawzi was told that it was important that Egypt not renege on anything they had promised the secretary general. Such back-pedaling might provide Israel with an excuse not to fulfill its pledge to withdraw. But Egyptian reaction remained unpredictable.⁶⁰

Later that morning (March 1) Dulles called together the chiefs of mission of the Arab states in Washington—participating were representatives from Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Libya, and Yemen—to assure them that no unpublicized commitments had been made to Israel. U.S. policy was as stated in the February 11 aide-mémoire and the president's speech of February 20. There was no "secret agreement" under which Israel would receive \$125 million in return for U.S. bases in Israel, as rumored by the USSR's news agency, Tass. There

had been "no agreement or understanding expressed or implied, to induce Israel to withdraw." Israel wanted more definite assurances from the UN, but the United States had insisted that "they could not expect any prize or reward to result from their invasion of Egypt." Any steps taken on Gaza must be within the framework of the armistice agreement and the secretary general's report of February 22. When the Egyptian ambassador, Ahmed Hussein, stressed that Israel should receive no gain in any way from its aggression, Dulles agreed that Israel should not be rewarded, but "we could not repudiate" steps already taken by the UN such as the establishment of UNEF. Neither should "we deny ourselves forward moves merely for the purpose of denying them to Israel."⁶¹

Hammar skjöld's Skepticism. Shown a draft of the Israeli statement by Lodge, Hammar skjöld was "relatively pessimistic" and judged the "assumptions" on which Israel would withdraw impossible. He feared Israel would try to pin him down on the United Nations being the "agency" to take over Gaza in the expectation that the UN presence would be maintained in Gaza until a final peace settlement and not merely a settlement on Gaza's status. The understanding on Gaza, he noted, had originally read "initial takeover" by UNEF in Gaza, but the word "initial" had been crossed out in ink. He was also disturbed by indications that the U.S. statement, as well as those of the UK, France, Canada, and the Netherlands, would say that if the postwithdrawal situation did not lead to peaceful conditions, these countries would take action inside or outside the UN. Before the assembly met on March 1, Hammar skjöld told Lodge and Pearson how intolerable it would be for the UN if the withdrawal statements were based on assumptions neither legally possible nor supported by an assembly majority. Egypt, he had no doubt, would insist on at least token administration in Gaza and would probably want to go beyond that, though for the moment there appeared to be no intention of returning Egyptian military forces to Gaza. Lodge, after seeing Pearson, found him also "most pessimistic" as to whether the scheme would work in view of an Egyptian statement in the General Assembly that day. Hammar skjöld later said he was worried about the Israelis reserving their freedom of action if the Egyptians returned and accused the French of egging them on.⁶²

Whether Hammar skjöld's reservations made an impact on Lodge, they were certainly reflected in the tone of his statement to the assembly and foreshadowed the friction and mistrust that would mark the immediate aftermath of the General Assembly session. Hammar skjöld himself did not openly intervene during the debate so as not to risk "wrecking the slender chance the Washington talks provided of getting around a difficult corner in an atmosphere of studied vagueness."⁶³

The agreed scenario unfolded in the General Assembly on March 1. Meir announced Israel's plans for full and prompt withdrawal from the Sharm el-Sheikh area and the Gaza Strip on the basis of certain assumptions. Israel counted mainly on the assurances given by the United States and accepted by the secretary general concerning the Gulf of Aqaba, and on the understanding on Gaza reached in Washington. In Israel's interpretation, the UNEF would take over exclusive military and civilian control (as noted, the word "initial" before "takeover" had been struck out in ink) and would provide security and administration "for a transitory period ... until there is a peace settlement... or a definitive agreement on the future of the Gaza Strip."⁶⁴

Recriminations over U.S. Assurances. Meir was followed immediately by Lodge, who termed her assumptions about the straits "not unreasonable" but he deviated sharply on Gaza, reading in full Hammar skjöld's February 22 statement on the UNEF takeover of the Gaza Strip, thus restoring two qualifications—"in the first instance" and "in the transitional period"—absent from Meir's statement. Lodge went on to say that the future of Gaza must be worked out within the

framework of the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel and noted Egypt's "commendable forbearance ... during these last trying weeks." Lodge's statement also deviated in other respects from the draft shown Eban the previous day, lacking "forthrightness" in endorsing the Meir statement, as the Israelis later charged, and carrying a different "tone."⁶⁵ At the end of the meeting Hammarskjöld informed the assembly that he had instructed Burns to meet with Dayan the following day to complete plans for immediate Israeli withdrawal and the UNEF takeover.

Lodge's statement in the assembly caused consternation and anger in Israel. The Israeli cabinet went into an emergency Sabbath session, and Burns's projected meeting with Dayan was postponed. The statement, according to the Israelis, did not correspond to what had been promised in Washington and did not give the necessary basis for withdrawal. Eban was instructed to secure directly from Dulles a clear announcement of Egypt's nonreturn to Gaza and acknowledgement of Israel's right to self-defense.

Dulles insisted that Lodge's speech was basically what he had shown Eban the evening of February 28. The draft had contained nothing about "hopes and expectations stated by Israel," though Israel had requested something of the sort later. Although the negative locution "not unreasonable" might have been avoided, the statement met Israel's request. The substance of the action to be taken if the situation broke down had not been omitted as Israel implied. In delivering the speech, Lodge had spoken more emphatically about the points that would satisfy the Arabs; it was a matter of inflection and not a departure from text except at the end of the speech. On Gaza, Dulles stood firm: He did not see how an arrangement for the UN force and administration could be made without Egyptian acquiescence.⁶⁶

Although Dulles resisted Israeli attempts to enlarge the scope of U.S. "assurances," to soothe Israeli feelings President Eisenhower sent a message to Ben Gurion that he was "deeply gratified at the decision of your Government to withdraw promptly and fully behind the Armistice lines," adding that "Israel will have no cause to regret having thus conformed to the strong sentiment of the world community." More gratifying to Israel was the president's closing remark that it was "reasonable to entertain" the "hopes and expectations" voiced by Foreign Minister Meir in the General Assembly and that the United States "will seek that such hopes prove not to be vain." At the same time the administration also resisted Israel's request that it "take note" of Israel's position with respect to its rights to act in self-defense in certain circumstances to defend its rights in the Gulf of Aqaba and Gaza. Dulles's position was that the United States would stand on the president's letter to Ben Gurion. In fact, there was a difference of opinion regarding Gaza, and he "saw no use of spreading that difference on the record."⁶⁷

As Dulles told the president, he was concerned that "we do nothing ... which could not see the light of day." It was "terribly important that there be no suspicion" of secret agreements. Neither must there be any delay in withdrawal. Israel had the opportunity to get out on the basis of the "assumptions in the Israeli statement" that had gone unchallenged. Now he feared the Arabs would challenge these at the United Nations.⁶⁸

Indeed, rumors were spreading among the Arab delegations at the United Nations that the United States had given promises and committed itself to actions not known to others. Lodge assured Egyptian foreign minister Fawzi on March 4 that the U.S. position remained as stated on Friday (March 1) and Fawzi could assume that the U.S. views on Aqaba did not amount to "legislation" or even "recommendation." Neither would "force be used to put across that policy." Regarding Gaza, Fawzi understood the United States to maintain that Egypt's position was "absolutely according to the Armistice Agreement—nothing more and nothing less." Lodge

agreed that this was the U.S. stand.⁶⁹

Under the circumstances, Ben Gurion decided to withdraw without further bargaining. Foreign Minister Meir repeated Israel's withdrawal commitment in the assembly on March 4, and Egyptian foreign minister Mahmoud Fawzi renewed his reservation of Egypt's rights in the Gaza Strip. Dayan was instructed to meet with the UNEF commander, and the next day General Burns reported that he had agreed with Dayan to take over in Gaza on the night of March 6-7 and in Sharm el-Sheikh on March 8.⁷⁰

This arrangement papered over the differences and opened the way for the UN to take over from the departing Israeli forces, but the outcome left a heavy residue of disappointment, recrimination, and mistrust that would trouble Israeli relations with both the United Nations and Washington for months to come.

What Dulles was saying in the diplomatic exchanges he made public in news conferences on March 5 and again on March 26. Questioned about what commitments, if any, the United States had given Israel before the withdrawal, Dulles declared that the U.S. position had been "fully and totally set forth in the public documents in the case," citing primarily the aide-mémoire on February 11, the Lodge statement in the General Assembly on March 1, and President Eisenhower's letter to Ben Gurion of March 2. "There are," he declared on March 5, "no private assurances to anyone which go beyond or which are different from what is set forth in the public documents." As for the president's hopes that the expectations raised by Foreign Minister Meir in the United Nations would not prove vain, Dulles said that the letter "referred generally to the hopes and expectations for a better future for the area" and should not be interpreted as necessarily an endorsement of every detail. Again, at a news conference three weeks later, Dulles repeated that the U.S. position with respect to free and innocent passage through the Gulf of Aqaba and on Gaza remained that defined earlier.⁷¹

The restrictive interpretation on the "assurances" given Israel remained a matter of concern in Jerusalem for years. Indeed the myth of a "secret" U.S. guarantee to use force if necessary to keep the Tiran straits open was never completely laid to rest. The search for a "lost" document continued. As late as January 1992, a leading Israeli military analyst recalled a U.S. guarantee that "mysteriously got 'lost' on the eve of the Six Day War."⁷² That no such undisclosed document ever existed is the reasonable inference from the extensive documentation.

From Israel's perspective, the value of the U.S. commitment to assure free navigation in the Tiran straits and the Gulf of Aqaba was tested and found wanting during the crisis of May 1967, on the eve of the Six Day War. Nasser had declared the straits closed to Israeli shipping and to strategic cargoes bound for Eliat. The Israeli government pressed the Johnson administration to "implement" the assurance of 1957 by publicly affirming the right to free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba and, in particular, Israel's right under Article 51 of the UN Charter to use force if necessary to keep the straits open. Israel also harbored the expectation that President Johnson would carry out the pledge given by Secretary Dulles in February 1957 to "exercise" the right of free navigation on behalf of ships of U.S. registry by sending a flotilla escort (with or without the participation of other maritime states) to force the blockade.

Anxious to avoid aggravating the crisis, however, Johnson hesitated. Nor could anyone give him an authoritative interpretation of the commitment given Israel a decade earlier. Col. (later Gen.) Andrew J. Goodpaster, assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who had served as President Eisenhower's staff secretary during the Suez crisis and its aftermath, was sent to Gettysburg to seek clarification from the former president as to the meaning of the 1957 assurance; President Eisenhower's oracular response that "we meant what we said" did not dispel

the confusion. To Israeli Ambassador Avraham Harman, Eisenhower would only affirm that he would support President Johnson's position on the right to free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba. Some officials considered the 1957 assurance as at least a "moral" obligation to use force if necessary to keep the strait open, though all agreed it was not an explicit commitment and in any event there was not the time realistically to honor it. Actually, as noted above, at the time Egyptian Foreign Minister Fawzi and other Arab officials had been assured that no "force would be used to put across" the policy stated in the February 11, 1957, aide-memoire. The more restrictive interpretation prevailed.

As Ephraim Evron, the Israeli minister at the Washington embassy during the May 1967 crisis, was later to recall, Israeli officials were frustrated and bewildered at what was seen as an evasion of a clear commitment. In Israeli eyes, Dulles's promise to "exercise" the right of free passage meant that Washington was committed to assert that right actively in the circumstances of May 1967. Particularly dismaying to Israel was the administration's reluctance to "publicly reaffirm" the commitment of 1957 that it would regard armed interference with Israeli ships exercising the right of free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba as an attack on Israel entitling it to take action in self-defense. Even this reaffirmation President Johnson withheld so as to avoid the appearance of giving a green light to Israel to attack Egypt. Israel became convinced that it was being left in the lurch at the very time the commitment of 1957 was most needed. On June 5, the Israeli Air Force launched the attack.⁷³ But, as noted above, as early as March 1957 Israel already suspected that the U.S. assurance might prove of questionable value in a crisis.

Clash over Post-Suez Order

It did not take long for the radically opposed views of Israel and the United Nations to clash over the "expectations" concerning postwithdrawal events in Gaza and Sharm el-Sheikh. In a "long and disturbing talk" with Meir on March 4, Hammarskjöld was told that Israel would (1) exercise the right to go through the Straits of Tiran the next week and use warships if necessary and (2) return to Gaza if Egypt moved back there "in any way, shape or form." Meir also claimed that Israel's position had been endorsed by all who had stated in the General Assembly that Israel's assumptions and expectations were reasonable. In fact, Hammarskjöld told Lodge, Meir claimed that every single word of her March 1 statement had been endorsed by Secretary Dulles, including the reference to Israel's right of self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter. In these circumstances, Hammarskjöld complained, he could not negotiate in Cairo either on the Suez Canal or on UNEF arrangements for Gaza. He was precluded from negotiating on the latter because it would have to be on the basis of "Egypt's coming in some way," which would bring in the Israelis, the resumption of fighting, and the collapse of UNEF.⁷⁴

Hammarskjöld planned to negotiate directly with Nasser on UNEF arrangements and foresaw trouble on two points. UNEF's longevity depended on balancing its presence on the Egyptian side of the armistice line with the stationing of UNEF units on the Israeli side. This position was consistent with the UN resolution and with the interpretation of the United States and Canada among others. Israel was resisting. The second point was that Egypt wished to retain rights in Gaza for its bargaining value. This, too, he thought consistent with the position of the United States and the General Assembly that the future of the Gaza Strip had to be worked out within the framework of the armistice. Hammarskjöld wanted to be assured that the United States

agreed with Egypt on these points, and he asked for a statement from Secretary Dulles to fall back on when, as he expected, Israel challenged the basis of his negotiations with Nasser regarding Gaza.⁷⁵

Though Dulles would not issue such a statement, Hammarskjöld received the reassurance he requested. Dulles confirmed that he had never committed the United States to the proposition that if Egypt returned to Gaza, the Israelis would automatically have a right to reoccupy the area by force; all this would have to be worked out within the terms of the armistice agreement. As to what Meir had told Hammarskjöld the day before, "these private statements" should be ignored; her statement in the assembly (which the United States had seen in advance) was quite different and "binding." And in a formal letter to Lodge, Dulles reaffirmed that the United States had not acquiesced in Israel's right to forcibly reoccupy the Gaza Strip if an Egyptian administration returned in any form. Rather, the United States adhered scrupulously to the position stated by Lodge in the General Assembly that it was "the view of the United States that from a juridical standpoint the future of the Gaza Strip must, as the secretary general said, be worked out within the framework of the Armistice Agreement." Should there be any recurrence of hostilities or violation, the United States would consult with other UN members on appropriate action to be taken with the object of restoring peace. No commitment to take action "within or outside the United Nations" had been given.⁷⁶

To Ben Gurion, this restrictive interpretation was worrisome. In a reply to President Eisenhower's March 2 letter, he declared that Israel had evacuated the Gaza Strip—"which in my profound conviction ... we ought not to have to evacuate"—largely on the strength of the president's promise that "Israel will have no cause to regret" the action and that the "hopes and expectations" voiced by Meir will "prove not to be vain." During the previous four months the settlers of Israeli villages in the south had been able to live in peace, without fear of grenades being thrown into their houses or being ambushed while tilling their fields. Anxiety had now returned all the greater "lest the UN Secretary General, out of merely formalistic interpretations of his own, may seek to bring the Egyptians back to Gaza, which never belonged to them." He had reassured the settlers because the "President gave us assurances."⁷⁷

For the State Department, the assurances remained ambiguous, and the administration preferred to leave it that way. At a conference to review a State Department memorandum on U.S. objectives and policy for Egypt, the president observed that with Israel now in compliance with the United Nations, the Egyptians "must take great care as to the propriety of their position." In particular, the president closely questioned the memorandum's "hope" that Egypt will stay out of Gaza. He thought the United States was committed to more than that. Assistant Secretary Rountree recalled that the administration had throughout sought a "defacto non-return" of Egypt to Gaza and "we could not and would not go further than that."⁷⁸

From the Israeli perspective the assurances were much less ambiguous and the understanding reached at the end of February called for much more forthright action by Washington. Israel hoped for speedy action to "give effect to the readiness of the United States to exercise free and innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba." And the "compelling element" for Israel was to ensure that Gaza, for the transitory period described in the Israeli statement on March 1, would continue to be under the exclusive control of the United Nations.⁷⁹

An Egyptian Administrator Returns to Gaza

Hammar skjöld, faced with the need to work out arrangements with Nasser and for managing the UNEF operation as it entered Gaza, was troubled by the "basic contradiction" between the Israeli interpretation of the understandings and the "official legal stand" by which the United Nations was bound in light of the assembly policy. As he told the UNEF Advisory Committee, he had to follow a policy of taking step after step in an atmosphere of ambiguity. Was he to make an agreement with Egypt on the extent and form of UNEF's activities in the administration of Gaza? Was UNEF to open fire if the Egyptians tried to return to Gaza? Proceeding with the "vague encouragement" of Dulles, who urged him to go ahead with UNEF's entry into Gaza on an informal commitment from Nasser that Gaza would not be reoccupied, Hammar skjöld hoped the "initial" period might be lengthy enough to allow feelings to cool down and the UNEF operation to take hold. Hammar skjöld's hope for a cooling-down period was soon dashed. Within days of UNEF's entry into Gaza, Egypt challenged UNEF's administrative authority there. Cairo's announcement of the appointment of Gen. Hassan Abdul Latif as administrative governor of Gaza led Hammar skjöld to warn Egyptian foreign minister Fawzi that if these challenges persisted there would soon be a meeting of the assembly. This was hardly a frightening prospect for Egypt, In the end Hammar skjöld "could see no legal basis for objecting to an Egyptian administrative governor in Gaza, much as he might deplore the timing and form of the proposal, nor... could he maintain that it was UNEF's exclusive function to police the Strip and that Egyptians had no right to challenge UNEF's arrangements." UNEF's vital objectives were to avoid the return of Egyptian troops to Gaza and to stop the resumption of fedayeen raids.⁸⁰

In talking with Lodge, Hammar skjöld put the best face on this development: The Egyptian communique announcing the appointment of an administrative governor did not oppose the UNEF presence but referred to its limited functions. And, after all, "we had all said in the past we could probably not avoid some administrative functions" reverting to Egypt. But the announcement did set off alarm bells in Washington, as the U.S. press charged that the United Nations was not stopping Nasser's takeover of Gaza. The administration was unsure what course to follow Did Hammar skjöld favor an approach by U.S. ambassador Raymond A. Hare in Cairo urging Nasser to refrain from precipitate action that would "undo what had been achieved in the area?" Hammar skjöld suggested Hare speak along lines of the instructions he had sent to the UN under secretary Ralph J. Bunche, who had been sent to Cairo to direct UNEF's arrival: The UN did not question Egypt's legal rights, but no steps should be taken that prejudged a settlement of the problems mentioned in the secretary general's statement in the General Assembly on February 22.⁸¹

Nasser was not much impressed with arguments that serious complications could follow his "brusque" action, claiming there was really not much point in taking Western opinion seriously since anything he did would be turned against him by the British and French. He voiced the "strong suspicion" that the UN was engaged in a plot to internationalize Gaza. He also pressed Bunche to station UNEF "on both sides of the armistice demarcation line," proposing a half-mile (0.8-km) buffer zone on either side of the line. He volunteered there would be no more fedayeen raids if Israel also refrained from raids but insisted on dispatching the administrative governor to Gaza. Neither Bunche nor Hare was able to dissuade him. And when Hammar skjöld informed the Advisory Committee on March 14 of the arrival of the Egyptian administrator, none of its members challenged the right of the Egyptian to return there.⁸²

Meir, in consternation over Hammar skjöld's acquiescence in Egypt's move into Gaza and still furious over the alterations in the Lodge statement, hurried back to the United States to arrest the seeming erosion in the understanding and "expectations" on the basis of which Israel had just

withdrawn. In a two-hour exchange with Dulles on March 18, the deep differences in interests and perspectives were exposed. Meir declared that she had been "shocked" by the fact that Hammarskjöld was already talking about the next step before the United Nations was even in Gaza. On whose authority had the Egyptian general come in as governor of Gaza if not that of the United Nations? Israel had withdrawn on certain assumptions. It had "not relied on the United Nations," Meir stated, but on "the United States and its President." The developments in Gaza would not have taken place if the United Nations had opposed them, and the United States had used its strong influence in the world organization to that effect.

Dulles did not disguise his chagrin that things had not gone entirely as anticipated, though U.S. expectation had not been quite as optimistic as Israel's. What was done had been done within the framework of the armistice agreement, which gave Egypt the right of occupancy. The United States had assumed there would be a "token Egyptian occupation" and had hoped for a de facto UN administration. Egypt had "gone somewhat farther" than expected. But the situation was not hopeless. At present there was no evidence, said the secretary, that Gaza would be used as a fedayeen base or that Israeli shipping could not pass through the Straits of Tiran. Actions were still in the making, notably the secretary general's trip to Cairo. And "the U.S. would support him strongly. " Although Meir had said she did not rely on the United Nations, the United States did. If Egypt did not conform on Aqaba and Suez, "all the weight of world opinion" should be brought to bear on Egypt. The UN might not be the only place to do this, conceded Dulles, but "it was a real place" where "a considerable degree of moral judgement" could be expressed.⁸³

Dulles and Hammarskjöld differed on how tough a line to take with Nasser. The secretary general had asked for Washington's views on his forthcoming negotiations with Nasser on arrangements for UNEF's functioning at the Straits of Tiran and in Gaza. He was counseled to take a firm line with the Egyptian president. UNEF must remain in the Sharm el-Sheikh and Gaza "until its task is completed." Egypt was not entitled to unilaterally terminate the mission. UNEF should be withdrawn only when the United Nations was satisfied that it should be and after ample opportunity for consideration by the General Assembly, which had authorized it. No Egyptian force should return to the straits area until it was clear that "non-exercise of any claimed belligerent rights" had established in practice the peaceful conditions that must govern navigation of international waters. As for Gaza, no Egyptian military or paramilitary forces should return there, and UNEF should remain until a definitive settlement was reached.

To Hammarskjöld, the tough line advocated by Dulles was the advice of Polonius: "it is understandable that is what is desired. What remains is to get it." The U.S. position was "reasonable," but the Assembly resolutions and his statements on Gaza had not been explicit. His February 22 statement spoke of an initial takeover period by the UN and had also referred to "helpful arrangements" with Egypt. For, in exercise of its "rights," Egypt could reduce UN control in Gaza to practically nothing. Hammarskjöld now stressed the prime requirements of effective peace -keeping to be the consent of the host country and the cooperation of the conflicting parties. With Egypt he could use only persuasion.⁸⁴

The Cairo Agreement

In these circumstances and with these presuppositions Hammarskjöld traveled to Egypt on March 20. His pessimism regarding Nasser's desire to show restraint in asserting Egypt's "rights"

was further confirmed by an Egyptian troop movement into the Sinai without notifying Burns.⁸⁵

In five days of intensive discussions in Cairo, Hammarskjöld came away with an agreement on arrangements for UNEF, including provisions on infiltration. As he explained to Lodge on his return, Hammarskjöld avoided discussions about principles and presented Nasser with "practical arrangements" written by Lt. Gen. Burns and transmitted to Nasser and the Advisory Committee. Nasser accepted Burns's paper but did not sign it. Still, the memorandum was considered tantamount to an agreement. Nasser gave a "definite undertaking" that no Egyptian troops would move into Gaza. As a "moral commitment" to the secretary general, it could be used with the Israelis. Egypt also had not made UNEF deployment on Israel's side of the line a condition of their assenting to UNEF's functions. Although the arrangement did not constitute a UNEF "administration" of Gaza, Lt. Gen. Burns considered the "points of agreement" on UNEF's functions as satisfactory "concrete arrangements." Further, Hammarskjöld considered the "initial" takeover by the UN, as contemplated in his February 22 report, now an accomplished fact.

The implication was that Israel had no cause for complaint, especially as "the Egyptians are working with us to prevent raids." As for Sharm el-Sheikh, the Egyptians clearly had no intention of moving in or of asking UNEF to leave. They were in fact closing their eyes to the Aqaba situation. Asked what Egypt would do if Israeli ships proceeded through the Straits of Tiran, Fawzi had replied: "Please forget that you asked that question."⁸⁶

At the same time, Hammarskjöld could not budge Nasser from his uncompromising positions on the canal or claims of belligerency against Israel. By the end of March Cairo had indicated that it would comply with the arrangements worked out by Hammarskjöld and, though this was not considered a binding agreement, close its eyes to UNEF's presence at the mouth of the Gulf of Aqaba. The relationship with Israel would be indirect, through the United Nations, consisting of parallel understandings and arrangements with the secretary general. The relationship would continue to be defined by the restored armistice.

Israel, however, was far from encouraged. Hammarskjöld's failure to insist on a reply to its question on belligerency "obviated" whatever achievement Hammarskjöld may have had, Israeli embassy minister Shiloah told Assistant Secretary Rountree. Nasser wanted to consolidate his gains on Suez before making trouble in Gaza, but this was a temporary achievement and there must be an arrangement to give UNEF authority in Gaza. On Aqaba, Shiloah was troubled when told by Rountree that following the U.S.-UK discussions at the Bermuda summit, Washington and London would consult further on how to give "permanency" to the legal position on free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, perhaps by seeking an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). For Israel, seeking an ICJ ruling threw doubt on the firmness of the U.S. position on the straits. It was becoming increasingly evident, the Israeli minister charged, that the UN did not feel that Nasser should be pressured, that he was an aggrieved party and that it was first necessary to return to the status quo ante.⁸⁷ Neither side was to budge on its assessment of the secretary general's Cairo talks.

Despite Washington's attempts to reassure Israel about the outcome of the Hammarskjöld-Nasser talks, suspicions remained about the "practical arrangements" on the deployment of UNEF reached in Cairo. The UN Secretariat resented a press offensive, attributed to Israel, which distorted the Cairo arrangements and criticized the UN's shortcomings. The UN's predicament, Urquhart noted, was that the Egyptian concessions, if published, might create a serious political problem for Nasser, but as long as they were not disclosed "some important segments of the world Press would continue to proclaim that Hammarskjöld had surrendered to

Nasser." Particularly irksome was Joseph Alsop's report in the *New York Herald Tribune* of an "unannounced deal that has been virtually signed and sealed" between Hammarskjöld and Nasser. The UN Secretariat was exasperated at the "violently resentful" attitude of Israel toward UNEF when it was established and at the "sabotage" committed on withdrawal by Israeli troops. Urquhart observed that Hammarskjöld was also vexed by a *New York Times* editorial of May 20, 1957, on the UN's "defeatist attitude" with regard to the Suez Canal, "which may still give Nasser a victory by default," and an article in the June 8 London *Daily Telegraph* stating the fedayeen were training in Rafah and Gaza and that UNEF was to all intents and purposes under the control of Egypt. And, "on top of these completely untrue statements, it went on to accuse UNEF soldiers of black market activities." The impact on UN psychology was lasting and still remembered by Urquhart thirty years later.⁸⁸

Hammarskjöld's Visit

To overcome the resulting chill in UN-Israel relations, on April 19 Hammarskjöld wrote Ben Gurion suggesting a visit to Jerusalem. In an accommodating response, Ben Gurion welcomed the visit but suggested the discussion focus on Israel's central concerns: Egypt's blockade of Israeli shipping and the threat of fedayeen raids.⁸⁹

Briefing papers for Ben Gurion and Foreign Minister Meir and her senior staff in preparation for the Hammarskjöld visit in early May 1957 reflect a profound suspicion of UN intentions. A memorandum by Yosef Tekoah, director of armistice affairs, observed that the visit was taking place on the eve of the "final capitulation" by the Western powers, including Britain and France, to Nasser on the Suez Canal issue. In light of this, the secretary general and "those who hide behind him" feared a renewed crisis between Egypt and Israel should (1) Israel seek to test its right to send a ship through the canal or (2) Nasser try to demonstrate his power by demanding removal of UNEF forces from Gaza and the Sinai, including Sharm el-Sheikh. Hammarskjöld could therefore be expected to (1) propose that the issue of navigation rights be sent to the World Court and (2) demand that the UN force be stationed on Israeli territory. Israel's refusal would allow the UN to blame Israel should Nasser later demand UNEF's removal. Under the circumstances, the policies embodied in Meir's March statement to the General Assembly should be reaffirmed, stressing the point that Israel would not concede its right to transit the canal. Above all, the memorandum urged that Hammarskjöld demand a clear answer from Nasser on the question of Egypt's continued claim to belligerency.⁹⁰

Despite the "differences of approach [which] reflect differing responsibilities rather than divergence in views," Hammarskjöld returned to New York on May 12 with "a feeling of mutual trust and understanding." The perception at the UN Secretariat was that the reception accorded Hammarskjöld in Jerusalem signaled a turn toward improved relations. The situation in Gaza and the Gulf of Aqaba was peaceful, and Israel's attitude appeared more cooperative and friendly. Although UNEF claimed that the one-sided deployment made its position basically unstable, Hammarskjöld felt less inclined to push for the stationing of UNEF in Israel until it could be balanced by some progress on the question of the canal. Israel had accepted that UNEF could fire on infiltrators coming from Israeli territory into the UNEF security zone on condition that UNEF would also fire on persons coming into Israel from Gaza. In practical terms, however, Urquhart noted, "the absence of a 'security zone' on the Israeli side of the line made Israel's permission to shoot more or less academic."⁹¹

As the months passed, the UN was increasingly heartened at the smooth functioning of UNEF. Regard for the UNEF peacekeepers was increasing, and Israel was seen as more cooperative. Partly, Israel was motivated by the need to mend fences with Washington and to terminate its diplomatic isolation. The overriding concern in Jerusalem was to get an unambiguous and public reaffirmation of U.S. commitment to Israel's independence and improve prospects for economic aid.

On a trip to the area at the end of November, Hammarskjöld found the Israeli attitude toward UNEF significantly changed for the better. He was also highly encouraged by the attitudes of Ben Gurion and Dayan, both of whom "unhesitatingly ... considered UNEF a major factor in the maintenance of reasonably peaceful conditions—not only around Gaza, where UNEF's contribution was fully recognized, but also in the whole region." In his view, UNEF had become an established feature in the Middle East, and by March 1958 Hammarskjöld was able to say that "the operation has simply succeeded."⁹²

6

Enforcing the Restored Armistice

THOUGH UNEF WAS AN operational success story, the course of Israel's relations with the UN peacekeepers were far from smooth. Two key differences bedeviled the relationship. The first was the Israeli doctrine that the armistice agreement with Egypt was no longer operative. The other issue, latent for long stretches but never absent from the troubled relationship, was Jerusalem's refusal to accept UNEF forces on its territory. In UN eyes Israeli recalcitrance on this score, despite a clear mandate from the General Assembly, both impaired UNEF's operational effectiveness and created political complications. Hammarskjöld faced a perennial worry that Egypt would some day ask UNEF to leave because of Arab gibes that the UN force was Egypt's shield against the Israel Defense Force.

Israel's repudiation of the armistice and implacable opposition to stationing UN troops on its side of the line aggravated the strains in U.S. Israel relations as well and sharpened the differences over the scope of assurances in the immediate aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal. Political and strategic considerations, particularly about Arab reaction to the assurances, impelled Washington to strengthen UN authority in policing the Arab-Israeli borders and enforcing a restored armistice. Israel's negative attitude on these issues appeared calculated to weaken UNEF authority. For Washington, a strong UN peacekeeping presence served not only to help contain border tensions and deter the renewal of hostilities. It also offered two political advantages: (1) a plausible reason for resisting Israeli importunings for a closer security link and (2) a rationale and mechanism for deflecting pressures on Washington to reactivate the peacemaking diplomacy of 1955. After yet another abortive attempt to address the underlying Palestine issues—boundaries, refugees, and the transition from armistice to peace—Washington concluded these were not subject to an early solution. A strong UN peacekeeping presence under UN auspices remained the best option for maintaining stability as the Arab-Israeli confrontation faced a prolonged impasse.

Israel Seeks to Nullify the Armistice

After the Suez crisis Ben Gurion explained to the Knesset that the "campaign of deliverance" had been precipitated by fear of Egypt's growing might and the ominous threat that its army would be joined by those of Syria and Jordan in a unified command.¹ But beyond this, Ben Gurion said the decision to go to war resulted from frustration with the armistice regime: Israel was condemned for retaliating against Egypt-inspired raids from Gaza while Nasser could with impunity blockade Israeli shipping since he remained in a so-called state of belligerency with Israel. So, in his "victory speech" of November 7, 1956, Ben Gurion had declared the armistice agreement with Egypt "dead and buried."

The requiem turned out to be premature. Ben Gurion was later to concede that his declaration, made in the flush of victory, was politically ill advised.² But he never renounced the nullification

doctrine. Thus, in explaining to the Knesset on March 5, 1957, the decision to withdraw from Gaza and Sharm el Sheikh and welcoming assurances from the United States and other maritime powers, Ben Gurion took strong exception to Dulles's statement that day that the Gaza Strip would be governed by the armistice agreement: "We deny this completely not because we deny our signatures to agreements but because all these years the other side did not honor its signatures."³

In the end, Israel was compelled to pursue an inconsistent line on the validity of the armistice agreement. Declaratory policy adhered to nullification, while in practice Israel was flexible, acquiescing in UNEF's and UNTSO's authority to deal with boundary disputes and cross-border raids from Gaza pursuant to their armistice-related responsibilities. It also accepted, in practice, UNEF's mandate to enforce a restored armistice regime. But the consequent strains in Israel's relations with both the United Nations and the United States were never dispelled. Israel found itself isolated then and later,⁴ adhering to the declared policy that the armistice regime, at least on the Egyptian front, was a "fiction."

In Washington's view the Israeli doctrine not only undermined "the best structure of stability" on Arab-Israeli fronts but also threatened to erode the assurances on free navigation through the straits. If the armistice agreement were voided, then a state of belligerency could be presumed, thus raising difficult problems about innocent passage through the straits. The charter itself was insufficient to protect this right, and if the armistice were considered "inoperative," Israel's contention that it remained in a "state of nonbelligerency" became questionable. Dulles and legal adviser Herman Phleger left no doubt of Washington's position: U.S. assurances were predicated on the existence of the armistice agreement and the legal framework it provided. This point, Dulles cautioned, "goes to the whole heart" of Israel's position in the Gulf of Aqaba.⁵

To ensure that there was no mistaking the U.S. position, Lodge's statement to the General Assembly on March 1 stressed "the vital necessity of full and strict compliance with the Armistice Agreement between Israel and Egypt" and recalled that disregard of the agreement had been the "forerunner" of the Suez crisis. Once Israel had completed withdrawal, the statement went, the Israel-Egypt armistice agreement "will again be fully operative." Dulles made sure that the draft of the statement shown Eban beforehand contained this passage.⁶

It is not clear whether Israeli leadership calculated the full political consequences of its lonely stance. Little weight appears to have been given to the "crucial fact" that the armistice treaties validated both the new state's boundaries and Israel's international credentials for admission to the United Nations. By the end of 1953 the Foreign Ministry had concluded that the Jordan armistice was disintegrating. The decision to boycott the mixed armistice commissions with Jordan and Syria followed a year later. By the summer of 1955, serious consideration was being given to renouncing the General Armistice Agreement with Egypt, and the Foreign Ministry was asked to prepare a legal opinion on the consequences. The legal adviser's findings were inconclusive, but he cautioned that any decision to declare the Egyptian armistice agreement invalid would have to take into account the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, which gave a "sort of guarantee" to the armistice agreements.⁷ The memorandum was sent on to Foreign Minister Sharet, whose reaction is not recorded. Factions within the bureaucracy lined up on both sides and no decision was taken.

Over the succeeding year, however, Israel was increasingly frustrated with Nasser's use of the armistice to interfere with Israeli shipping and commerce. But it was not until early 1956 that a consensus emerged to renounce the armistice agreement with Egypt; abrogating the agreements with the other Arab signatories, except for Lebanon, was not excluded.

The line of reasoning was developed in an elaborate Foreign Ministry aide-mémoire in the spring of 1956.⁸ The agreements were premised on four essentials, the memorandum noted:

1. To eliminate the threat to peace in Palestine and facilitate transition to permanent peace
2. To terminate "permanently" all hostile acts
3. To delineate armistice demarcation lines beyond which armed forces of the parties should not move
4. To bring such a reduction of armed forces on both sides as would ensure the maintenance of the armistice during the "transition to permanent peace in Palestine"

Implemented in good faith, the aide-mémoire argued, the agreements could have achieved the objective sought by the Security Council. But the Arab states kept insisting that the armistice relationship was that of a state of war and not inconsistent with the "exercise [of] all belligerent rights." This is the "prime factor" that had led to the "progressive" deterioration of the armistice system.

The same line of reasoning was premised in a legal brief prepared in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the eve of Ben Gurion's "victory speech." No dissenting voice was raised in the higher bureaucracy to Ben Gurion's decision to abrogate the armistice with Egypt. Differences in the Foreign Ministry arose over extending that policy to the agreements with Syria and Jordan (no one wanted to touch the agreement with Lebanon for the time being). Shabbtai Rosenne, the legal adviser who prepared the brief, argued that since the Egyptian armistice was now "officially" considered a "fiction"—in explicit contrast to the position of the United Nations—Ben Gurion's Knesset speech the next day should therefore express "some substantial qualifications" about the armistice agreements with Jordan and Syria as well. Israel's "refusal to invoke the procedures of the Jordan MAC" was already a move, said Rosenne, toward "emasculat[i]on of that GAA and its conversion into a fiction." The same was true of the "de facto abolition" of the demilitarized zone under the Syrian agreement. Though it might be argued that abrogating the Jordan agreement might not serve Israel's interests, especially as regards Israel's treaty rights of access to Mount Scopus, the cease-fire agreement with Jordan of November 30, 1948, incorporated similar arrangements.⁹

Others were not persuaded by Rosenne's logic, in the end accepting the opinion of Director General Walter Eytan that "in my view there is no reason to abrogate the other armistice agreements, and I do not think the Prime Minister needs to take any position whatever with regard to them."¹⁰ It was not until after the Six Day War that Israel took the formal step of declaring the other armistice agreements {including that with Lebanon} invalid.

Israel was in a quandary. It had pronounced the GAA with Egypt a dead letter while it dealt with the United Nations, particularly with UNEF, as if it remained operative. A respectable way out of this awkward position was suggested by the Israeli mission to the United Nations—to repair the armistice system by amending the GAA.¹¹ A policy paper drafted at the Israel mission to the United Nations by Counselor Shamai Kahane argued that the shock of the Sinai operation had not brought about a revolutionary change in the UN role in the area. The UN remained committed to the armistice as the sole basis, the "foothold," of stability in Egypt-Israel relations and no credible substitute was apparent. Egypt may in practice have "emptied the agreement of its content," but it had not formally renounced it. Israel alone had challenged the continuing validity of the armistice agreement with Egypt, a position that, even if it were to bring some advantages in bargaining for changes in the pre-Suez situation, did not carry such weight as to

open the way for a new and far-reaching agreement.

In effect, Kahane contended, repudiation of the armistice agreement was a lonely and no-win game. The alternative was to seek revision of the GAA by invoking the procedure in Article XII for revision by mutual consent of the parties, or, failing that, a conference convoked by the UN secretary general "for the purpose of reviewing, revising or suspending" any provision other than Articles I and II prohibiting aggressive or hostile acts by armed forces.

This approach was not considered realistic, even though it was in line with an idea once broached by Ben Gurion to Hammarskjöld of convoking an armistice review conference with Jordan under the Article XII procedure. The relationship with Egypt was different. As noted earlier, an Israeli reply of January 25, 1957, to Hammarskjöld's inquiry of December 6 about the validity of the armistice with Egypt, had reaffirmed Ben Gurion's view (as stated two days previously in the Knesset) that the armistice agreement with Egypt had become a "harmful and dangerous fiction which only assisted the Egyptian ruling junta in its malevolent designs ." In the letter, Eban determined that "a new system of relationships [with Egypt] must now be constructed" for, the letter stated, Egypt held "incongruously that the Agreement could co-exist with a state of war." Israel did not consider that relations between the two countries were those of a state of war, and their mutual obligations were still defined by the UN Charter; but any return to the old armistice agreement was not acceptable. Quoting the prime minister's remarks in the Knesset, the letter concluded that the agreement was "beyond repair." At the same time, it noted that the absence of an agreement did not mean a state of war existed, and Israel was prepared to sign an agreement of nonbelligerency and mutual nonaggression.¹²

Whether the armistice was "beyond repair" was never tested in the months that followed. Ben Gurion's stand did not provide the opening to negotiation with Egypt through a Rhodes-like conference, as some had hoped. Neither did it lead to a revised armistice agreement under terms of the Article XII procedure. Essentially, neither party budged. Nasser would not abandon his claim that a continuing "state of war" was not inconsistent with the armistice agreement. Israel formally boycotted the EIMAC as the mechanism designed to supervise compliance with the "dead" treaty.

In the end, Israel's denunciation of the armistice agreement with Egypt brought dubious results. It did not materially affect the country's relationship with Egypt or the UN authority to enforce compliance with the armistice regime. The idea of revising the agreement was not pursued in the ten years between the Suez crisis and the Six Day War. Ben Gurion's notion of persuading Nasser to sign an agreement of nonbelligerency and mutual nonaggression died at birth. Moreover, as noted below, Israel's denunciation of the armistice agreement left the UNEF operation unscathed. As Hammarskjöld made clear in his report to the General Assembly of January 24, 1957, the UN force was deployed to maintain the pre-Suez *status juris*, which first and foremost meant restoring the armistice regime.¹³

The credibility of Israel's declaratory policy was further undermined by the ambiguous and selective manner in which it was applied. The validity of the first two articles of the armistice agreement (obligating the parties to refrain from "any warlike or hostile act against the military or para-military forces of the other party or against civilians") was never challenged. Nor is it clear that the Israeli leadership considered how its nullification policy would affect the claim that the Rhodes agreements constituted international recognition of the armistice lines as the boundary of its territory. Although the agreements and the attached maps delineated "armistice demarcation lines" (on the Sinai frontier, those coincided with the international frontier and were so referred to by the United Nations), Israel considered them as establishing and legitimating

definitive boundaries, not subject to renegotiation. But were not those boundaries legitimated only as long as the armistice treaties were valid? Israeli diplomatic documents do not appear to have addressed the possible challenge that abrogation might pose to its claim that the armistice lines described its definitive boundaries.

Such challenges did arise, though admittedly it is not clear that this resulted from the repudiation. Thus, Secretary of State Dulles told a closed session of the House Foreign Affairs committee on February 26, 1958, that the armistice agreements defining the de facto limits of Israel "do not establish definitive boundaries," setting off a storm of indignation in Israel, even though the remark about armistice boundaries was indistinguishable from Dulles's public position in his statement of August 26, 1955.¹⁴

In sum, Israel's declaratory policy of repudiation proved to be politically inconsequential and largely symbolic, underscoring Jerusalem's frustration with the impasse in the peace process and creating an added point of contention in its relations with the UN. Neither Israel's position on the boundaries nor its relationship with Egypt—or, for that matter, with the other Arab states—was affected substantively by its dramatic renunciation of the GAA.

What proved consequential during the next decade was the gradual acceptance by both Egypt and Israel of the UNEF presence as the pacifying element, arbiter, and communications channel in their uneasy and continuing relationship. And the legal-political structure within which UNEF operated continued to be the restored armistice regime.

UNEF Polices the Armistice Lines

The deployment of UNEF represented an international decision to stabilize the armistice, while forestalling Lester Pearson's more ambitious plan to move beyond policing a cease-fire. In the end, the Canadian resolution authorizing UNEF stressed the urgency of a force but spelled out no details; it simply called on the secretary general to submit a plan. It was left to him to lay down the principles on which the force should function, as well as to assemble it and direct its operation. The assembly adopted "the philosophy of "Leave it to Dag [Hammarskjöld]" as a substitute for an international search for a peace settlement.¹⁵

The prototype of "peacekeeping" operations under the UN banner, UNEF was based on a tacit acceptance of the impasse, as a way to provide a tolerable stability when the parties were considered too far apart to warrant moving toward negotiation for peace. Deployment of UNEF was a confession of inability to move beyond the armistice, an acceptance of the armistice as protracted, not transitional.¹⁶

The task thrust on the UN and taken up somewhat reluctantly by Hammarskjöld and his staff soon became an open-ended assignment to interpose between the warring parties, to attempt to contain cross-border incidents, and to deter resumption of hostilities. Despite rhetoric about a "short-term" peacekeeping venture, UNEF's mandate was based on a political postulate that presaged a long stay.¹⁷ Hammarskjöld assumed the responsibility for managing UNEF on the understanding that the armistice remained the *status juris* of the relationship between Egypt and Israel, that the armistice agreement would continue to define this relationship under the aegis of the UN peacekeepers.

From the outset, Israel had conflicted feelings about the UNEF and its mandate. Israel's aim was to assure that UNEF, not Egyptian authorities, controlled certain sensitive areas in order to

avoid "Nasser's laying a basis for future hostile action." At Aqaba, UNEF would take over the islands at the mouth of the Gulf and a mainland strip to help keep the waterway open; at Gaza it would provide the mechanism for the exercise of UN civilian as well as security functions; and a wide strip would be occupied in the Sinai as a buffer zone. The UN force would take over former Egyptian bases at El Arish, Abu Aweigila, and Bir Gifgafa. It was essential that the UN force come in with enough strength to be credible. Above all was the Israeli concern that UNEF not be subject to removal at Nasser's behest, that the force not leave before its mission was completed as a result of Egyptian pressure. (Of particular concern was that contingents from countries like India and Yugoslavia, which were politically aligned with Egypt, would be withdrawn if Nasser requested them to leave.)¹⁸

Israeli ambivalence about UNEF, as about subsequent UN peace-keeping operations on Arab-Israeli fronts, can also be attributed to its doubts about the force's "effectiveness" in stopping fedayeen incursions and guarding the straits. Given its mandate and dependence on Egyptian consent, UNEF would not serve as a "fighting force" (as Dayan was later to observe) and could therefore not be a reliable element in Israel's security system, especially given the pro-Arab direction of UN sentiments.

Still, Jerusalem came to accept UNEF to help keep the border quiet and to keep watch at the entrance of the Gulf of Aqaba as a token of international assurance of freedom of navigation. Although this arrangement did not prevent the renewal of the Egyptian blockade on the eve of the Six Day War, it did constitute an internationally accepted *casus belli* in June 1967, as Amos Perlmutter noted, and gave Israel an easier time in the Security Council in its aftermath.¹⁹

In other ways, too, the outcome was far from unprofitable, as President Eisenhower was later to observe. By withdrawing from Gaza and Sinai and handing them over to the UN force, Israel had "increased [its] standing among the nations of the world" and made clear that the Gulf of Aqaba was an "open international waterway" in which all were entitled to free and innocent passage."²⁰

For Egypt, UNEF provided insurance against Israel's reinvasion of the Sinai. Nasser and the Arab world also saw the UN force as a mechanism for compelling Israel to evacuate Arab territory without forcing Egypt to abandon its claim to belligerent rights. It enabled Nasser to recover the Sinai and restore his control in Gaza without having to negotiate with the enemy. But the price was a UN force stationed on his side of the frontier as well as at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba. Egypt was troubled by the appearance of a UN interposition force as not so much buffer as protector of Egyptian territory.

For both political and managerial reasons, the UN viewed a one-sided deployment as defective. Hammarskjöld's main fear was that Israel's refusal to allow UNEF to operate on its side of the line might provoke Egypt to demand the withdrawal of the force from its side and "put an end to the relatively peaceful atmosphere that was essential if long-term solutions were to be found."²¹

UN Troops on Israeli Soil Would Be a "Constant Irritant"

Israel's refusal to accept UNEF on its side of the frontier was to mar its relations with the UN and with Washington. But the Israeli leadership remained adamant for several reasons. From its perspective, the international force was *replacing* Israel's to prevent the takeover by Egyptian forces of certain sensitive areas—Gaza, the strong points on the Sinai frontier, and the mainland

strip along the Gulf of Aqaba. This arrangement was part of the "assurances" that persuaded Israel to withdraw. Besides, as a nation barely a decade old, whose sovereign credentials and territorial borders were periodically questioned, it was determined to resist importunate UN demands to "make the UN force whole" by accepting "foreign troops" on its soil.

Clear from the record is the extreme sensitivity of the Israeli leadership at the prospect that UNEF troops, like the UNTSO observers, might become a "constant irritant" in Israel's relations with the UN and with the troop contributors. As early as January 1957, a briefing paper for a press conference recommended that in reply to a hypothetical question about Israel's readiness to receive UNEF units on Israeli soil at Nitzana (El Auja) and along the frontier if Egypt agreed to station UN forces at Sharm el-Sheikh, Ben Gurion should stress the difference in the situations of the two countries. There was "no justification in law or in fact for stationing such troops on Israel territory and very serious practical objections. Israel is a small country. ... The stationing of foreign forces in any part of our country would be felt everywhere. They would be a constant irritant. They would, to use an American expression, always be in our hair and their presence rightly resented." Egypt's situation was different, for the UN troops would be "separated by hundreds of kilometers from Egypt's settled areas of population."²²

Two months later Israeli foreign minister Golda Meir expanded on this theme in a two-hour exchange with Secretary Dulles, who pressed her on receiving UN forces on Israel's side of the armistice line. Israel, Meir argued, had "a small territory with long boundaries." If UNEF were placed on the border with Egypt, there would be pressure to place UN troops along the Jordan and Syrian borders as well. Israel would then be "an occupied country and, with all kinds of soldiers on its soil, would no longer be independent." Meir also pointed out Israel's broader concern about the reliability and effectiveness of UN peacekeepers and observers. Israel had "tried the UNTSO but it had not worked," and UNEF had no more power.²³

The Cairo Arrangements—Reassuring Egypt

More than a difference over the terms of reference of the UNEF separated Israel from the other chief actors in the immediate aftermath of Suez. On UNEF's mission, the UN and Israel did not share a common frame of reference.

The charter under which UNEF was to operate, as noted above, was embodied in enabling resolutions of November 4-5, 1956, and in the guiding principles and terms of reference set forth in Hammarskjöld's final report of November 6, endorsed the next day in Resolution 1001.²⁴ UNEF's mandate was to "secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities" in a manner that would not influence the military balance and "thereby the political balance affecting efforts to settle the conflict."

Burns stressed the delicate balance in UNEF's mandate. It would be "more than an observer corps, but in no way a military force temporarily controlling the territory in which it is stationed" and would not have military functions exceeding those necessary to secure peaceful conditions. It would operate on the assumption, however, that the parties to the conflict would "take all necessary steps for compliance with the recommendations of the General Assembly." On these assumptions, "the force [must] be so strong that it would be in no danger of being thrust aside, pushed out, or ignored, as the UN Military Observers had been in Palestine." In view of the strength of the armed forces of Israel and Egypt, he suggested that the force "would have to be about the size of a division, with a brigade of tanks, and attached reconnaissance and fighter-

aircraft units—the whole organized as an important force capable of fighting."²⁵ A key principle governing UNEF (later of other peacekeeping forces) was the consent of the parties involved, first and foremost the host government, since by definition this was not an enforcement action under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, Burns's negotiations in Cairo were thus designed to give the Egyptian authorities "firm assurances" that the operation would not infringe on Egyptian sovereignty. Hammarskjöld reassured Cairo that the force "provided a guarantee ... that, since it would come only with Egypt's consent, it could not stay or operate in Egypt if that consent were withdrawn." On that understanding, Nasser gave his consent on November 14 to the arrival of UNEF in Egypt; the first troop units were sent the next day.

Hammarskjöld believed a firmer understanding of the presence and functioning of the force in Egypt was needed, so he visited Cairo in mid-November. In a "good faith agreement," embodied in an aide-mémoire, Egypt declared that, "when exercising its sovereign rights on any matter concerning the presence and functioning of UNEF, it will be guided, in good faith, by its acceptance" of the General Assembly resolution establishing the force. The United Nations, "understanding this [declaration] to correspond to the wishes of the Government of Egypt," reaffirmed "its willingness to maintain UNEF until its task is completed."²⁶

The secretary general brought this aide-mémoire to the assembly for its approval on November 20, and along with two other memoranda agreed upon between Hammarskjöld and Nasser—stating that the area to be occupied by UNEF would be subject to Egypt's agreement and continuing consent, and separating the question of the reopening of the Suez Canal from the functions of UNEF—the Cairo arrangements became the basis for UNEF's status in Egypt.

Israel was no party to these negotiations and arrangements. From the outset, Israeli suspicions about the UNEF operation were fueled by the perception that, in the Cairo talks, Hammarskjöld had reached an accord with Nasser to "return the situation in the area to that which had prevailed before 29 October." In a cover memorandum, dated November 23, forwarding a top-secret aide-mémoire on the Cairo arrangements (dated November 17), the Israeli delegation to the UN conjectured that Hammarskjöld's November 20 report to the assembly did not tell the whole story. Portions of the Cairo agreement had been "omitted or materially altered." In particular, the Israel delegation was troubled that the General Assembly had given Hammarskjöld a "blank check" on UNEF's operation, with the intent of returning the situation in the area to the status quo ante as agreed with Egypt. The secretary general, the delegation concluded, feels free to take this position because "he believes that the majority of the Assembly is behind him—especially the U.S."²⁷

As the terms of UNEF's mission were negotiated, Israel's influence appears to have been negligible. Writing to Hammarskjöld on January 25, 1957, Eban delicately reproached Hammarskjöld for appearing to "preclude any definition of the UNEF's function and duration as might effectively prevent the restoration of a blockade and the consequent renewal of hostilities." In Israeli eyes, the primary function of the international force was to assure that the straits remained open and the Gaza-based fedayeen bridled. Two weeks later, Eban wrote again to the secretary general reiterating Israel's concern about Cairo's refusal to renounce its claims to belligerency and to agree to "full and mutual abstentions from belligerent acts." Moreover, Israel had not yet received from the UN a satisfactory response to the February 4 aide-mémoire: Would UNEF units be stationed along the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba? Would they "act as a restraint against hostile acts, and ... remain so deployed until another effective means is agreed upon between the parties concerned for ensuring permanent freedom of navigation and absence of belligerent acts in the Straits of Tiran and in the Gulf of Aqaba"?²⁸

Hammarskjöld could give no such assurance. On the contrary, at the February 4 meeting, he confronted Israel with the issue he had informally raised in January—stationing UNEF troops on the Israeli side of the line. As the General Assembly had made it clear that stationing UNEF at Sharm el-Sheikh required *Egyptian* consent, it was important to know whether Israel consented to the stationing of UNEF units on its territory. In his interpretation, the General Assembly resolution (1125 [XI]) contemplated UNEF's deployment on both sides of the Egyptian-Israeli ADL. Hammarskjöld thus turned the tables on Israel: Positioning UNEF on the Israeli side was essential not only for UNEF to function but also for obtaining Egypt's consent to the stationing of UNEF at Sharm el-Sheikh. The issue was never resolved.

From time to time, Hammarskjöld would probe Israeli intentions, as did U Thant, his successor as secretary general, on the eve of the Six Day War,²⁹ and was consistently rebuffed. Israel's refusal to accept UNEF troops on its territory irked the UN and riled Washington. At the UN Israel was blamed for impairing the full effectiveness of the peacekeeping force and jeopardizing its survival. The secretary general and his senior staff found the contradiction in Israel's position vexing and unreasonable: UNEF's principal weakness in dealing with infiltrators, Urquhart wrote, was that it could operate only on the Egyptian side. Yet when raids from Gaza were stepped up in April (1957), UNEF was blamed for having turned into "nothing more than a symbolic array of foreign troops." Burns made the same point in his account. Israel remained "adamant and never showed the least sign of agreeing" to Hammarskjöld's request. When Israel "complained of UNEF's ineffectiveness," Burns proposed that a barbed-wire obstacle be erected along the ADL, and at first Israel supported the idea. Egypt seemed ready to go along, though it voiced misgivings about marking off the armistice line in this manner as "an agreed boundary." When Israel was asked to have a fence along its side of the ADL, "it suddenly lost interest in the idea," thus enabling the Egyptians to refuse to grant UNEF permission to do the same on their side. Burns concluded that Israel's refusal to accept a UNEF presence limited the emergency force's effectiveness against infiltrators. Although he did not appear to view the one-sided deployment as a serious impediment, Burns saw it as further evidence of Israel's noncooperation.³⁰

The issue festered throughout the UNEF era. Because UNEF was seen as essential to post-Suez stability, the full cooperation of both sides was crucial. Egypt was seen as generally supportive, but Israel's cooperation was considered limited.

Israel read the objective conditions differently. It had been denied the fruits of victory. The United Nations had come to Nasser's rescue without demanding concessions, particularly the renunciation of belligerency. Israel was now compelled by the world community to return to the status quo ante bellum with its flawed armistice arrangements. Israel conceded that UNEF had a role to play, but thought it limited to deterring border incursions and symbolizing an international warranty to freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba. But given UNEF's terms of reference, its operational limitations, and, above all, its uncertain survival, it was judged to be a minor player in Israel's security concerns. In Israeli calculations, the important consideration was to strengthen its defenses and to enlist the "psychological" and material support of the United States. The UN could never substitute for that.

An Unstable Tranquillity

The negotiations over withdrawal and assurances, and the emplacement of UNEF on the Egypt-Israel frontier to implement the restored armistice, highlighted the enlarged role of the United Nations both as the focus for diplomacy and as the chosen instrument for policing stability. As the formative decade neared its end, no progress had been made in solving the substantive issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and it was clear that the stalemate would be prolonged. By the end of March 1957, the U.S.-UK summit in Bermuda concluded that "the chances of a general settlement of the Palestine question are at present remote" and that progress awaited "a better atmosphere." Meanwhile, the United Nations would be relied on to maintain border tranquillity through its peacekeepers and "could be used to keep up the pressure on the parties" for a solution to particular problems.³¹

Peacemaking Postponed

The search for a settlement was not totally abandoned, however, and during much of 1957 intermittent initiatives were set in motion. The most promising approach, the State Department's Near Eastern and International Organization bureaus concluded, was to strive for a "direct solution" of the refugee problem. The time (summer 1957) appeared "sufficiently propitious." The key lay in persuading Israel to accept the principle of repatriation, with the hope the Arab states would cooperate in resettling and assimilating those refugees who did not return. Leverage could be brought to bear on Israel by linking such a concession to economic aid—an Export-Import Bank loan in addition to regular assistance—for which Jerusalem was pressing. The urgency was all the greater as the number of registered refugees increased even as pledges for financial support to UNRWA fell short, and as pressure on Israel to restrict Jewish immigration was having little impact on decisions in Jerusalem.

Henry S. Villard, who had been appointed as special assistant to the undersecretary of state to deal with the problem, soon reached a less optimistic conclusion: The refugee issue had to be addressed as an integral part of an overall solution, the prospect for which was not very promising until the "climate was more favorable." Israel remained implacably opposed to repatriation or to taking substantial numbers of refugees except in the context of an overall negotiated settlement. Part of the complexity of the situation, Villard told the secretary of state, lay in the "intransigent attitude in some Arab quarters" toward any refugee settlement, as well as Arab reluctance to entertain, as part of the plan, resettlement on their own territory. The administration would have to be content with certain steps to "melt down" the mass of refugees by attrition, providing aid to friendly Arab host governments, particularly Jordan, to absorb Palestine refugees on their land without waiting for a political settlement.³²

By the end of the year, Dulles determined that though the refugee problem was becoming "intolerable," the United States could not profitably take the lead in dealing with the Arab side, and the administration decided to shift further action into the UN context. Apart from urging the secretary general to use his good offices, the administration enlisted the help of Hans Engen, Norway's UN ambassador, who was also active on the UNEF advisory committee, to carry out "discreet explorations with the local governments" on various aspects of the Palestine problem, particularly refugees. Engen was urged to get out in front since the Arabs would be "put off" if the initiative came from Washington.³³

Shifting the burden to Engen proved futile. A united Arab front kept insisting that Israel accept the repatriation principle as a precondition, which Israel rejected. Antagonism to Israel, he found,

was on the increase since the Suez crisis and the prospect of an overall settlement seemed as remote as ever. By the end of 1957, further peacemaking efforts were tacitly shelved and the decision was made to concentrate U.S. diplomacy on ensuring the success of the enlarged peacekeeping operation with the mission of keeping the borders quiet and managing the impasse in Arab-Israeli relations. (At the same time, as noted below, regional security arrangements with certain Arab states were pursued in the context of the Eisenhower Doctrine.)

From this decision there was no retreat despite misgivings among some in Washington, notably the Pentagon, to the "peacekeeping" approach. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) attributed the "unsatisfactory politico-military situation in the Middle East" mainly to the unresolved Arab-Israeli problem, which "poses a serious threat" to the security of the United States and the free world. To forestall "further exploitation" of the situation by Moscow, a political solution was "essential and urgent." The JCS proposed a settlement embracing "fixed and agreed upon" boundaries, a guarantee that Israel would not thereafter expand its territory, and an unspecified solution of the refugee problem. The JCS would not flinch from imposing a solution if necessary. The timing was urgent, as the JCS chairman, Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, explained to the State Department at a meeting in mid-December, because Saudi Arabia was "beginning to weaken" and without a U.S. initiative the Soviets might "preempt us in this field."

The State Department remained unconvinced that the root of the problem lay primarily in Arab fear of Israeli expansion beyond the armistice lines, or indeed that they would accept these lines as final boundaries. For the "Arab states do not wish a solution, Israel does not wish a solution and the Soviets do not wish a solution." The climate in the Arab world was not conducive to a settlement. Initiatives had been explored to no avail. The "principal obstacle," Assistant Secretary Rountree observed, was that the refugee issue was for the Arabs their "principal political weapon against Israel." For "many Arabs," he noted, "consider Israel a short-term problem which they will liquidate over a period of time with the military and political support of the Soviet Union."³⁴

The State Department's pessimistic assessment followed a number of discouraging diplomatic exchanges in which it became clear that the Arab states would not contemplate concessions on boundaries and refugees on terms that might provide openings for negotiation. Just a week before the meeting with the JCS, high-level discussions in Washington with the former prime minister of Iraq, Nuri Pasha al-Said, dampened any hopes of a breakthrough. People in the Arab world, al-Said told Secretary Dulles, were losing patience over the Arab-Israeli matter. He urged the NATO powers, concerned about Soviet encroachment, to help bring about a Palestine settlement—and thus strengthen the pro-Western Arab nations of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq—by implementing the partition resolution of 1947. Israel must "make the gesture" to return to the partition plan; otherwise a million refugees would remain a "mine" ready to go off and destroy the area. And in a later talk with Dulles, Nuri al-Said declared that the United States could get Israel to cooperate if it really wished to do so, pointing out that when it cut off aid to Israel over the Benot Yaacov incident, Israel had quickly complied with the United Nations order.³⁵

Though Secretary Dulles explained that Nuri al-Said was oversimplifying the issue—repeatedly stressing that the people now in the territory originally allotted to the Arabs could not be thrown out—the Iraqi leader's position was not far from that of more moderate leaders. Just two months earlier, Lebanese foreign minister Charles Malik had urged the United States to make a statement on Palestine, the "minimum requirements" of which would be a permanent solution of the frontier problem on the basis of the 1947 resolution, cessation of further Jewish

immigration, and repatriation or resettlement of the Arab refugees.

Dulles agreed that Palestine was "at the heart of all the trouble in the Middle East" but concluded that anything by way of boundary adjustments "we can offer does not add up enough to enable the Arab world to accept." The boundaries were not sacrosanct, but it would be unrealistic to return to 1947.³⁶

Israel Resumes Campaign for Arms and Security Guarantee

Although the United States and Israel had arrived at nearly identical assessments of the futility of seeking an overall political solution, they drew diametrically opposed policy lessons. For Israel, the post-Suez threat was as menacing as ever, and the situation called for a strengthened defense and a more "precise" security guarantee than the generalized promise in the Eisenhower doctrine to defend the region against international communism.³⁷ And the prospect of a prolonged armistice reinforced the pre-Suez view that the United Nations was hardly the place to seek answers to its political and security concerns. Washington's advice to rely on the United Nations was even suspected in part as calculated to divert Israel from its quest for a closer security relation with Washington. Dulles, on the other hand, "hoped" that since an overall Arab-Israel settlement was remote, Israel would be "helpful" to the secretary general's efforts to restore tranquillity through peacekeeping. Israel's most "constructive contribution" to the cause of the free world, Dulles reiterated, would be to maintain a low regional profile, refrain from highlighting local quarrels, and cooperate with the UN observers and peacekeepers.³⁸

On this matter there was never a meeting of the minds. The UN peace-keeping presence was welcomed by Israel as the monitor of the frontiers, a help in curbing fedayeen incursions and a token of the international commitment to freedom of shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba. But only within narrow limits: So long as the international force did not infringe on Israel's sovereignty—by stationing UNEF units on its side of the frontier—or interfere with action by the Israel Defense Forces required for the defense of Nitzana (El Auja) and other sensitive points along its frontiers.

To meet its wider security concerns, Israel again turned to Washington. The breakdown of the Alpha plan for a negotiated peace settlement, which Dulles blamed mainly on Nasser, and the chill that marked relations with Cairo during the spring of 1957 stirred hopes in Jerusalem that the administration might be less reluctant to support Israeli defenses. Israel was in for a disappointment. Arms and a security alliance with Israel would only complicate Washington's larger goal of mobilizing Arab allies in the East-West confrontation. For the Arabs, the conflict with Israel overshadowed any inclination they might have to line up with Washington's anticommunist crusade.

Israel persisted in its courtship of Washington, no matter how often it was rebuffed. The diplomatic brief presented to Washington was remarkably similar to that advanced before the war. Indeed, the historian who selects at random a document from the archives on Israel-U.S. diplomatic exchanges of the 1950s would often be hard put to determine from the content whether it is pre- or post-Suez. Both before and after the Suez crisis, Israeli concerns centered on Soviet-Nasserite threats, anxiety about the arms buildup by Syria and Egypt, and appeals to Washington for military and economic aid and a closer security link. Israel also wanted to play a recognized role in the U.S. regional policy, to maintain a special working relationship as a strategic partner.

As in the year preceding the war, Ben Gurion pressed Washington for a security commitment that went beyond the nonspecific, declaratory pledges of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 and the Eisenhower Doctrine. While Israeli pleas did not carry the same apocalyptic overtones as during the period preceding Suez, the themes and arguments were identical. So was the response: Dulles was sympathetic but declared that broader U.S. political and strategic concerns militated against a close security relationship. The Tripartite Declaration and the American (Eisen-hower) Doctrine along with the peacekeeping function of the United Nations were an adequate guarantee against any conceivable threat. Thus, in reply to an Israeli plea at the end of November 1956 for an unambiguous pledge of U.S. commitment to Israel's independence, Dulles reaffirmed U.S. policy in language from the Tripartite Declaration. The United States would take action, "within and outside the United Nations," both to "prevent any violation of the frontiers or armistice lines by the states of the area" and to oppose any aggression in the Near East by rendering assistance to the victim of aggression. There had been no change in the policy set forth in the statements, "which reveal the concern of the U.S. Government for the independence and security of Israel and the other states in the area."³⁹

Israel's disquiet was not stilled by general affirmations of the kind just described. The breakdown of the Richards mission confirmed the country's misgivings. Following congressional endorsement of the Eisen-hower Doctrine on March 9, James P. Richards, former chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was sent to the Middle East to explain the president's policy and to gain regional cooperation to block Soviet encroachment. Richards was authorized to offer economic and military assistance.

But the mission (March to May 1957) exposed the divergence in the regional interests of the Arab countries (in particular, Nasser's hostility to the Baghdad Pact) and had to be aborted. Canceling his visits to Arab capitals, Richards was also inclined to bypass Israel but was instructed by Washington to go through with the visit there. To no one's surprise, Richards found the Israeli leaders primarily interested in the extent to which the Eisenhower Doctrine could be construed as a specific security guarantee. Foremost in Ben Gurion's mind, Richards reported, was the "protection which [the] doctrine would afford Israel in event of attack by [an] Arab state." He asked specific questions regarding possible U.S. military moves in the event of attack. Richards found the same concerns among the other Israeli leaders: The doctrine was of little value unless it provided automatic help. Richards had landed in the awkward position of having to discount the value of merchandise he had taken to the road to sell. The doctrine, he said, spoke of a country "controlled" by international communism, and in any case the congressional resolution conferred on the president authority to determine in each case whether it should be invoked.⁴⁰

Israel also sought "clarification" of how the United States would react to Arab interference with the transit of Israeli ships through the Tiran straits and with free navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba. At the end of April 1957, the Egyptian media intensified attacks against King Hussein as he moved to evict Nasserite elements from his government. With U.S. encouragement, Hussein invited Saudi troops to come to his aid. Israel wanted reassurance that it would be consulted and that the Saudi troops would not menace its security. On May 2, Acting Secretary of State Herter assured Israel that "we have made it abundantly clear to Near Eastern states that USG [U.S. Government] foreign policy embraces preservation [of] Israel." Israel could be assured that the Saudi troops in Jordan posed no threat to Israel. On sending Israeli ships through the straits, however, the United States thought it "most undesirable" to publicize the transit of a particular ship in view of the critical situation in Jordan. In a follow-up exchange, Ambassador Lawson

assured Foreign Minister Meir that U.S. misgivings about Israel flagship transits through the Tiran straits went not to principle but to publicity.⁴¹

Arabs Oppose Israel's Transit in Gulf of Aqaba

Israel was not paranoid. The Arabs had mounted a concerted effort to abridge its right of free transit and to question the international character of the gulf waters. On February 27—the day of the Meir-Dulles understanding—a joint communiqué was issued summarizing talks in Cairo between King Saud, King Hussein of Jordan, President Quwatly of Syria, and President Nasser on the Suez Canal and on Arab rights to "Arab territorial waters" in the Gulf of Aqaba. At the conclusion of the meeting, Saudi royal counselor and deputy minister of foreign affairs, Sheikh Yussuf Yassin, upbraided U.S. ambassador Hare about both the economic pressures on Egypt that had forced it, he said, to turn to Moscow, and U.S. support of Israel's right to transit the Straits of Tiran. It was "un-thinkable," he said, that Israeli ships should ever be allowed to navigate the straits. Furthermore, Yassin warned that any country that assisted Israel in securing rights of navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba would be regarded as placing itself in the same position as the British and French in their attack on Egypt.⁴²

Even before the Lodge statement was delivered in the General Assembly on March 1, a propitiatory telegram was sent to certain capitals. Lodge's statement would just reassert and expand on the aide-mémoire of February 11 (which had been made public on February 20) on transit of the straits, the "transitory" UN role in Gaza administration, and the hope for strict compliance of both parties with their international obligations. U.S. ambassadors were instructed to place the Israeli withdrawal in the context of a successful U.S. effort to achieve the purposes of the UN resolutions on withdrawal without rewarding Israel for its attack on the Sinai. Israel would get nothing to which it was not already entitled, such as the right of transit through the straits in accordance with international law. No unpublicized commitments had been made to Israel, nor had it been given any guarantees.⁴³

Saudi Arabia in particular was not appeased, and in May a special representative, Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, was sent to Washington in the first of a series of protests over Israeli use of the Gulf of Aqaba. Initially, Azzam focused on "recent incidents involving Israeli warships" in the gulf, but soon leveled the charge that Israel's presence in the gulf interfered with pilgrims taking the Aqaba route to Mecca. Throughout the summer of 1957, the Saudis questioned Israel's basic right to innocent passage. Azzam's legal argument was that the six-mile territorial-waters limit (which both Cairo and Riyadh recognized) overlapped so that the Gulf of Aqaba was divided into Egyptian and Saudi territorial waters. The fact that Israeli shipping used the channel on the Egyptian side made no difference. Assistant Secretary Rountree reiterated the U.S. position: the straits, although territorial waters, were imbued with an international character that gave users the right of free and innocent passage. Azzam countered that Israel never had the right of free passage in the Gulf of Aqaba because of its state of belligerency with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and was just exploiting the situation created by the UNEF presence at Sharm el-Sheikh. Azzam also brought with him a letter from King Saud expressing grave concern at alleged movements of Israeli war vessels in Saudi territorial waters at the northern end of the gulf. The Saudis decided not to request a UN Security Council meeting, for Arab opposition was not limited to the presence of Israeli warships but extended to all transit by Israeli and Israel-bound merchant vessels through the straits and the gulf.⁴⁴

Saudi pressure was stepped up in mid-June. Azzam not only challenged the validity of the U.S. position but charged that the United States had intervened as an "outsider" for it "had no appreciable trade in the Gulf, no shipping, no interests." The U.S. declaration was trying to force matters "as if there were no belligerency between the Arabs and the Jews." The administration went out of its way to assure King Saud about the Israeli warships and the safety of the pilgrims but refused to compromise the principle that the Gulf of Aqaba constituted international waters, entitling commercial ships of all nations to free and innocent passage through the Straits of Tiran.

The Arab world was not reconciled and continued to press for a change in U.S. policy. On May 24, the chiefs of mission of eleven Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and Yemen) met with Secretary Dulles to protest the presence of Israeli land and sea forces in the Gulf of Aqaba in defiance of Security Council resolutions and the armistice agreements of 1949. The gulf, they insisted, was a "narrow closed Gulf covered by Arab territorial waters and ... [the] entrance to it [was] also Arab territorial waters." Despite misgivings in the State Department about "taking the Israeli side," the administration held firm. A reply to the Arab embassies on June 27, released to the press the following day, reaffirmed that the Gulf of Aqaba comprehended international waters and that no nation had the right to prevent free and innocent passage in it or through the straits giving access to it.⁴⁵

The Arab drive to undermine the assurances from the United States and other maritime powers of Israeli rights in the Gulf of Aqaba added to Israel's anxieties. The postwar arrangements, under which UN peace-keepers policed a restored armistice, had hardly provided the necessary insurance against a Nasser-dominated Arab world, armed and supported by Moscow. From Israel's perspective, it appeared that no consequential change had taken place in the political and strategic landscape.

But the picture was far from bleak. By late summer of 1957, in several exchanges with Secretary Dulles, the Israeli ambassador reported that the situation in the region was more tranquil. Gaza and Aqaba were quiet. The country had been "liberated for peaceful pursuits," and "no one who had worked to bring about the present arrangements there should regret them." Israel's standing in Washington had been improved with the decision to pursue a "policy of peaceful and unpublicized exercise" of the right of innocent passage as urged by the United States. Seven or eight tankers and other vessels had proceeded to Eilat, and Israel had "reason to believe" that the United States would not make further statements indicating any doubt about the validity of its position that the Gulf of Aqaba constituted international waters.

Moreover, whatever reservations Israel had about the UN peacekeeping force were put aside as Jerusalem determined that it was in the national interest to cooperate with General Burns and his force, which was now regarded as consequential in damping down border tensions, curtailing fedayeen raids from Gaza, and, most important, providing an international presence at Sharm el-Sheikh as a deterrent to reimposition of the blockade. Eban acknowledged in mid-August that there had been little border trouble with Egypt "lately" because UNEF had "sealed off" certain points of conflict, and he urged the United States to take steps to assure against an early withdrawal of the UN force. Dulles responded by admonishing Eban that Israel must itself demonstrate a more cooperative attitude toward the United Nations. Its "reluctance" to cooperate with the UNTSO observers constantly put Israel on the defensive and "created the suspicion that Israel might be up to mischief." "This was the greatest handicap," said Dulles, "to Israel's United Nations relations." On Aqaba, Dulles appreciated Israel's exercising its rights so as to minimize

Arab opposition and assured Eban that despite rumors to the contrary, the United States was not modifying its position on Israeli rights in the Gulf of Aqaba.⁴⁶

Still, although the immediate situation looked brighter, it was "far from serene," Eban reported on his return from Israel in September. Ben Gurion felt the situation was "grave in global terms." The USSR now had footholds in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. Unless there was effective resistance, the "infection would spread" to Jordan and other Near East states and would weaken Europe. Syria was the main focus, though Egypt was the "architect" of these developments. Only one power, the United States, could counteract the trend.⁴⁷

At bottom, the United States and Israel differed in their assessment of the threat to Israel's security. The State Department saw "no present military threat to Israel from inside the area" and dismissed Israel's contention that the U.S. rejection of its arms request "threatens their security." The Near Eastern Bureau that summer continued to recommend that the administration adhere to the strict interpretation of the provision in the November 2 General Assembly resolution requesting UN members to refrain from introducing military goods into the area. The only exception would be to grant export licenses for certain spare parts.⁴⁸ The Eisenhower administration's irritation with Nasser's policy of "positive neutrality" did nothing to bridge this difference in outlook.⁴⁹ Despite the friction and distrust in Washington's relations with the Arabs, the United States continued to exhort Jerusalem to be less alarmist and counseled reliance on the United Nations and on the assurances in the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Actually, Washington's appraisal of the Soviet-Nasserite threat was not much different from Israel's. But the policy conclusion reached in Washington from an appraisal of Soviet intentions was the opposite of Israel's. Not intimacy but distance was called for. For the United States to be visibly helping arm Israel and allying itself with Jerusalem was seen as detrimental to U.S. interests in the Arab world. Yet the United States was committed to the preservation of Israel and stability in the area. To balance its interests, the administration must avoid alliances or formal security links. Its protective cover must be undifferentiated, extended to the entire Middle East in the form of a declaratory commitment to protect all the vulnerable states.

Soviets Challenge the Eisenhower Doctrine

It would appear reasonable to conclude that the narrow interpretation placed on the commitments in the Eisenhower Doctrine was, in part, due to the administration's concern about Moscow's reaction. As early as February 1957 Moscow had proposed that the permanent members of the Security Council (USSR, the United States, United Kingdom, and France, but omitting China, whose seat was held by Taipei) issue a joint declaration of basic principles on the "question of peace and security in the Near and Middle East and non-interference in the internal affairs of the countries of the region." In handing the note to U.S. ambassador Charles Bohlen, Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitri T. Shepilov made it clear that he had in mind primarily the "area which had been the scene of military actions in the fall." To Washington, Bohlen cabled that the Soviet gambit was an "obvious counter" to the Eisenhower Doctrine, then being debated in Congress. What the Soviets wanted was "neutralization [of the] entire area [of the] Near and Middle East." The "real heart" of the proposal, he noted, was a Soviet promise to refrain from arms deliveries to the area provided the three Western powers did likewise and liquidated Western military positions there.⁵⁰

The Department of State agreed the Soviet initiative was aimed at the Eisenhower Doctrine

and at subverting the Baghdad Pact, and it opposed a British suggestion for a point-by-point rebuttal. The Soviet proposal was "not serious" and any reply should be framed in the context of the Eisenhower Doctrine. One consequence of the Soviet gambit was that it induced the U.S. administration to put limits on the way the commitments in the Eisenhower Doctrine would be applied: Keep the U.S. security commitment in the region separate from the alliance relationship with NATO; avoid formal adherence to the Baghdad Pact while supporting its strategic aims; refrain from becoming a major arms supplier; and, do nothing that would cut across the "difficult negotiations" being conducted by the UN to stabilize the Arab-Israeli fronts. The doctrine had been submitted to the North Atlantic Council for comment. But the last thing Washington desired was any formal linkage to NATO. And any connection to the Baghdad Pact should be limited to an "informal arrangement for military planning liaison."⁵¹

Following the adoption of the joint congressional resolution of March 9, endorsing the Eisenhower Doctrine, and throughout the summer of 1957 the Soviet campaign against the doctrine continued unabated, reaching a high point in a virulent note of September 3 accusing the United States of aggravating tensions in the region. In an unusually blunt reply the administration told Moscow that the Soviet note "is highly offensive in tone and cynically distorts United States objectives and actions in the Middle East." Moscow was warned that in accord with the joint congressional resolution, the United States regarded the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the region vital to world peace and "there should be no doubt that the Government of the United States intends to carry out the policy set forth in this Resolution."⁵²

Dulles Rebuffs Israeli Overtures

Consistent with this policy of a blanket and undifferentiated guarantee to all states in the region menaced by the Soviets, the administration rebuffed repeated Israeli overtures for a specific security arrangement. Foreign Minister Meir broached the possibility of such an arrangement, perhaps linked to NATO, in a meeting with Dulles on October 8, and returned to the matter in a follow-up meeting with the Acting Secretary Christian A. Herter four days later. In advance of that meeting, Rountree advised Herter to remind Meir of the "II American Doctrine" as well as the White House statement a year earlier committing the United States to the independence and integrity of nations in the region. This pledge provided a "large measure of guarantee to Israel's security." Marrying the NATO and doctrine "families" would bring serious problems and obstacles. Instead, the burden lay on Israel so to conduct itself in the months ahead that opportunities to exploit the Arab-Israeli problem as a rallying point for the Arabs would be minimized. Besides, Israel remained capable of dealing with any threat from within the area, and the department questioned the wisdom of "Israel's seeking to assure its security by participating in the arms race."⁵³

Meir reiterated the now familiar thesis, stressing Israel's anxiety about tension in the area and the need "to prevent a Soviet takeover in Syria and indeed in the Middle East." What Israel required, in the face of a Soviet "threatening" attitude, was a specific commitment along lines of the U.S. statement on behalf of Turkey.⁵⁴ In addition, she requested arms assistance to strengthen Israel's capacity to face the threat of Soviet-supported Arab armies. Herter's predictable reply was that Soviet leaders knew the determination of the United States with respect to the independence and integrity of the Middle East countries; no specific commitment to Israel was

called for. He did not respond directly to the request for arms aid, noting that Israel had obtained substantial quantities of equipment, including modern aircraft, from France. He was critical of statements from Israel and its friends that the country was prepared to receive greatly increased numbers of immigrants, which alarmed the Arabs and added weight to fears by Israel's neighbors of its territorial designs. And, he concluded, Israel must cooperate more actively with the UN peace-keepers and should accept UNEF forces on its side of the line.⁵⁵

Following an exchange of correspondence between Dulles and Ben Gurion, which dealt both with Israel-Jordan border problems on the agenda of UNTSO and with the larger political and strategic relationship, Eban (accompanied by Minister Yaacov Herzog) talked with the secretary of state at length on October 31. The most urgent matter was continued Soviet penetration of the Middle East, which called, said Eban, for "greater precision in warning the Soviet Union against the danger of any attack on Israel." Israel's security also required a "prudent level of national arms to provide the capability to respond in the first instance to any attack."

Secretary Dulles turned the argument around. Granted that Israel needed, in George Washington's words, "a respectable defensive posture," he nevertheless wondered whether Israel should really be concerned about a Soviet attack. Of course, the Soviet Union was the real danger to the area, but whenever he sought to make this point with Arab leaders, they replied that "perhaps communism was a danger but it was remote, and the real danger was Israel in their midst." So if the Arabs were to be educated to the fact that the Soviets, operating through communist parties, subversion, and infiltration, were the "real present danger in the area," it was up to the Israeli government to help Washington allay Arab fears, to "avoid any actions tending to revive Arab fears of Israel or bringing the Arab-Israel problem to the forefront. *We wish the Arabs to forget the problem of Israel*" [emphasis added]. Washington's great problem, Dulles said, was that "we were tagged as supporters of Israel and Zionism, while the Soviet Union claimed to be against them." The way to escape this liability was to make the Arabs see that the Soviet Union was a greater danger than Israel. Israel should therefore look not to security treaties, which in any case were not "treaties of alliance at all," but to a common security system for a society of nations.⁵⁶

Dulles sent the same message to Ben Gurion in a more formal note two weeks later: The Israeli armed forces retained their superiority and their ability to deal with any threat that might arise, and the United States had made clear to the Soviet Union its "deep interest in the maintenance of independence and integrity of all states of the Near East, including Israel." For Israel, salvation lay not in arms and alliances, but in "Israel's membership in the United Nations and the totality of United States policies," which afford very substantial protection in the event of an attack.⁵⁷

Ben Gurion wrote to Dulles that Israel was ready to be more responsive to UNTSO's efforts to calm border tensions and differences with Jordan over Mount Scopus. Clashes with Syria in the demilitarized area and along the shores of Lake Tiberias generated friction with the United Nations and Washington. But these were sideshows compared with Israel's strategic concerns about its survival and safety. Military victory may have somewhat eased—but only somewhat—Israel's "sense of dread" that pervaded the psychology of the pre-Suez "bad fifties." As Eshed observed, Ben Gurion and those around him, like Reuven Shiloah, father of the Mossad (Israel's foreign intelligence agency) and Israeli embassy minister in Washington (1953-1957), lived "all the time with this feeling that Israel could be destroyed in minutes." The Dulles "doctrine of constraint" was premised on linking the Arab countries to Western defense arrangements. But military aid to Arab countries—including arms supply, training, and strengthening operational

and logistic capacity—that was designed to "constrain" Soviet penetration could also be used to destroy Israel. The reasoning used by the Eisenhower-Dulles administration against arms sales to Israel and a closer security connection was hardly reassuring, as noted earlier, and was intrinsically contradictory. Israel, it was contended in Washington, could not hope to absorb enough military equipment to guarantee a military balance with a hostile Arab world, and an arms race would only aggravate tensions in the region. At the same time, it was argued that Israel did not need the arms. If any-thing, it appeared too strong to Washington compared with Arab states, which were in a state of turmoil owing to their embarrassing defeat on the battlefield.⁵⁸

Israel's feeling of vulnerability, of being "cornered," was far from dissipated after Suez, as the United States continued its prewar policy of courting the Arabs in hopes they would become pillars of a regional stability. Israel was not impressed by Dulles' assurances and remained determined to build up its military strength and keep pressing for a more binding security relation with Washington.

Israel continued its diplomatic campaign into the following year as international attention was focused on the civil strife fomented by Egyptian intervention in Lebanon and Jordan. On July 18, 1958, even as U.S. Marines were landing on Beirut's beaches, the Israeli embassy sought to enlist Washington's support for another type of specific security arrangement, a mutual defense "grouping" of Israel and four other non-Arab states in the region—Ethiopia, Iran, the Sudan, and Turkey. Israel was looking for allies on the periphery of the Arab world under the patronage of Washington. The concept and strategy of the periphery, designed to leapfrog the Arab siege, was the brainchild of Reuven Shiloah, who had been its advocate for some time, particularly toward the end of his tour as minister of the embassy in Washington (September 1953-August 1957), both through his contacts in the CIA and Pentagon and as head of the Mossad. He considered an indirect security connection more realistic and more palatable to the administration than a formal bilateral or even NATO-affiliated alignment, which had for years been resisted.⁵⁹

In a personal letter to President Eisenhower, Ben Gurion argued that the five "undominated" periphery countries of the area—Ethiopia, Iran, Israel, the Sudan, and Turkey—could serve as a bulwark against "Soviet-Nasserist subversion in the Middle East." But this grouping, Ben Gurion said, would need the political, financial, and moral support of the United States and "the inculcation of a feeling in Iran, the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Turkey that our efforts in this direction enjoyed the support of the United States."⁶⁰

Dulles replied within days (August 1, 1958) that the president sympathized with Ben Gurion's objectives. No specific commitment was made. During the next few months Washington "quietly expressed interest in the state of their relations with Israel in the capitals of Iran, Turkey and Ethiopia," but declined to do so in the Sudan as "unlikely to be of benefit." Israel, meanwhile, worked at strengthening these relationships and reported to Washington some successes, notably in Iran and Turkey. Encouraged by what he saw as a promising turn in alliance politics, Ben Gurion wrote Dulles an eight-page letter in mid-January 1959 reiterating the themes of the July message. The situation remained threatening in light of the "Berlin situation" and continuing threats to Israel voiced by high-ranking Soviet officials. Israel was reaching out to peripheral states with the purpose of building a dam against Soviet encroachment, providing technical aid and training to the developing nations of Asia and Africa, and spreading free world values.⁶¹

All this diplomatic effort for a closer and more formal security relationship with Washington to counter the perceived threat from Nasser and the Soviets netted Jerusalem little more than sympathy and repeated admonitions to cooperate with the UN. The administration was careful to avoid any suggestion of an alliance relationship, even to the extent of sponsoring a non-Arab

regional grouping. The Department of State counseled keeping political distance from Israel and strict limits on support for strengthening Israel's regional position. "We should go no further than we already have to help the Israelis" with the peripheral-states grouping, Rountree advised.⁶²

Nor did Israeli diplomacy make much headway in acquiring military equipment from Washington or help in financing purchases of arms from other Western countries. By and large, U.S. caution about being seen as Israel's arms supplier continued. In the wake of the Lebanon and Jordan crises of the summer of 1958, Israel intensified its drive to acquire military equipment from the United States on the presumption that Washington's disenchantment with Nasser would change attitudes about arming Israel. But the United States dampened such hopes in discussions with Meir and Eban in September and October 1958. The established policy was reaffirmed: The United States would not supply Israel's major military requirements, although licensing policy on "non-offensive military equipment" was liberalized so Israel could purchase trucks and personnel carriers, signal equipment, helicopters, and certain antiaircraft and conventional machine guns.⁶³

Essentially, then, post-Suez policy in Washington (as at the United Nations) did not change on either security guarantees or the balance of arms or the conditions of an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. If Israel's security was not threatened, and the UN could be relied on to police the stalemate, then Washington must look to its political interests in the Arab world.

The "very close relationship [of the United States] with Israel has to be carefully balanced by our attention to the Arab states," Congressman Ogden Reid was cautioned by the State Department before his departure for Tel Aviv in June 1959 to take up his post as the new ambassador there. It was important for him "to take no position that tends to identify you with Israeli causes or interests" or to undertake any activity that "can be interpreted as support or sympathetic interest in the IDF." The Israel Defense Force, Rountree stressed, is "regarded with fear and respect and its activities or acquisition of new weapons are matters of great sensitivity to the Arabs." Similarly, although the United States supported Israel's use for maritime purposes of the Gulf of Aqaba, in accord with the memorandum of February 11, 1957, it remained "a subject of some sensitivity" in relations with Saudi Arabia, and appearances in Ellat should be avoided on occasions related to Israel's efforts to expand traffic via the gulf. Requests for economic assistance to Israel received sympathetic attention. Still "we find little economic justification for any but commodity or loan assistance" though political considerations made it almost impossible to eliminate grant assistance altogether.⁶⁴

In Israel and among its supporters in the United States, this tendency on the part of the administration to distance itself from Israel's interests and causes was viewed with foreboding. Despite the national self-confidence professed by Ben Gurion in the spring, the Foreign Ministry that summer was concerned about unfavorable signs in the "atmospherics," pointing to a change for the worse in U.S.- Israel relations. The "signs" included refusal to grant Israel's requests for permission to buy 100 demilitarized tanks, attitudes on Israel's share of Jordan waters, and the sharp "rebuke" regarding an article by Dayan on Suez. The U.S. embassy saw this as the beginning of a "new period of increased Israeli sensitivity."⁶⁵ Israel's concern was underscored by Jacob Blaustein, a prominent Baltimore business executive and American Jewish leader with access to the secretary of state, in a conversation with Assistant Secretary G. Lewis Jones toward the end of the year. Israeli leaders, Blaustein said, were "increasingly disturbed by indications that the United States is veering toward the Arab position" on a number of current important problems, and "there is almost an air of despair in Israel over what is considered a change in the status quo detrimental to Israel's interests."⁶⁶

The convincing show of strength in the Sinai operation had demonstrated Israel's military prowess, but it had not brought the political out-looks of the antagonists any closer, and, in the State Department's view, any identification of the United States with Israel could operate against U.S. national interests. The message Washington was getting even from Arab moderates remained that expressed by Lebanon's foreign minister Charles Malik: that no settlement could be expected without U.S. pressure on Israel to make meaningful concessions. The United States should declare, he urged Dulles, that it opposed "aggression" from either side, that it was against Zionist expansion and further Jewish immigration, and that a territorial settlement must be on the basis of the 1947 partition plan. Israel should cede western Galilee as a place for refugees, with the area placed under UN control. Also, there "could be" a territorial strip across Israel, joining the Arab states.⁶⁷

Clearly, even such concessions—if they could be extracted from Israel—would not satisfy Israel's more radical neighbors. Revealing was a series of diplomatic exchanges in Damascus in the summer of 1957 between U.S. ambassador James S. Moose and Syria's foreign minister Salah al-Din Bitar. For Syria, the Zionist menace was far more urgent than that from communism. Moose's declaration that in light of spreading communist influence in the region the United States "stands ready to help nations of the Middle East safeguard their independence" evoked from Bitar the response that what was needed was U.S. support for Arab unity. The Eisenhower Doctrine was not the answer because it ignored the Zionist and imperialist threats, focusing only on the communist one.

The core issue was Palestine. And consideration of the Palestine problem should begin riot with the present but "comprehend the past," remembering that Israel had existed only for nine years, whereas Palestine had been predominantly Arab for many centuries, and recalling the "injustices inflicted upon the Arabs." Arabs do not ask for the destruction of Israel or elimination of the Jewish community, Bitar said. There is no objection to "Jews enjoying a measure of autonomy" and developing their own culture. But there must, he insisted, be a change in the "fanatically Zionist, expansionist character of the present Israeli regime." Arabs regard this regime, Moose reported, "as a prime danger which obscures, in their minds, the Communist danger." Moreover, the Arabs consider it essential that Arab refugees be allowed to return to their homes and that further Jewish immigration be stopped.

The Arabs had no intention of reviving hostilities, Bitar continued, and "will continue to respect the armistice agreements" but they "could not consider peace negotiations with a regime of 'invaders.'" Moreover, the U.S. declaration that the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway was "improper and evidence of partiality toward Israel." Apart from the political and legal arguments against it, Bitar feared that Israel was creating at Elath a military base that would menace 100 miles of Arab coast in the gulf and was laying claim to "certain areas near and including Medina as part of its 'future' Zionist state." The United Nations had called for a return to the status quo before the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in its November 2, 1956, resolution. Israel did not use the gulf prior to the war and had no rights to it now.⁶⁸

The Lebanon Crisis of 1958

With views so wide apart, a prolonged stalemate policed by the United Nations had to be anticipated. With Cairo, the problem was different and even more frustrating. Nasser professed to be unconcerned about Israel which, as he told *Newsweek's* Harry Kern, had been constrained

to reduce its army to a small mobile force capable only of tactical strikes. His focus at the time was elsewhere, on moving ahead with plans for union with Syria. A United Arab Republic would strengthen both Egypt and Syria vis-à-vis Israel "but in any case history has passed the latter by." Kern wondered whether Nasser was putting the confrontation with Israel on hold while he enlisted Soviet support to outflank the Jewish state by installing friendly regimes in Jordan and Lebanon.⁶⁹

What Washington suspected was that Nasser had larger designs of regional hegemony and feared that his policy of "positive neutrality" opened the way for penetration of international communism. This clash of outlooks and interests was to lead to the U.S.-British intervention in Lebanon and Jordan during the crises of 1957 and the landing of U.S. Marines in Lebanon in the summer of 1958. Threatened by civil strife "instigated and abetted" by Nasserite elements, the president of Lebanon, Camille Chamoun, appealed for help against Nasser's intervention first from the United Nations, then the United States. In June 1958 the Security Council established the United Nations Observer Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) to monitor and deter infiltration from Syria (S/4023, June 11, 1958). Uncertain about its mandate and numbering less than 100, the observer group was not a reassuring deterrent. Tensions increased in mid-July, aggravated by events elsewhere in the Near East. On July 14 the Iraqi government was overthrown in a violent and bloody military coup seen to be fomented by external forces and, at the same time, a plot to overthrow the government of Jordan came to light. Chamoun asked for military assistance from the United States to help preserve its integrity and independence. On July 15 U.S. Marines landed at Beirut. President Eisenhower explained U.S. forces had been sent to protect American lives and to "encourage the Lebanese government in defense of Lebanese sovereignty and integrity." At the same time, the United States called for an urgent meeting of the Security Council.

The council met immediately to consider both Lebanon and the situation in Jordan, where the British had responded with military aid to an appeal from King Hussein. The United States called upon the United Nations to take whatever action was necessary to preserve Lebanon's independence and permit withdrawal of U.S. troops. Owing to a Soviet veto, the council was unable to act and the General Assembly met in emergency session. The "memorable" Arab-sponsored resolution, which ended the crisis and provided both the United States and United Kingdom with an honorable screen behind which to extricate their forces, was adopted unanimously on August 21 as the "Arab solution" to the problem. It was more a manifesto than a plan of action. The resolution called on all member states to act strictly in accordance with the principles of mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, of nonaggression, and of strict noninterference in each other's internal affairs. The secretary general was requested to take forthwith "such practical arrangements as would adequately help in upholding the purposes and principles of the [UN] Charter in relation to Lebanon and Jordan in the present circumstances, and thereby facilitate the early withdrawal of the foreign troops from the two countries." Hammarskjöld's "arrangements" were to expand the UNOGIL group. (By the end of November when it was phased out, UNOGIL numbered 600.) The crisis passed. By October 25 the U.S. forces were out of Lebanon, and the UK forces left Jordan by November 2. UNOGIL was withdrawn by the end of the year.⁷⁰

The outcome in the General Assembly was of considerable significance for the Arab-Israeli issue for it reinforced the Arab conviction that the United Nations could be enlisted to evict foreign troops and foreign influence from Arab territories if the Arabs were united. The Cairo press heralded Dulles's announcement in the General Assembly that the United States had

decided to withdraw in the shortest possible time (behind the screen of UNOGIL) as an occasion for pride and enhancement of Arab prestige. Arab states, including Lebanon and Jordan, had presented a united front and proved that Arab nations could settle disputes among themselves without outside interference and were determined to maintain a neutralist stand. Arab radio commentary wondered, in view of the Arab "victory" at the United Nations, whether the West would change its "decayed diplomacy" in the Middle East to conform to the wishes of people in the region.⁷¹

The outcome of the crisis was significant for another reason. It showed once again that although Jerusalem and Washington might share an interest in opposing Soviet designs in the area, Israel could not capitalize on the U.S.-USSR confrontation. If anything, the administration was more convinced than ever that it could not afford to alienate Israel's Arab neighbors or offend Arab sensibilities by entering into a closer strategic relationship with Israel. The Lebanon crisis also demonstrated for the Eisenhower administration the uses of the United Nations in countering Soviet designs in the region. Chairman Nikita Khrushchev on July 19 had called for a meeting of heads of government of France, India, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States to address the "armed intervention" in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as the "threat of intervention hanging over Iraq and the entire Arab world." Eisenhower lost no time in countering this gambit by characterizing the proposal as "calculated to derogate from the authority and prestige of the United Nations," and the recommendations expected from the heads of government as designed to "make the United Nations into a 'rubber stamp' for a few great powers." The purity of U.S. intentions, he implied, was clear from its readiness promptly to withdraw its troops when the UN replaced them with its own peacekeepers. Several weeks later, Dulles told Gromyko in New York that the U.S. withdrawal from Lebanon could be brought about "if provisions were made for continued interest and presence of [the] UN there." The Lebanese crisis had thus reinforced the administration's preference for enlisting the UN to help extricate Washington from politically embarrassing situations in the area.⁷²

What all this added up to was that neither the agenda of the Arab-Israeli conflict nor the UN peacekeeping mandate—to police a restored armistice—had been significantly changed by the Sinai War and its after-math. Prospects for settlement remained remote, and Dulles was making little headway in persuading the Arabs to "forget the problem of Israel" and turn their attention to the greater menace of communist penetration in the region. Neither could he persuade Israel to take steps to allay Arab fears by limiting Jewish immigration, repatriating a substantial number of refugees, and cooperating more fully with UN peacekeepers. As the 1950s came to an end, the UN peacekeeping presence, now substantially reinforced with the deployment of UNEF, became the axis around which international action on the Arab-Israeli conflict revolved. Its task once again was to damp down border tensions and police the stalemate. The big change was that the focus of peacekeeping action shifted from the Egyptian front to the frontiers with Syria and Jordan.

7

Guardians of the Arab-Israeli Stalemate

Two CHANGES IN THE POSTWAR situation were key. The main scene of trouble shifted from the Egypt-Gaza line to that with Syria and Jordan. Of more historic consequence was Israel's growing responsiveness to U.S. policy aims and its increasing dependence on Washington for economic and military aid and for support in a United Nations numerically dominated by the African and Asian countries of the Nonaligned movement.¹ As U.S. policy remained wedded to the proposition that UN peacekeeping was crucial to stability in the region, Israel came under persistent pressure to cooperate with the world organization in its peacekeeping task, to participate fully in the mixed armistice commissions, and to respect the world body's authority to arbitrate the armistice agreements.

UN guardianship of the stalemate was accepted by both sides. The Arabs continued to resent the one-sided UNEF presence, which was perceived as embarrassing evidence that Arab nations required an international force to protect them from Israel, Yet they also realized that the peacekeeping system legitimized the Arab-Israeli relationship as a military truce without prejudicing Arab political claims. For Israel, the peace-keeping system provided a tolerable framework for stability, given Arab intransigence. It alleviated border tensions and removed obstacles to civilian activities in the disputed areas. Israel therefore worked out ad hoc and pragmatic arrangements with UNTSO and UNEF.

But because the UN peacekeeping presence was considered marginal to Israel's security interests, it was disparaged. Then and later, Israeli policymakers measured the "effectiveness" of third-party peacekeeping not in Hammarskjöldian terms of "fire-watching,"² of conflict management and containment, but in the ability and readiness of the peacekeeping force to "fight" to deter and counter infiltration and raids. Because of the peacekeepers' limited mandate and the political context, Israel concluded, the group would necessarily fail to take into account Israel's vital strategic concerns. Israel's depreciation of the UN peacekeeping system of the 1950s and 1960s (and, later, UNIFIL's presence on the Lebanon border) largely stems from its perception that such a presence was essentially symbolic. To Israeli strategic planners it was clear that a UN battalion commander would never risk exposing his men to determined guerrilla attacks; he had neither the national interest nor the mandate to take necessary and effective counteraction. Besides, the United Nations proved helpless in defusing the most contentious issue of all (to which Ben Gurion returned repeatedly as evidence of Cairo's continued belligerence and violation of the armistice): the restrictions placed on Israeli shipping and commerce through the Suez Canal. Although, as noted below, these restrictions were sometimes relaxed, Israel's sense of sovereignty was offended by the fact that it sailed at Nasser's sufferance and that its rights as certified by the Security Council were consistently spurned.

Given this outlook, Israel pursued a two-track strategy. On the main track it strove to align itself with Washington, seeking political and financial support for arms and alliances with non-Arab countries on the periphery to outflank the Arab siege. But both U.S. pressure and its own need for relative stability to consolidate and build a society and polity, impelled it, on a parallel track, to cooperate more positively with UN peacekeepers and international efforts to maintain the armistice regime. This two-track strategy can be seen in Israel's selective and pragmatic

participation in the armistice machinery on a case-by-case, incident-by incident basis. Cooperation with the peacekeeping mission was, however, subordinated to two overriding objectives: the needs of security and of accelerated and unimpeded economic development and immigrant absorption. Such a policy of cooperation with reservations inevitably led to instances of mistrust and friction with the UN peacekeepers reminiscent of earlier years.

Supervising the Quasi Détente

By the end of the formative decade and, indeed, right into the early 1960s, relative quiet reigned on the borders, punctuated by incidents that were usually snuffed out by UN peacekeepers (although at times the occurrences engaged the attention of the Security Council). Serious incidents were infrequent. Clashes were localized and, even on the Syrian front where heavy fighting would sometimes erupt, their effects were contained by the intervention of UN peacekeepers. All sides were inclined to be more cooperative with the UN's conflict-containment efforts. And Israel also limited its military retaliation to cross-border raids and shelling. The seemingly permanent political stalemate of the decade following the Sinai War was reflected on the frontiers.

On the Egyptian frontier a strange "quiescence"—as Golda Meir characterized it—prevailed through the fall of 1957 and into the next year. Nasser was engaged in building up his forces and mobilizing backing for his pan-Arab movement. The focus was on Nasser's maneuvers in the civil strife in Lebanon and Jordan, where he aimed at installing friendly regimes. Along with Nasser's success in merging with Syria early in 1958 in a United Arab Republic (UAR), all this could be read as aimed at encircling Israel for the postponed struggle. The U.S. embassy in Cairo reported without comment that the daily *al-Ahram* of October 3, 1958, carried an "exclusive lead story" recalling the Ben Gurion-Eisenhower correspondence in the summer of 1957, which, according to the newspaper, betrayed a concern that Nasser's pan-Arab policy could outflank and encircle a vulnerable Israel.³

Whatever the reason, in the early years the UNEF presence served the parallel interests of Cairo and Jerusalem in maintaining a quiet on the Gaza line and the Sinai frontier that lasted for a decade. Even though Israel was concerned about Nasser's longer range designs, it welcomed a climate of detente in which nation building was accelerated and Israel's economic and political position in the region consolidate.,

Not that all was quiet on that frontier. Incidents of cross-border marauding from Gaza and of armed Egyptian infiltrators into the Negev occurred from time to time, especially in the first year after Suez. The U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv reported, for example, that according to an Israeli source, two armed Egyptian infiltrators were killed near Kibbutz Magen in the Negev by an Israeli police patrol on July 15, and three infiltrators armed with machine guns penetrated Israeli territory 10 km (6.2 miles) opposite Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. The infiltrators were believed to have come from the Sinai, not Gaza.⁴

Refusing to participate in EIMAC, Israel channeled its complaints through the UNEF command. Bums vainly attempted to persuade Israel to end its boycott of EIMAC. Formally, the mixed commission functioned as usual without an Israeli representative and generated adverse rulings and reports to UN headquarters and to the Security Council. Incidents were few and readily handled by UNEF personnel, but Israel's boycott proved an irritant in UN-Israel relations.

Frustrating to Israel was the realization that its Sinai victory had brought no sweeping change in Cairo's policy or UN remedies with respect to its transit of the Suez Canal. Still, although the UN could not persuade Egypt to stop interfering with Israeli shipping through the canal, UNEF's guardianship at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba was not challenged. The presence of the UNEF was credited with "continu[ing] to assist in maintaining peace and relative stability along the armistice demarcation line" and at Sharm el-Sheikh, as the secretary general reported from year to year. In his reports of August 21 and October 9, 1958, for example, the secretary general could with justice take credit for the virtually unbroken quiet that prevailed along the entire line between Egypt and Israel, in contrast to the instability and border tension in that area before the deployment of UNEF. He reported that the 5,400-man force was functioning smoothly, that morale was high, and increased efficiency was maintained in the face of budgetary problems. (Lack of reliable financing was to remain a central problem with peacekeeping operations ever after, leading to a constitutional crisis in the mid-1960s over Soviet and French refusal to pay their assessment shares for the peacekeeping expenses of UNEF and the Congo operation.) In 1958, the Colombian contingent was withdrawn for financial reasons; but remaining contingents from Brazil, Canada, Denmark, India, Norway, Sweden, and Yugoslavia continued to serve until UNEF was withdrawn at the behest of Nasser on the eve of the Six Day War.⁵

As the secretary general's reports observed, it was the UN peace keeping presence that ensured "relative stability," though it would sometimes be claimed that UNEF did more, helping to "maintain peace." Without its presence, he claimed, "the cumulative effect of numerous incidents along the line would probably soon attain a seriousness far overshadowing the effort and expense now involved in the maintenance of the Force."⁶

Still, the quasi detente on the frontier was broken periodically by incidents that kept the UN peacekeepers occupied in damping down border troubles and "fire watching." For the twelve-month period ending July 31, 1960, 384 incidents were reported, a marked increase over the 137 in the corresponding period of the previous year. In the following year (1961) the number was down again. All but a very few of the incidents were minor. The secretary general could report that "quiet prevailed in the area." He attributed this to the "constant vigilance by UNEF sentries and patrols, by day and night," which had "an effective influence in restraining infiltration activities across the Armistice Demarcation Line and in the prevention of incidents along the Line." Air violations, on the other hand, were numerous, most of them blamed on the Israeli aircraft over flying the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. But these rarely led to combat or casualties.⁷

Within this circumscribed role, the UNEF presence helped to stabilize the western side of the Egypt-Israel armistice line and the international frontier, covering a distance of 273 km (169 miles). The Sinai coast from the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba to the Straits of Tiran, a further distance of 187 km (116 miles), was kept under observation by UNEF air reconnaissance. By day, the entire length of the ADL was kept under observation by some seventy intervisible observation posts (OPs). By night, sentries were replaced by patrols that moved on foot and covered the length of the ADL on an average of three times each night.

The Jordan Front: Friction over Jerusalem's Neutral Zone

On the Jordan front, too, border troubles were minor for some years after the Sinai War.

Infiltrators from Jordan territory were active in the Jerusalem area and the Negev from time to time, but incidents were contained by UNTSO action and Israeli forbearance. Given its broader strategic interests, Israeli restraint was understandable. Its paramount concern was not to add to Hussein's troubles as he faced Nasser's attempt to subvert his regime. In any event, the raids as such were the lesser problem. The larger issue, as before, was Jordan's resistance to more normalized relations with Israel and bilateral arrangements for disputed areas to be negotiated between the two.

Israel had hoped soon after the armistice agreement was signed to work out state-to-state relations with Jordan, particularly in the Jerusalem area. Amman, however, spumed Israeli overtures to regularize arrangements for access to holy places and cultural institutions in the Jordanian sector and to resume normal functioning of the educational and humanitarian institutions—including the Hebrew University and Hadassah Hospital—on Mount Scopus as the GAA had provided. The United Nations could do nothing to move the Jordanian authorities.

The Tree-planting Imbrolio

The tree-planting affair, which flared up in the summer of 1957 and occupied the United Nations into early 1958, was of little moment. But the political effect was significant. For, in Israeli eyes, it exposed the inadequacy of the armistice arrangements and the ineffectiveness of the UN-prescribed remedies for breaking through the armistice constraints and normalizing state-to-state relations. The troubles arose from the planting of a band of trees on the Israel-controlled side of a de facto civilian line drawn through the neutral zone established in 1947-1948 around Government House, the former residence of the British High Commissioner of Jerusalem, which was taken over by the United Nations as UNTSO headquarters. (The neutral zone, comprising Government House, the Arab College, and the Jewish Agricultural School, was incorporated with minor changes into the cease-fire line of November 30, 1948, and the zone was left intact in the armistice agreement). Jordan considered the area a no-man's land, but Israel claimed that a 1949 agreement, signed but not ratified by Jordan, accorded it jurisdiction over civilian activities on its side of the dividing line.⁸

The controversy—which Eban once dubbed a "great fuss about nothing"—engaged U.S. diplomacy, the UNTSO establishment, the secretary general, and the Security Council from the summer of 1957 into the following year. On July 21, 1957, Israel staked out an area in the vicinity of Jabal el-Mukkaber on its side of the "civilian line" and brought in earthmoving and cultivating equipment to prepare the land for afforestation as part of a beautification project. Jordan filed complaints with IJMAC and UNTSO, and on September 4 requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council on the ground that such actions violated the GAA. In a counter complaint Israel alleged "violations by Jordan of the provisions of the General Armistice Agreement, and in particular of Article VIII thereof" (the commitment to set up a special committee to regularize relations in the Jerusalem area).

Jordan claimed that the 1948 cease-fire agreement made the area a "noman's land" (which the armistice confirmed), that the tree planting had intruded on privately owned Arab properties, and that Israel's purpose was to gain "new strategic positions ... which would render practically impossible all defense of the Arab part of Jerusalem," Moreover, in Jordan's view the area was under the control and supervision of the United Nations, which should protect the existing status of the Arab properties.

The UNTSO chief of staff did not accept the Jordanian position that he had supreme authority in the zone. An inaccurate parallel was being drawn between the neutral zone and the DMZ between Syria and Israel, created by the armistice agreement. Rather, this was a problem for the MAC. But because of Israel's boycott of the MAC, the chief of staff hesitated to call a meeting at which a Jordanian resolution "inaccurate as to the true situation in the zone" would have been presented and on which he would have to abstain or vote against. Both the United Nations and Washington sought to avoid Security Council discussion of an issue that by the summer of 1957 became entangled in intra-Arab politics. Because Israeli work in the zone was taking place in full sight of Arab-held Jerusalem, King Hussein felt he must take some action in the United Nations to counter the taunts of Syrian and Egyptian propaganda that he had sold out the neutral zone to the enemy.⁹

Given the considerable uncertainty about the authority of the parties and of the UN over the area, the Security Council asked UNTSO's acting chief of staff, Col. Byron V. Leary (U.S.) to report on the status of the disputed area and more generally on compliance with the armistice agreement. Leary issued two reports. The message of both was that in the interest of tranquillity no controversial activities should be pursued, irrespective of rights and wrongs. The first report, dated September 23, stressed that UNTSO's task was limited to assuring the demilitarized status of the zone and that it lacked authority to regulate civilian activities there. Anyway, the MAC was the suitable venue for taking up the matter, and Leary proposed that IJMAC meet to discuss civilian activities in the zone with a two-month deadline to reach a decision. Pending such discussion Israel should suspend all tree-planting activity.¹⁰

Following what had become established policy, Washington backed the UN solution. Ben Gurion was urged to comply with Leary's proposal and to suspend the planting "without prejudice," so as to "create an atmosphere" in which the MAC might resolve the problem "peacefully."¹¹

Neither did Israel get much satisfaction from Leary's second report, issued a month later. Israel was, indeed, entitled to request implementation of Article VIII, which provided for a special committee to normalize Israel-Jordan relations in the Jerusalem area. But there was no provision for "assistance" from the United Nations in achieving this end, and Israel could best facilitate the implementation of the GAA if it resumed full participation in the meeting of the MAC and offered full cooperation to UNTSO¹²

On November 22, the Security Council met again to discuss, not Leary's reports but Jordan's renewed complaint about the tree planting. Jordan demanded: that the council condemn Israel for armistice violations; that activities stop immediately; that the situation be restored to the status quo at the time the armistice was signed; that supervision and control of UNTSO over the disputed area be confirmed; and that Israel cooperate with IJMAC as competent to deal with violations of the armistice agreement. The Jordan brief reflected the established Arab position: Let the United Nations insist on a return to the status quo at the time the armistice was signed and assert its authority over disputed areas as well as its competence to act through the armistice machinery and to arbitrate disputes in the MACs.

Two months later, in a resolution cosponsored by Washington and London and adopted unanimously on January 22, 1958, the Security Council delivered its Solomonic judgment, in effect sustaining Jordan's interest. Neither side, it declared, "enjoys sovereignty over any part of the zone." Israel was told that in the interests of reducing tensions controversial civilian projects such as the tree planting must be put on hold and that the United Nations had the power to judge what constituted compliance with the armistice provisions and to demand Israel's "full

participation" in the MAC and "full cooperation" with UNTSO. These phrases became a ritual formula and served as authoritative guidance for UN peacekeepers in the field, to which they could appeal when Israeli authorities challenged their intervention.¹³

Despite frustration at the outcome, Israeli reaction to the Security Council resolution was characterized as "definitely restrained" by the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, a government spokesman expressed regret that a minor local problem had been magnified to the proportions of an international conflict. The Israel government's attitude, he declared, would be determined by the extent to which the council's recommendations conform with the rights and obligations established by the armistice agreement. The cabinet, at the time, did not press Israel's countercomplaint regarding Jordan's noncompliance with Article VIII of the armistice agreement.¹⁴

Hammar skjöld's Visit

Israel's larger strategic concerns, aimed at closer alignment with Washington to counter Soviet-Nasserite encroachment, dictated a more conciliatory approach on disputes like the tree-planting affair. The U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv observed that a period of détente in Israel-Jordan relations was noticeable as of the end of November 1957, when it was announced that Hammar skjöld was coming to the Middle East. For once, the secretary general had no fixed agenda for his visit, his purpose being to show concern and dampen the embers that periodically threatened to set Arab-Israeli fronts on fire. By December 4, following his visit to Amman, the United Nations announced that he had successfully arranged for passage of the periodic Mount Scopus convoy that, as noted earlier, had been blocked by Jordan's claim that gasoline could not be considered fuel under the accepted rules.

With Jordan resisting negotiations on Mount Scopus, in December 1957 Hammar skjöld sent a personal representative, Ambassador Francisco Urrutia of Colombia, to negotiate on full implementation of the July 7, 1948, agreement for the demilitarization of Mount Scopus and UN inspection of the area. In a successful exercise of shuttle diplomacy—Urrutia flew between Jerusalem and Amman twenty-four times during the negotiation—by January 19, 1958, he worked out with Israel and Jordan an agreed interpretation of the 1948 agreement, giving the United Nations more control over convoys to Mount Scopus. Provision was made for a regular supply convoy, and both parties agreed that the United Nations would be responsible for ascertaining the need for and ultimate use of items included in the convoy manifesto. Both sides were satisfied with the outcome. An Israeli official told a U.S. embassy official that he hoped this method of negotiating disputes "free from noisy debates such as often occur in the UN" would continue. He praised Urrutia's "common sense approach" in recognizing that full implementation of the 1948 Mount Scopus agreement was an "ideal" rather than a probability as long as tension existed between Israel and Jordan.¹⁵

For the remainder of the decade the border and disputed areas in Jerusalem remained relatively quiet, though contentious issues were never resolved. In fact, several months after completion of the Urrutia agreement, Bunche was back in Jerusalem to discuss Mount Scopus arrangements after several incidents of firing at and obstructing convoys, the revival of the MAC machinery, and Israel's "intentions" to press for implementation of the armistice provision on free access to the cultural and medical facilities on Scopus.¹⁶ But border troubles were overshadowed by concerns in both Jerusalem and Amman about perceived Nasserite threats to the Hussein regime,

which were to lead to Western intervention that summer. In these concerns, the role of the UNTSO peacekeepers was marginal.

The Unquiet Syrian Front

On the Syrian front the most serious border troubles erupted in the years after Suez, and the issue of UN authority under the GAA ignited the most contentious encounters with the peacekeepers. As in the early 1950s, many of the incidents originated in the extension of Israeli land cultivation and drainage works toward the eastern boundary of the DMZ. Also, Israeli fishermen, often escorted by police boats, extended their operations into the northeastern part of Lake Tiberias; shooting incidents resulted and often flared into fire fights between armed forces.

These disputes drew in UNTSO and, from time to time, ended up in the Security Council. Israel and the United Nations differed mainly over Israel's challenge to UN claims of authority under the armistice agreement. Was the United Nations the arbiter of rights and claims under the armistice? After all, it was an agreement reached by the parties, beyond the mandate of the world organization to contain fighting and prohibit actions that brought military advantage to one side or the other. Who controlled the DMZ? Was the MAC, which by definition included a Syrian representative, competent to deal with "civilian" activities in the DMZ, or were such matters to be handled by the UN chairman in contact with the Israelis? Israel's selective boycott of the commission and its attempts to circumscribe the UNMOs investigatory actions generated abrasive encounters and recriminations.

The issue was joined within weeks after withdrawal of the last Israeli troops from Sinai. On March 26, 1957, Syria complained to the ISMAC chairman that Israel was building military fortifications, including a bridge, at the outlet of Lake Huleh in the DMZ and requested immediate investigation. The bridge was built by Israel for the transport of earth moving and dredging machinery necessary for completion of the Huleh reclamation project described in [Chapter 3](#). Syria claimed that because of its military value the bridge should not be allowed in the demilitarized zone. In his report of April 20, UNTSO's acting chief of staff, Col. Leary, who also served as ISMAC chairman, faulted Israel "first and foremost" for noncooperation with UNTSO. Leary himself and accompanying military observers had initially been denied access to the zone by Israeli authorities. When allowed to enter the zone, they confirmed that the western approaches to the bridge had been mined in contravention of the armistice agreement. Steps were taken to remove the mines. On the substance, however, Leary found that Syria had no ground for complaint. The bridge was not built on Arab-owned lands, and its construction did not prejudice civilian interests in the zone. He was satisfied that the bridge had been erected in connection with the Huleh reclamation project and that UNTSO would not be justified in asking for its removal. In view of the difficulties encountered in entering and inspecting the zone, however, Leary proposed that the "special powers" of the MAC chairman and of the UN military observers in the demilitarized zone be reaffirmed.¹⁷

Leary's report set a pattern for many years to come (and in many ways mirrored the pre-Suez practice): Syria complains about Israeli territorial encroachment; Israel, it is charged, interferes with UN investigators and tries to circumscribe the UN chairman's authority; UNTSO faults Israel for noncooperation but sanctions water and engineering projects like that at Lake Huleh within strict limits. Often, as with the tree-planting dispute in Jerusalem, Israel is asked to

suspend projects in the interest of calming the situation. Israel sometimes refuses to comply. Even when Israel is the winner, as in Leary's ruling that the bridge was part of a legitimate engineering project, the very fact that its economic decisions must be subjected to UN approval is irksome and regarded as politically questionable. From time to time, as in this case, the matter ends up in the Security Council, which invariably supports the rulings of UNTSO and the secretary general and admonishes Israel to have recourse to the armistice machinery.

At council meetings on May 23 and 28, Syria charged that Israel's "unilateral action" in building a bridge with military potential, its exclusion of the MAC chairman and military observers from the demilitarized zone, and the mining of approaches to the bridge constituted a "flagrant violation" of the armistice agreement. Israel countered that, as Leary's report confirmed, the bridge was built in connection with the Huleh reclamation project. Israel challenged the very basis of the Syrian charge that the bridge would be used for military purposes. With the armistice, "relations between Israel and Syria are no longer based on purely military considerations as they were during the Truce, and ... therefore neither party may invoke such considerations where they do not apply." Thus, to Syria the armistice was but a prolongation of the truce, but to Israel it marked a transition from a military to a political relationship.

Although Israel had been largely vindicated in Leary's report (and the majority of the Security Council members, including the three Western powers, generally dismissed the claim that the project might give Israel military advantage) it used the occasion to challenge the scope of the UN authority in the demilitarized zone. UNTSO's "freedom of movement," the Israeli representative contended, was not unlimited. Its policy was "not to interfere in any way with the movement of military observers in the Demilitarized Zone, *if any such movement is necessitated by their official functions*" (emphasis added). But as a "matter of principle" Israel refused to entertain Syrian complaints regarding the zone and would not agree to investigations in the zone arising from Syrian complaints. The Israeli attempt to thus narrow the competence of the United Nations in the zone drew sharp criticism in the Security Council. U.S. ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge supported the authority of the UNTSO chief of staff as in accord with his special responsibilities under Article V of the armistice agreement, and his decision on the bridge was endorsed.

The Security Council's consensus, delivered by Lodge in his capacity as president, became authoritative for the entire interwar period: The UNTSO chief of staff had the authority to ensure implementation of the armistice agreement within the zone, and he was entitled to the "full cooperation of the governments concerned."

Given the green light by the council, the chief of staff's report of June 27 faulted Israel for preventing UN military observers from carrying out investigations in certain parts of the zone. Israel had rejected the request to dismantle fortifications in the zone on the ground that Syrian noncompliance with the armistice agreement openly threatened its security. Leary insisted that the chairman and the UN military observers must, at all times and without prior authorization, have freedom of access to and freedom of movement in the demilitarized zone in order to carry out their duties. Israeli authorities were also requested to assist in locating lodging facilities within the zone so that some observers could remain there on a twenty-four-hour basis.

Israel remained unyielding. In a supplement to the June report, the acting chief of staff informed the secretary general that, as of August 7, he had received no reply from the Israeli authorities to his request for stationing observers in the zone. Neither had he succeeded in setting up an observation post near the bridge. In fact, advised of UNTSO's intention to establish the post, the Israeli foreign minister claimed that the terms of the armistice agreement did not entitle

UNTSO to act in the demilitarized zone without Israel's consent and that UNTSO's intention to establish the observation post near the Huleh bridge without Israeli permission was not in conformity with the armistice agreement.¹⁸

By the fall of 1957 the pattern was set for the rest of the interwar period. Israel resisted UNTSO's assertion of competence to act in the demilitarized zone without Israeli consent. Its refusal to provide "full cooperation" led to international strictures on Israel and chronic criticism from the UN establishment and Washington. Israel's response was that the world was insufficiently alert to the threat of a Soviet-provoked Syrian attack. To the foreign press in Jerusalem, Foreign Minister Meir declared that Syria's accretion of arms was viewed with "extreme anxiety," especially given the repeated threats from Damascus to destroy Israel. The danger was increased, she added, by the big-power policy of arming Israel's neighbors and by the Soviet propaganda campaign.¹⁹

Although "relative quiet" reigned on the border, some incidents escalated into serious confrontation. On November 6, 1957, an Israeli was killed and another wounded while cutting a fence west of the Arab village of Khirbet in the Tawafik (Tawfiq) area of the southern sector of the zone. (See [Map 3.2.](#)) Tawafik was to become the scene of some of the fiercest confrontations in succeeding years. Half the land was owned by Arabs and half by Israelis, and all attempts by successive MAC chairmen to delimit the plots failed. Serious incidents resulted from opposing claims to cultivate particular plots and from Israeli engineering operations close to Arab strips. An "informal discussion" at an ISMAC emergency session on November 14 led to agreement on measures to prevent recurrence: Any "legitimate work" in the area should not be interfered with (a bow to the Israeli side), but the parties "should comply fully with the GAA" by settling matters in the MAC (a bow to the Syrian side).²⁰

Israel Defies UN Authority over ISMAC

Many of the incidents continued to be dealt with in the framework of the MAC. Although Israel maintained in being its delegation to the ISM AC and sought favorable "findings" from the chairman and the UNTSO chief of staff, its formal policy of almost total boycott of regular ISMAC meetings was maintained throughout the interwar years. And a running confrontation over Israel's "nonparticipation" embittered the UN-Israel relationship.

Israel did participate in "emergency and extraordinary" meetings from time to time. In the fall of 1957, there was a flicker of hope that "unusual" meetings would be possible even on disputes involving clashes in the demilitarized zone. As noted above, following Syria's complaint about the digging of a ditch for water diversion in the Tawafik-Tel Katzir area, a peaceful solution was reached in an "unusual" meeting of the commission. Israel was "hopeful that a period of border calm will prevail for an indefinite period," the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv reported. Later, the Israelis dug another drainage ditch west of Khirbet in the Tawafik area to replace the one originally planned, thus hoping to complete the project by skirting the contested area. Israel sought and obtained a favorable finding from Maj. Gen. Carl C. von Horn (who succeeded Col. Leary in March 1958) that the work was legitimate. Its purpose, he ruled, was to dig the drainage ditch and not to define a line to which Israelis could extend cultivation.²¹ Israel thus found that it could turn the UNTSO-MAC mechanism to its advantage.

But such occasions proved to be aberrations. Several more "emergency" meetings were held, but without Israeli participation. As a consequence, Syria turned such meetings to its political

advantage for many years right up to the Six Day War. When, in early 1967, Israel participated in an "emergency and extraordinary meeting," the event was so unusual that it was hailed as "significant" in UN annals.²² The political costs to Israel in the Security Council and other international arenas should not be underestimated, for it was seen as defying UN authority and the international consensus.

Israel's political interests were thus damaged by its vacating the field to Damascus. Syria was able to use the mixed commission procedure to generate resolutions and declarations condemning Israel. Based on accounts in the Syrian complaint, these resolutions became part of the official UN record annexed to the UNTSO chief of staff's report. The Syrian account then defined the Security Council debate to Israel's disadvantage.

For example, at the seventy-ninth emergency meeting (held on February 16, 1960, without Israeli participation) ISMAC adopted a Syrian draft resolution condemning the attack on the village of Khirbet, which resulted in the "destruction" of the village "in violation of elementary humanitarian principles." The commission also adopted a declaration deploring Israel's repeated absences from the commission's meetings and recalled the Security Council resolution of May 1951 declaring such absences inconsistent with the intent of the armistice agreement. Appended to von Horn's report to the Security Council, both the condemnatory resolution and the declaration served as a bill of particulars against Israel, and its action was condemned as a flagrant violation of the armistice agreement.²³ The commission's one-sided actions put Israel on the defensive even when it had a good case. In effect, it was placed in a position of noncompliance with the armistice agreement by the very act of refusing to participate in the mixed commission.

Ironically, Israel's policy of selective participation in ISMAC, where regular sessions would have brought it face-to-face with Syrian representatives, not only exposed it to international censure but also diminished opportunities for direct contact with the Syrian representative and underscored the fact that the armistice regime was a joint instrument of the parties. Israel was caught in a dilemma. Its boycott of ISMAC gave Syria free rein to maneuver in the mixed commission. Yet recognition of the Syrian representative's standing on matters affecting the zone undercut Israel's claim that the zone was sovereign national territory. With very few exceptions, the UN chairmen would not make fine distinctions between cases of infringement of the armistice affecting the zone (which Jerusalem declared off limits to the commission) and incidents of military penetration and cross-border firing where Israel might accept the MAC's competence. Israel was never able to extricate itself from this quandary, and its inconsistent policy on participation in the mixed commissions created tension with the United Nations up to the Six Day War,

Israel's policy of selective participation in ISMAC meetings became especially perplexing by the mid-1960s. Both Israel and Syria made greater use of ISMAC to register complaints and enlist UNTSO's investigatory procedures during the mounting tensions and border clashes. ISMAC records list more than eight thousand complaints processed by the commission since the Sinai conflict. The range of cases addressed by UNTSO and the ISMAC chairmen, and the extent to which Israel enlisted the ISMAC mechanism, can be glimpsed in a listing appended to UNTSO's report to the Security Council on its meeting, convened at Syria's request, to consider an incident at el-Qadi on November 13, 1964, in the northern area of the ADL.²⁴

Far from having fallen into disuse, then, the armistice mechanism was operating actively, but its function had been transformed. From a meeting ground for face-to-face discussions on disputes and incidents under UN chairmanship—in effect, the Rhodes formula—the MAC had

become largely a vehicle for UNTSO to receive and consider complaints, make a finding of fault, respond with measures to improve observation, and monitor compliance with the armistice regime. Though formally not part of the regular ISMAC process, Israel was thus engaging UNTSO and the mixed commission extensively for the same purpose as was Syria—to build a record useful in defending its interests in the international arena. (The central UNTSO mechanism also continued to be engaged for sundry tasks, such as prisoner exchange.)

For clues to Israel's sometimes negative and perplexing policy on the MAC process, one needs to look at what the UN Secretariat once dubbed the parties' "state of mind." Israel's misgivings about the way the armistice relationship evolved was due only in part to UNTSO's handling of border incidents. At bottom, what concerned Israeli policymakers was UN acquiescence, if not complicity, in side-tracking the key issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In Israel's eyes, the world community had capitulated to the Arab states' persistent refusal both to recognize its sovereignty and legitimacy and to move beyond the military standoff and on to a normalized state-to-state relationship, as anticipated at Rhodes. The armistice had, in effect, ratified the right of Arab states to maintain a formal state of war. By concentrating on "secondary" causes of border tension, the UN peacekeepers were reinforcing Arab intransigence.

This concern is most explicitly expressed in Israel's letter of February 25, 1960, to the president of the Security Council in explaining its position on the Tawafik incident.²⁵ By allowing itself to be diverted to technical details of "secondary importance," the letter explained, the United Nations was not attending to the "real maladies." The underlying problem stemmed not from the particulars of the dispute, Israeli ambassador Yosef Tekoah argued, but lay in Syria's attitude toward the Arab-Israeli relationship. An intensified policy of hostility against Israel and the campaign of open incitement to war, accompanied by extensive military preparations, "in both provinces of the United Arab Republic, directed against Israel," were at the bottom of the border troubles. If tranquillity was to be ensured in the area, the UAR "must abandon her policy of hostility."

Huleh: UNTSO Safeguards Israel's Interest

Despite Israel's suspicions and concerns, its interests were not ignored by UNTSO. Of the three focal points of dispute in the late 1950s and early 1960s—the Huleh reclamation project, Lake Tiberias, and the south-central sector of the demilitarized zone—the UNTSO command was particularly protective of Israeli interests in the Huleh matter. As noted above, in March 1958 Israelis and Syrians clashed over reclamation work in the Huleh area. Two intensive artillery duels early in April brought UN and US intervention. Following a Syrian attack on workers at the eastern margins of Lake Huleh (near the central demilitarized zone), a cease-fire was achieved. At Washington's urging, Israel agreed to suspend work but insisted that this not be taken to (1) cast doubt on Israel's right to execute such an operation *within or outside* the demilitarized zone, (2) concede authority to the United Nations over Israeli territory, or (3) imply that the canal was not being built on Israeli territory.²⁶ Israel later agreed to divert the canal from the demilitarized zone, and Hammarskjöld was quoted as being optimistic about the outcome.²⁷

Trouble erupted again at the end of the year. On December 3, a Syrian army post fired on Israeli shepherds, killing one, and then opened a heavy artillery barrage against seven Israeli villages. An artillery duel on a 14-km (9-mile) front ensued. Israel appealed to the Security Council for "peaceful redress, and still more for deterrence." The UAR (Syria) said the incident

"should be placed within the framework of Israeli provocations and daily violations" of the armistice. Playing its most effective card, Syria declared that Israel's taking the case to the council without first having recourse to the MAC demonstrated that Israel was "only following propaganda purposes for reasons of internal policy."²⁸

UNTSO's report on the incident did not absolve Israel. Syrian smallarms fire, during which the Israeli shepherd was killed, may have precipitated the incident, but the subsequent artillery exchange was initiated by Israel. Suggesting that Israel was largely responsible, the UNTSO chief of staff again recalled that ISMAC had held no regular sessions since June 1951 and consequently the MAC chairman and the UNTSO chief were unable to operate as the armistice agreement had intended. At a followup Security Council meeting twelve days later (December 15) the secretary general implicitly admonished Israel by declaring that no military action in contravention of the cease-fire could be justified, even in retaliation, except in a case of obvious self-defense in the most limited sense.

In a prearranged scenario, Lodge then suggested that "great weight" be given to Hammarskjöld's position that the most effective course was to back the UNTSO chief of staff and to press both parties to cooperate with the MAC chairman. In his summation, the council president declared that the events of December 3 were serious not only because of the loss of life but also because "any one of [them] could have been satisfactorily dealt with under the provisions of the armistice agreement."²⁹

This was the approach taken by the United Nations and supported by Washington until the Six Day War. Israel thus got little satisfaction from taking to the Security Council what it considered a strong case. Instead, it was admonished to use the armistice machinery. There was impatience with both sides, but mainly with Israel for resorting to armed force and failing to cooperate with Hammarskjöld and his peacekeepers.

Despite Israel's strong misgivings about the direction of UN intervention in the Huleh dispute, the record shows that Israel was not always the loser. Though the United Nations would from time to time call for suspension of work while it investigated Syrian complaints, in the main, UNTSO (even more than the secretariat in New York) supported Israel's legitimate interest in completing the project. On May 30, 1960, for example, the ISMAC chairman had instructed Israel to stop further dredging pending an engineering study by the UN. The outcome of the study undertaken during the summer was favorable to Israel, and the ISMAC chairman ruled that the proposed works were not in violation of the armistice. Damascus protested. Writing to the senior Syrian delegate on September 15, 1960, the acting chief of staff, Col. R. W. Rickert (USMC), noted that Israel had several times been overruled to the advantage of Syria when it questioned the powers of the chairman (as in the Tawafik affair described above). In this case—the right to dredge south of Benot Yaacov bridge—Syria was out of order; the dredging operation would simply continue, for a short distance along the west bank of the river, the work already carried out north of it.³⁰

Apparently there were misgivings in New York and Rickert cabled UN under secretary Ralph Bunche, underscoring the limits imposed: that the drainage work would not extend beyond 300 meters (990 ft) south of the bridge and only for the purpose of "completing [the] Huleh scheme and only to complete it." Should there be a request to start work on another object, particularly diversion of waters, the "text of the findings would be used as a basis for refusal." Rickert stressed that the work would be on Jewish-owned land on the western bank and there "will be no work on eastern bank [lands] which are Arab owned. Work will affect neither Syrian nor local Arab interests." Moreover, Rickert pointed out to Bunche, Israel had in effect acknowledged that

it needed the MAC chairman's authorization to proceed with the project and waited several months for the expert's study. This was an "implicit recognition" by Israel of the status of the DMZ "despite occasional statements that [the] zone is part of Israel." Rickert urged quick approval so that work could proceed before the rainy season began and the Syrians be notified.³¹

Apparently, Bunche was still not satisfied that all Syrian concerns had been met, and Rickert sent a follow-up cable confirming that the project had been authorized only so long as it observed the limits imposed. Bunche was also assured that the expert engineer who had conducted the study concluded that it was highly improbable that the work done on the western side of the river would reduce the flow of water in the dry season given the topography. Bunche went along with the decision but reminded Rickert that Israel's "long-standing position" on UN competence in ISMAC did not affect the UN interpretation of the armistice agreement or limit its authority under the armistice.³²

The Specter of Retaliation

Damping down the hundreds of incidents that flared up on the Syrian frontier during this period remained a central preoccupation of UNTSO. Most of the incidents were minor but some escalated into serious fire fights. By the early 1960s, as Israeli military action was stepped up in response to Syrian cross-border shelling and raids, concerns were voiced at the United Nations and Washington that Israel was reverting to a policy of retaliatory raids.

Two crises—the Lake Tiberias dispute in 1962 and the raid on the Israeli village of Almagor the following year—illustrate the consistency of the international response and the extent to which "peacekeeping" had become accepted as the all-purpose prescription for restoring armistice stability.

Lake Tiberias—March 1962. Syrian harassment of Israeli fishing and patrol boats on Lake Tiberias, which Israel regarded as "situated entirely inside Israeli territory," ignited frequent exchanges of fire along the eastern shore in February and early March 1962. Tension reached a flashpoint on March 8 and again on March 15. Israel complained to the mixed armistice commission that Syrian positions on the lake's northeastern shore had opened heavy machine gun, bazooka, and recoilless rifle fire on an Israeli police boat that had come to the assistance of Israeli fishing vessels under machine gun attack. Two policemen were wounded and the patrol boat damaged. Syrian witnesses claimed that the Israel patrol boat had opened fire on farmers working near the village of El Kursi, but UNTSO chief of staff von Horn pointed out in his report that the statement of the Syrian witnesses did not explain the damage done to the police boat. UNTSO could not determine which side started the shooting.

On the night of March 16-17, Israel armed forces struck at Syrian military positions on the northeastern shore, near the DMZ's armistice demarcation line. Both sides suffered casualties. Israel claimed the attack had been directed at a Syrian military position encroaching onto the demilitarized zone, but Syria denied that its army had set up any posts in the zone. The UNMOs could provide only a partial account of the encounter, with the UNTSO chief of staff noting in his report to the secretary general the "incomplete character of the investigation." Still, while criticizing Syria for maintaining and employing heavy weapons in the sector (prohibited by the armistice rules), Gen. von Horn charged Israel with sending patrol boats provocatively close to the shore and found the large-scale raid unjustified.

Syria took its case to the Security Council, which met on March 28 and again on April 3,

asking it to warn Israel of sanctions if "aggressive acts" were repeated. Israel should also be made to accept the proposal for stationing a UN patrol boat on the lake. Israel countered that Syrian machine gun and rifle fire had been directed throughout February and early March against the village of Dardara and at fishermen near the Syrian village of El Kursi. Attacks had come from Syrian army positions forming part of a system of fortifications extending illegally into the demilitarized zone. It characterized the action on the night of March 15-16 as an exercise of its right of self-defense. If the United Nations was unable to secure Syrian respect for the armistice, Israel was faced with a "crucial dilemma": either to take steps to silence the guns firing into its territory or to surrender part of Israel's shore and lake to Syrian control.

As Bar-Yaacov pointed out, council members saw Syrian culpability in this incident as greater than in earlier confrontations. Israel got little comfort, however, from the council or U.S. ambassador Adlai Stevenson. Condoning neither provocation nor retaliation, Stevenson stressed that, whatever the facts, they did not justify Israel's "reversion to a policy of retaliatory raids," a policy that had contributed to the rise of tensions in the Middle East during 1955 and 1956 and culminated in the Sinai War. It could no more be countenanced now than it was then. What was Israel's recourse? Extensive UN machinery was available to "prevent difficulties."

Israel was strongly condemned in a resolution sponsored by the United States and Britain, with only France abstaining. No country was ready to accept Israel's explanations of its policies on border security or on its selective participation in the UN-chaired mixed armistice commission. Despite Israel's denials, U.S. deputy representative Charles Yost characterized the Israeli assault as a return to the policy of "determined and large-scale retaliation condemned by the Security Council." As there was a "readily available alternative," in the UN peacekeeping machinery to such military action, there could be no justification for a policy of retaliation.

Israel was predictably upset by the severe and admonitory stand of the United States, which confirmed that U.S. policy in support of the UN's authority to enforce the armistice regime had not changed with the advent of the Kennedy administration. Israel's representative at the council table could only vainly protest that the resolution was not fairly balanced. The veto power, he charged, had become a crucial element in the council's dealings with the Israeli-Arab conflict to the detriment of Israeli interests—a none-too-veiled reference to the readiness of the West (including the United States) to acquiesce in council resolutions unfairly critical of Israel so as to avoid a Soviet veto. When Israel sought redress from the council, no remedial action could be taken because the USSR had placed its veto power at the disposal of one of the two parties to the dispute. The Israeli government denied that it had ever had "a policy of retaliatory raids."³³

Incident at Almagor. Of all such encounters on the Syrian front during this period, none more clearly reinforced Israel's frustration with the armistice structure and the UN political process than the Almagor case. Land disputes in the Almagor-Jordan delta, at the southern end of the DMZ (just north of Lake Tiberias) were unique. Bar-Yaacov noted that it was Israel that complained of illegal *Arab* cultivation, alleging that the Syrians were cultivating lands in Israeli territory west of the DMZ.³⁴ Tensions culminated in a serious incident on August 16, 1963, when three unarmed farmers from Kibbutz Almagor, returning home on a tractor from work in the fields, were ambushed and attacked at close quarters with automatic weapons and hand grenades by ten Syrian soldiers in uniform, about 1 km (0.6 mile) west of the Syrian border. Two of the farmers were killed; the third fled, pursued by some of the soldiers who fired and hurled hand grenades at him. He escaped, and the Syrian army unit returned across the border.

Levi Eshkol, who had succeeded Ben Gurion as prime minister, listened to Washington's cautionary advice to refrain from retaliation and appeal to the United Nations. The scenario

followed the familiar course. Although Israel came away with a moral victory, once again it was pressed to rely on the UN peacekeepers.

In the Security Council the Israeli representative stressed that the "wanton murder of two Israeli farmers by Syrian soldiers II should not be treated as an isolated incident. The attack was "a calculated and sinister act of provocation" and the time had come to curb Syria's persistent violations of the UN Charter and the armistice agreement.

Flatly rejecting these charges, Syria countercharged Israel with various violations, claiming that Israel's refusal to respect the DMZ's juridical status or to take part in MAC meetings was the basic reason for tension in the area. The Syrian prime minister then told the United States, British, French, and Soviet ambassadors in Damascus that Israel was massing troops along the frontier, a charge that Gen. Odd Bull, who had succeeded Gen. von Horn as UNTSO chief of staff in June, believed was "being fabricated" to cover suspected internal unrest. UN observers attached to ISMAC in Damascus had also noted large convoys of Syrian personnel and heavy weapons moving through Kuneitra toward the frontier area. The UNTSO observation posts on both sides of the frontier, however, had reported no unusual movements near the armistice line.³⁵

The Security Council accepted the findings and recommendations of the UNTSO chief of staff. While substantiating the Israeli version of the Almagor incident, he found no evidence of a military buildup in the DMZ or the defensive areas by either side in excess of the permissible military strength. The chief of staff recommended certain measures to "alleviate tension and restore tranquility in the area," including: an unconditional cease-fire and abstention from all hostile acts; delineating areas within the southern DMZ that could be brought under cultivation; a survey marking the armistice line; full reactivation of the MAC; and an exchange of prisoners, including the three Israeli citizens detained by Syria on July 13, 1963.

If there was a consensus in the council it had to do not with assigning blame for the tension and incidents but on the need to implement the armistice. The prescription for preventing such incidents was to strengthen the hand of the UNTSO chief of staff by supporting measures he had recommended. The Anglo-American resolution (S/5407, August 29, 1963) condemning the "wanton murder" of the two Israeli farmers at Almagor and holding Syria at fault, picked up eight votes (exceeding by one the requisite majority at that time). Despite the Soviet veto, Israel considered it a "moral and political victory" and declared it would cooperate with the UN peacekeepers, as did Syria.³⁶

The outcome, though a "political victory, II was frustrating and discouraged Israel from taking its case to the Security Council in similar incidents. UN involvement was seen as a marginal consideration in its security calculations on the Syrian front as well as on the Egyptian and Jordanian. From Almagor until the eve of the Six Day War, however, the Israeli leadership was more inclined to cooperate with UNTSO in the investigation of incidents and the settlement of land disputes.

From the UN perspective, Hammarskjöld's peacekeeping system was working. It kept the lid on violence, arbitrated the armistice, maintained the cease-fire, and deterred the use of force that would upset the delicate balance of the truce. The UN saw its mandate as preventing either side from securing military or political advantage from acts not in compliance with the armistice. The UN peacekeeping mechanism had become the key instrument of the Western-led consensus in the United Nations to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Living with the Impasse

In the aftermath of the Suez crisis, then, it became clear that the Palestine problem was here to stay. The Sinai War had brought no sweeping reorientation in the policies of the adversaries. The international decision was to make Hammarskjöld and his peacekeepers the guardians of the stale mate and manager of the restored armistice.

The peacekeeping solution, to be administered by the first-ever international force on the Egyptian line and the military observers of UNTSO, presumed a prolonged armistice as the latent hostility would not soon be transcended. No serious effort was undertaken to move beyond the truce arrangement to peacemaking until after the Six Day War of 1967. Essentially, the international post-Sinai decision ratified the one reached at the time the Palestine Conciliation Commission collapsed after the Paris Conference of 1951: that the Arab-Israeli conflict represented a classic case of irreconcilable differences where peacemaking at the time was not feasible. The grand II American initiative" undertaken outside the United Nations framework did not fare any better, as demonstrated by the breakdown of Operation Alpha in the spring of 1956 (described in [Chapter 4](#)). And the decision to abandon the search for an overall settlement developed a momentum of its own, so that most diplomatic energies invested in the Arab-Israeli conflict until 1967 were concentrated on maintaining the military stalemate and managing the political impasse.³⁷

Deep-seated Arab-Israeli differences virtually foreclosed any realistic possibility of a negotiated compromise on the hard core territorial and refugee issues. The Sinai defeat had worked no change in the Arab insistence on repatriation (right of return) and compensation without linkage to recognition of Israel or its armistice boundaries. At the end of the formative period, the dominant Arab opinion had not come to terms with Israel's existence. Neither had Israel's policy changed. In May 1958 Ben Gurion reiterated the position taken by Sharett in his fateful conversation with Bernadotte ten years earlier. Israel was liable and ready" to help with the Arab refugee problem on two conditions: the establishment of "relations of true and stable peace" between the Arab states and Israel, and the admission of large numbers of refugees by the underpopulated Arab states.³⁸

It was vain to hope that either side could be induced to make the necessary concessions. Both the antagonists and the international community were therefore reconciled to the impasse and accepted the key role the United Nations was assigned in managing the armistice regime. Toward the end of World War II, it was universally assumed that the United Nations would play a central, if not decisive, role in dealing with postwar conflicts. By the end of the 1950s, however, with the emergence of the East-West division and the growing presence of the new states in the world organization, the major international decisions were being made elsewhere. The key conflict-control assignment of the UN in the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular its operational responsibilities as peacekeeper and enforcer of the armistice, was thus an anomaly in UN history. (Similar responsibilities were undertaken in the Congo for four years [1960-64] and in Cyprus [1964 to date]. However, in neither of these cases—nor in those that appeared in the 1980s—did the operational responsibilities of the UN encompass serving as arbiter of an armistice arrangement and administrator of an armistice machinery.)

The decision to live with the truce and political impasse, and even to acquiesce in the paradox that the long armistice was not incompatible with claims of a continuing state of belligerency, was never explicitly acknowledged. It went contrary to the Bunche postulate that by definition

the armistice was a prelude to rapid transition to negotiated peace. Peacekeeping, here as in Cyprus in the mid-1960s, was rationalized as temporary and a prelude to peaceful settlement. In practice, however, the focus of international effort never advanced beyond the concept of conflict containment, of UN peacekeeping as an open-ended mandate to police a continuing truce, maintain quiet on the armistice lines, prevent a recurrence of fighting, and deter the outbreak of a shooting war. Improvised by Hammarskjöld as a short-term nostrum, UN peacekeeping became institutionalized as the vehicle for managing a prolonged stalemate and the substitute for peace efforts. Beyond this, the UN peacekeeping presence assumed the task of interpreting the provisions of the armistice agreements and administering the armistice machinery.

As we have seen, Israel accommodated itself to this state of affairs with some reluctance. The object for which it had gone to war in October 1956 had not been achieved. The victory was not unequivocal. Despite its emergence as a regional power to be reckoned with, the underlying power and political equation had not radically changed. The Eisenhower Doctrine, codified in a congressional resolution in the spring of 1957, was a welcome commitment to the state's survival and security, but far from the alliance link it wanted to remove the anxieties that had driven it to war in the first place. Neither the United Nations nor Washington agreed with Israel's estimate of the seriousness of the threat to its independence or integrity. Nor did the Security Council accept Israel's rationale for resorting to military action as retaliation for cross-border shooting and raids. U.S. administrations both before and after Sinai held to Dulles's view that concerns about Arab military threats from Egypt and Syria were exaggerated and that Israel's wisest policy was to trust the U.S. guarantees in the Eisenhower Doctrine and the post-Sinai assurances backed up by the UN peacekeeping presence.

Israel was faced with a dual dilemma. Security concerns militated against placing much reliance on the effectiveness of UN peacekeepers to deal with cross-border threats or raids and arms buildup that might be a prelude to a large-scale assault. Yet, the government was subjected to persistent urging from Washington not to resort to retaliation. It was thus under a constant squeeze between security needs and diplomatic constraints. The other dilemma flowed from contradictions in its armistice policy. It had gained nothing but obloquy and world resentment when it declared the armistice agreement with Egypt a dead letter. Its interpretation of the armistice agreements, whether on the extent of UN authority in the mixed commissions or on the status of the demilitarized zone as Israel territory, was almost universally rejected. Yet, its very legitimacy as a state and its international acceptance, not to speak of its claim to the 1949 boundaries, derived from international ratification of the armistice regime that had been reaffirmed after the Suez War. In its attempt to cope with this dual dilemma Israel found itself in a latent adversarial relationship with the UN establishment and its peacekeepers in the field.

To add to Israel's frustration, the very presence of an international force shielded the Arab side from reality, from having to come to terms with the consequence of defeat in battle. The UN presence allowed the Arab side to keep harboring illusions and to prepare for the next round. Even the relative stability on the borders, which could be attributed to the UN's enforcement of the armistice and the policing of the armistice lines, meant prolonging the military and political stalemate. As in all peace keeping operations, but in particular in this one, as George Sherry has noted, "one can sense the hidden resentment of governments that feel they are being prevented from 'prevailing' ... after having been robbed of victory by the intrusive blue-helmeted peacekeeping force"³⁹

The personal and cultural causes of friction cannot be totally discounted. Abrasive encounters, rudeness, mutual suspicion, and lack of candor during UN investigations occurred from time to

time at the end of the formative period as they had during the early 1950s. But they were fewer and not as highly charged. Neither do they reflect the disdain and antipathy that sometimes characterized encounters in the early years. UN personnel could not but be irritated at the irreverent and dismissive attitude toward the UN shown by some Israeli officials and soldiers—a tendency to disparage the value of the peacekeeping duties in which the UN people were engaged (a feeling many Israelis did not bother to hide). But the personal dimension was far less important than the differences over the value of the UN mission and the extent of its authority and "competence" to enforce the armistice regime.

Security Ethos Versus Peacekeeping Ethos

At bottom, one can discern a clash between Israel's security ethos and the UN peacekeeping ethos. Hammarskjöld and Ben Gurion did not share a common frame of reference. Israel believed that with notable exceptions, such as Lt. Gen. Riley in the early years and Col. Rickert in the post-Sinai period, the UNTSO and UNEF commands as well as certain secretariat officials were not alert to Israel's vulnerability, that the attitude of the UN peacekeepers fluctuated between an unsympathetic detachment and judgmental partisanship, Israel's security ethos drove it to test the "effectiveness" of the UN peacekeeping mission by its responsiveness to Israel's security needs and concerns, while the United Nations naturally measured its success by its ability to reduce border tensions, deter the recurrence of fighting, and maintain the integrity of the armistice structure. For Israel the UN peacekeeping intervention was at best of marginal relevance to broader security interests and its leaders were skeptical about whether the price demanded—an intrusive international presence to manage the standstill and arbitrate its relationship with the Arab adversary—was worth it.

Israel also grew to distrust the United Nations as politically biased. Ultimately this perception of the UN as hopelessly tilted against Israel rendered the world organization unacceptable in Israeli eyes for any substantive role in Middle East peace efforts.

Chronic Invalidism

Part of the clash was philosophical, a difference over the impact of UN peacekeeping intervention on prospects for moving toward a negotiated peace. Since the first international peacekeepers were deployed, scholars and analysts have differed over the effect of controlling a conflict on the readiness to address the underlying issues and negotiate a compromise settlement. The conventional rationale has been that the peacekeepers were sent in to contain the fighting and hold the line for diplomatic mediation. Containment was the necessary first step. This construct was institutionalized in Cyprus. In March 1964 the Security Council authorized the deployment of the UN Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to "use its best efforts to prevent the recurrence of fighting" and to contribute to the "maintenance and restoration of law and order." The mandate was authorized initially for six months, with the "expectation" that at the end of the term "sufficient progress towards a final solution will make possible a withdrawal or substantial reduction of the Force." To this end, the basic resolution of March 4, 1964, provided that the secretary general, in agreement with the governments of Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (the guarantors), would designate a mediator to use his best endeavors to promote a

"peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus." This ritual formula of "expectation" that the peacekeepers' mission would soon be ended has been repeated at mandate-renewal time ever since. Despite the yeoman work of many mediators and successive secretaries general, despite some limited progress on normalization and humanitarian questions, the conclusion reached by the secretary general in his mid-June 1975 report on the mediating mission entrusted to him was that "the deadlock over the fundamental bases of settlement persists." The situation did not change much in succeeding years.⁴⁰

Experience with peacekeeping on Arab-Israeli fronts and in Cyprus led some to argue that peacekeeping as conflict control lessens the sense of urgency, that by pacifying the situation and fostering tolerable conditions the pressure for settlement is removed and the military and political stalemate prolonged. Some Israeli strategists also argued that in the absence of the UN peacekeepers the Arab side would face up to military and political realities and negotiate. At the time of the Cyprus crisis in 1964, former secretary of state Dean Acheson argued against bringing in the peacekeepers on the ground that intervention of this kind would impede a solution. Better, he said, to let the Greek and Turkish sides in the intercommunal quarrel fight it out and be compelled to reach settlement on their own.

After the Six Day War, Bernard Lewis speculated that great-power intervention through the United Nations may have prevented the Arabs and Israelis from coming to terms. Intervention, he suggested, has more than once increased tensions, provoked crises, and prevented solution. For the "effect of the United Nations on problems in the Middle East and elsewhere," he observed, "has often been like that of modern medicine on major diseases—enough to prevent the patient from dying of natural causes, but not enough to make him well. Chronic invalidism is not a happy state."⁴¹ Along the same lines, the mainstream attitude of Israeli officials and strategists has held that UN peacekeeping intervention was of marginal help in assuring security while keeping the Arab-Israeli relationship in a state, if not of prolonged invalidism, then of protracted confrontation.

The prevailing view among UN officials and Washington policymakers has been just the opposite, and this divergence accounts for much of the mutual mistrust. The idea that peacekeeping prolongs a dispute and removes inducement to negotiate a settlement, they contend, is based on the dubious proposition that chances for settlement would be improved if UN peacekeepers were withdrawn. Particularly in the Arab-Israeli case, where the impasse is due to a deep-seated clash of interests and differences over the terms of a desirable and durable settlement, such an outcome is illusory. Rather, "the thing to do is to recognize the facts of life and keep the conflict under control." If the possibility for settlement exists, it will readily emerge from a conflict-control situation and is much more likely to do so in an atmosphere of stability fostered by the peacekeepers.⁴² Neither of these antithetical notions is provable, and each side continued to adhere to its view.

Essentially, attitudes on the value of UN peacekeeping were not that different at the end of the 1950s than before the Sinai War. The period from 1956-1957 was not a turning point as 1967 was to be, either in terms of the power balance in the region or in the key role assigned to the UN peacekeepers to police the armistice. What had changed after Sinai was Israel's greater readiness to live with the standstill. For several reasons it was less inclined to challenge the peacekeeping mandate. UN peacekeeping intervention was a marginal consideration in security calculations and the armistice structure was imperfect in Israeli minds, but what happened at the United Nations was secondary to Israel's relationship with Washington. By the end of the formative period Israeli leaders needed no convincing that the United Nations was not a politically

salubrious forum for pursuing its interests. Actions in the General Assembly and Security Council on the Arab-Israeli question were increasingly unbalanced and Jerusalem put little faith in the UN ability to deal fairly with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thereafter, Israel concluded that the UN could not serve as an acceptable international agency for handling the peace process. If anything, with time the credibility of the United Nations declined even further, to the point where it was not acceptable to Israel as a factor in the Egypt-Israel negotiations to implement the security clauses of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 or the "peace process" of 1991-1993. As Aaron Klieman and others have observed, all important political figures in Israel, to a greater or lesser extent, came to expect little from the UN in the way of effectiveness or fairness. UN intervention was seen by both the leadership and public opinion as an unwelcome intrusion, detrimental to productive negotiations and unhelpful in meeting Israel's security concerns.⁴³

Ironically, it was precisely the Washington factor that turned Israel toward a more forthcoming and cooperative posture vis-à-vis the UN during the interwar years, for Israel's UN policy had importance only as a derivative of the Washington relationship. Although the United States had resisted too close a relationship and rejected the notion of a formal alliance, toward the end of the Eisenhower administration, "there were signs of greater Washington willingness to treat Israel more sympathetically," a tendency that gathered momentum during the Kennedy and Johnson years.⁴⁴ Israel had hitched its future to Washington and so long as an integral part of the U.S. Middle East policy assigned to the United Nations the key stabilizing, peacekeeping role, Israel had no choice but to go along, for Israel could only influence UN action through Washington. As part of its U.S. policy, then, Israel accepted the need to work with the UN peacekeepers. This did not obviate friction and distrust, but in dealings with the UN peacekeepers, Israeli officials had to be ever cognizant of the reaction in Washington.

Moreover, the tolerable deadlock, which followed the deployment of UNEF and the reinvigoration of UNTSO as policemen of the armistice, ushered in a period of relative stability and prosperity, which at the time served Israel's interests. Great strides were made in economic deployment and absorption of immigrants into Israeli society, and economic and political ties were forged with Asia and Africa. Despite Israel's concerns that a prolonged armistice could erode its legitimacy, except for the Arab states and a few of their friends, "no one questioned Israel's right to exist, nor did anyone challenge Israel's territorial integrity within the boundaries established by the 1949 armistice agreements."⁴⁵

Israel might remain apprehensive that UN peacekeeping intervention, and particularly its assertion of a guardianship role in the Arab-Israeli relationship, could interfere with necessary military action on the borders and impede economic development. But it came to accept that the United Nations was helping to dampen border tensions and contain incidents during this period of consolidation and nation building so vital to its future security. Besides, the Sinai triumph had made Israel less apprehensive about the danger that "Israel could be destroyed in minutes," which had preoccupied Ben Gurion and other Israeli leaders in earlier years.⁴⁶ Moreover, even though UN intervention might serve as a barrier to direct relations with the Arab side, the process (whether in the MACs or at the Security Council) presumed a conflict between states with a status as sovereign equals in the world organization. UN involvement thus reinforced the legitimacy of the state and the de facto recognition of its 1949 borders.

Peacekeeping as conflict control, as impasse management, worked. It signaled a tolerance of unresolved conflict, a recognition that certain conflicts are not ripe for solution and that the best that could be hoped for was to live with them until positions and circumstances changed. All sides came to accept that the time was not propitious for an international "peace process," and

none was initiated until the Jarring mission after the Six Day War. Peacekeepers could not be expected, however, to contain the gathering storm that in the spring of 1967 erupted into war. But, as defenders of the United Nations have convincingly argued, this was not their mandate.

Notes

CITATION OF UN, U.S., AND ISRAELI diplomatic documents are as follows. Telegrams and other unpublished communications in UN archives are cited by sender (UNTSO, UNHq, MED, and so on), document number, date, and file code by number and box (DAG 22520—box 17). Citations of published, official records follow UN practice: document prefix (S/ for Security Council and A/ for General Assembly), number, and date.

U.S. diplomatic telegrams (Deptel), dispatches (D-), and memoranda of conversations (Memcon) are cited by sender, destination, interlocutors, and date. Such documents published in the series *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) are cited by volume and document number there assigned; unpublished ones filed in the National Archives, Department of State Central Files (Nat Arch DOS/CF) are cited by stamped code bearing file number and date. Other abbreviations and acronyms are listed below and at the front of this book.

Diplomatic documents from the Israel State Archives (ISA) published in the series *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel* are cited, following interlocutors and date, by ISA, Documents, volume, and document number there assigned. Unpublished documents in archives are cited by numbered code in ISA files, as in Burns-Dayana, September 20, 1954, ISA 2429/8.

Abbreviations in Notes

- A Assembly (prefix for UN General Assembly documents)
- Airgram Nonurgent communication between a U.S. diplomatic post and the U.S. Dept. of State
- AmConGen American Consulate General
- AmEmbassy American Embassy
- AmLegation American Legation
- COS Chief of staff
- D Dispatch from U.S. Embassy to U.S. Dept. of State
- Delga Telegrams from U.S. delegation at UN General Assembly
- Depcirtel U.S. Dept. of State circular telegram
- Deptel U.S. Dept. of State telegram
- DOS/CF U.S. Dept. of State/Central Files
- Dulte Telegram from Secretary Dulles to U.S. Dept. of State
- Embtel US. Embassy telegram
- ES Emergency session of UN General Assembly
- FRUS *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Dept. of State, Washington, D.C
- Gadel Telegrams to U.S. delegation at UN General Assembly
- GAOR General Assembly Official Records (of sessions)
- GOE Government of Egypt
- GOI Government of Israel
- GOL Government of Lebanon
- GOS Government of Syria
- ISA Israel State Archives
- MED Telegram from UN Mediterranean station, usually to UNHq
- Memcon Memorandum of conversation
- PALUN Telegram to U.S. representation at Palestine Conciliation Commission
- S Security Council (prefix for UN Security Council documents)

Secto Telegrams from U.S. Secretary of State at international conferences
TeDul Telegram to Dulles (away at conference)
Tosec Telegrams to U.S. Secretary of State at international conferences
UNPAL Telegram from U.S. representation at Palestine Conciliation Commission
USG U.S. Government

Introduction

- [1.](#) George L. Sherry, "The United Nations, International Conflict, and American Security," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 5, 1986, 763.

Chapter 1

1. Interview with author, Jerusalem, September 21, 1987.
2. The United Nations organized elections, referenda, and plebiscites, for example, in French Togoland (1958), Ruanda-Urundi (1961), Cook Islands (1965), Equatorial Guinea (1968), British Cameroons (1959,1961), Western Samoa (1961), and French Somaliland (Djibouti, 1977)—with or without the cooperation of the metropole—and an "act of free choice" in West Irian (1969), where several years earlier it had also provided temporary administration when authority was being transferred from the Netherlands to Indonesia. But at no time did it define the terms of the outcome or maintain a peacekeeping presence beyond the period of elections and (in the case of West Irian) temporary administration.
3. Abba Eban, Israel's first ambassador to the UN, is fond of citing the fact that Israel was initially asked to introduce the 1952 resolution for a cease-fire in Korea, though it had to withdraw because of Arab opposition. See Abba Eban, *An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 161-164; Eban's article "The Israeli Proposal: 4 Questions," *Ma'ariv*, December 17,1976; and remarks made at a Jerusalem workshop on Israel and the UN, July 2, 1986. See also Shabbtai Rosenne, "Israel and the UN: Changed Perspectives, 1945-1976," *American Jewish Yearbook, 1978* (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society, 1979), 3-59, for comments on the decline in Israel's standing at the UN during later years.
4. Interview with Brian E. Urquhart, New York, June 16, 1987; and Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1958).
5. Gideon Rafael, quoted in Avi Beker, *The United Nations and Israel: From Recognition to Reprehension* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Bar Ilan University, 1985), 43.
6. Israel State Archives (ISA), *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. 4, May-December 1949, Yemima Rosenthal, ed. (Jerusalem: State of Israel, 1986); Doc. #487, Ben Gurion diary note of December 14, 1949, 716-717. (Hereinafter cited as ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949; other such volumes cited in similar manner.)
7. Moshe Sharett, *Personal Diary* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 1978), entries for March 26 and 28,1955, vol. 3,414-417.
8. Moshe Zak, former senior editor of *Ma'ariv*, recalled in an interview with me on October 27,1987, that a political process of "freeing ourselves from the UN" was set in motion when the UN failed to carry out its decision on partition and to "protect the Jews" when they were attacked. The UN was seen as onesided and unable to accomplish anything.
9. ISA, Documents, companion volume to vol. 4, May-December 1949, xxi.
10. ISA, Documents, vol. 1, May-September 1948, #380,409-414. (Until 1949, Sharett's family name was Shertok. For consistency, he is referred to throughout as Sharett.)
11. Sharett was alluding to the crisis that had occurred during the first truce as UN observers exercised strict control over Israeli ports and airfields to block the import of arms and immigration of Jewish men from the refugee camps in Cyprus. In contrast, the flow of Arab men and arms across land borders from neighboring Arab states could not be stopped by the UN observers.
12. Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 43-44. See also Mordechai Gazit, "Mediation and Mediators," *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 4,1981, 85.
13. Recalling the procedure in the Knesset on June 14,1968, Foreign Minister Abba Eban described it as follows: "After a preliminary discussion with the chairman to fix the procedure, they [the delegations] met face to face under an agreed chairman." The UN chairman, from the first day, brought Israelis and Egyptians together under his auspices, but at Lausanne all the Arab states met in a unitary delegation and did not sit in the same room with Israeli representatives, though informal exchanges took place.
In the UN version, it was the activist and ever-present mediator, Bunche or one of his deputies, who managed the scenario and drafted the texts. Urquhart stressed that the parties talked with each other through Bunche, who was present even during the billiard games, organized to loosen things up. Interview with Brian E. Urquhart, New York, June 16,1987; minutes of first joint formal meeting of Israeli-Transjordanian delegations, March 4, 1949, UN archives, DAG 1/ 22550—box 1; Eban quoted in Rosenne, op. cit., 15 (see Note 3).
14. ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, Eban letter to Eytan in Lausanne, June 8,1949, #63,101-106.
15. Rosenne, op. cit., 16 (see Note 3). In lining up votes for Israel's admission, Eban noted a favorable trend in view of progress in armistice talks and "complete peace" in the country. Canadians will vote for admission "unless new attack by us." Eban to Sharett, February 9,1949, ISA, Documents, vol. 2,378,422.

16. Interview with Gideon Rafael, Jerusalem, October 1, 1987.
17. Interview with Walter Eytan, Jerusalem, September 21, 1987.
18. On growing Arab acceptance of UN involvement and authority in settling the Palestine problem, following realization of their military weakness at the time, see Fred Khouri, "United Nations Peace Efforts," in Malcolm Kerr, ed., *The Elusive Peace in the Middle East* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975), 23-29, and fuller account in Fred Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*, 3d ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 78-81.
19. Pablo de Azcarate, *Mission in Palestine, 1948-1952* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 1966), 118-119; Touval, op. cit., 76ff; and Eytan, op. cit., 52. Touval quoted Nadav Safran: "The commission made the fatal mistake of assembling all the Arab delegations together as one party and thus put them in a position in which none of them would dare make any concession for fear of being accused by the others of being soft on Israel." Nadav Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 336.
20. Kerr, op. cit., 8-14; and Touval, op. cit., 44, 79.
21. Kerr, op. cit., 14.
22. See, for example, the article by Hasnin Heichal, "Jarring's Mission: Why Are We Conducting Talks with Him?" *Aharam*, December 15, 1967, reprinted in *Itim Mizrach*, no. 149/589/176, December 17, 1967.
23. Hussein A. Hassouna, *The League of Arab States and Regional Disputes—A Study of Middle East Conflicts* (New York: Oceana, 1975), 291.
24. Touval, op. cit., 3-19 and 321; Gazit, op. cit., 97-100.
25. Shabbtai Teveth, *Moshe Dayan: The Soldier, the Man, the Legend* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1972), 172-173. Dayan spoke out against a UN peacekeeping presence because it got in the way of direct contacts. He also opposed security guarantees. The "guarantor would have a right of intervention," for "aravut [guarantee] brings hitarvut [interference]." Interview with Moshe Zak, Tel Aviv, October 27, 1987.
26. Interview with Walter Eytan, Jerusalem, September 21, 1987; and Walter Eytan, "Three Nights at Shuneh," *Midstream*, November 1980, 52-56.
27. Minutes of informal meeting of February 4, 1949. UN archives, DAG 13/ 330. Israel State Archives contain minutes of a "second joint informal meeting" that day at which Egyptian colonel Ismail Sherine declared that what was being negotiated was a "military accord" in which parties maintained their political and judicial rights. ISA 2431/1.
28. Brian E. Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 113.
29. Based on remarks by Brian E. Urquhart in interview, New York, June 16, 1987. See his *Hammarskjöld* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 221-222.
30. Khouri, op. cit., "United Nations Peace Efforts," 87.
31. R.W. Tucker, et al., *SDI and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview/ FPI Johns Hopkins SAIS, 1987), 5.
32. Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy and Johnson Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 157-191.
33. Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 26-27, and Harry S Truman, *Memoirs—Years of Trial and Hope*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 148.
34. Khouri, op. cit. (*The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*), 85 (see Note 18).
35. Spiegel, op. cit., 42-43, and Truman, op. cit., 166. Marshall's biographer noted the "rare disagreement" between the secretary of state and Truman on policy toward the new state of Israel: see Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman* (New York: Viking/Penguin, 1987), 45-49.
36. Thus, Loy Henderson, director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, wrote to the undersecretary of state on April 22, 1948, that "we must insist wholeheartedly in the effort to find a peaceable way out of the Palestine impasse [since] failure may undermine the security of the Western world." *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) 1948, vol. 5 (The Near East, South Asia, and Africa), part 2, 841.
37. Kennan's comments on Rusk Memorandum, January 29, 1948, in FRUS, *ibid.*, PPS 19/1, 577-578; Lovett's to the secretary of state, May 21, 1948, *ibid.*, 1021.
38. U.S. ambassador Douglas to the secretary of state, August 2, 1948, 501 BB Pal/8-248, FRUS, 1948, vol. 5, part 1, 1266-1268.
39. U.S. ambassador Douglas to the secretary of state, August 27, 1948, FRUS, *ibid.*, 1354. Douglas bombarded the State Department with the dual message that the United States and United Kingdom "will be able to work together in bringing about [a] definite settlement of [the Palestine] problem" and that the "British Government [is] most anxious to keep in step with [the] U.S. on this question and visualizes optimum U.S.-UK cooperation [in] achieving final settlement," *ibid.*,

1266-1268.

- [40.](#) Secretary of state to the president, August 31, 1948, 501 BB Pal/8-3148, FRUS, *ibid.*, 1363; acting secretary of state to the U.S. delegation in Paris, October 27, 1948, 501 BB Pal/10-2748, *ibid.*, 1250.
- [41.](#) The so-called Jessup formula derived from a statement by deputy U.S. permanent representative to the UN Philip C. Jessup, in the assembly's political committee on November 20, 1948, that the United States "approved the claims of the State of Israel to the boundaries set forth in the 29 Nov. [1947] resolution and considered that modifications thereof should be made only if fully acceptable to the State of Israel. Reductions in such territory should be agreed upon by Israel and *if Israel desired additions it would have to offer an appropriate exchange through negotiations*" [emphasis added]. See ISA, Documents, May-December 1949, footnote to #63,101.
- [42.](#) Deptel 527 to Tel Aviv, May 28, 1949, 501 BB Pal/5-2849, FRUS 1949, vol. 6 (The Near East, South Asia and Africa), 1072-1074, and in ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, #42, as letter from Ambassador McDonald to Ben Gurion.
- [43.](#) ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, #42, 75-77, and unnumbered editorial note immediately preceding, on 75. Almost forty years later, Moshe Zak, former senior editor of the Tel Aviv daily *Ma'ariv*, who had close contacts with the Israeli leadership of the time, recalled the "shock" caused by the "threatening" Truman note. Interview with author, October 27, 1987.
- [44.](#) ISA, Documents, *op. cit.*, Sharett to McDonald, June 8, 1949, #64, 107-111.
- [45.](#) *Ibid.*, Weizman to Truman, June 24, 1949, #104, 168-172.

Chapter 2

1. The indefinite truce was ordered by the Security Council on July 15, 1948 (Resolution 54, S/890). As Khouri pointed out, although the first truce resulted from negotiations conducted by the mediator with the parties, "the second permanent truce was ordered by the Security Council directly and the actual terms were laid down without the need for further consultations with the Arabs and Israelis." Fred Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*, 3d ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 80.
2. For an authoritative and comprehensive account of UN peacekeeping in the area see United Nations, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of UN Peacekeeping* (New York: United Nations, 1985), part 2, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict," 9-156. On the origin of Bernadotte's mission and the Western and Soviet attitudes to his appointment, see Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 24-27. The General Assembly entrusted the choice of mediator to the five permanent members of the Security Council.
3. See UNHq 155, secretary general to Bunche, Jan. 29, 1949, UN archives, DAG 13330—box 21. The PCC secretariat wanted to be present at Rhodes and to visit the capitals concerned. On institutional competition between the council and assembly, see Mordechai Gazit, "Mediation and Mediators," *The Jerusalem journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1981, 86.
4. Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* (New York: Stein & Day, 1981), 16-17, and interview, Jerusalem, October 1, 1987.
5. United Nations, op. cit., 20-25.
6. Nadav Safran wrote that "by the summer of 1950 all these efforts [at achieving a final peace through the UN] had collapsed never to be resumed..." *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 224. Actually, the conciliation commission had a spurt of activity in the fall of 1951 and did not fade from the picture until the Paris Conference ended in November.
7. Peacemaking forays were undertaken from time to time, notably by UN secretary general Dag Hammarskjöld during the months preceding the Suez War. This preventive diplomacy was intended not to bring about a settlement but to contain the crisis and prod Egypt and Israel to negotiate arrangements that would stabilize the armistice lines. It was not until after the Six Day War that a special mediator, Gunnar Jarring, was designated to promote peace negotiations under terms of Security Council Resolution 242 of November 1967. By then, however, it was already clear that the UN could operate institutionally only as an adjunct to U.S.- led great-power intervention. At the abortive Geneva Conference following the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the UN role in the "peace process" was largely symbolic and managerial.
8. Touval, op. cit., 140.
9. United Nations, "Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator on Palestine," submitted to the secretary general for transmission to the members of the United Nations, in pursuance of Resolution 186 (S/2) of the General Assembly of 14 May 1948, supplement 11 (A/648), Paris, 1948.
10. On the marginal effect of British and U.S. attitudes on Bernadotte's two plans, see Mordechai Gazit, "American and British Diplomacy and the Bernadotte Mission," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1986, 677-696.
11. Thus, as recently as May 1992, the U.S. State Department's spokeswoman, Margaret Tutweiler, unwittingly unleashed a storm in U.S.- Israel relations by affirming the administration's continuing support for Resolution 194. (In reply to a question she stated that the administration was not prepared to discuss how to interpret the resolution; that was a matter for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate directly in the peace talks then in progress!) Israelis were dismayed that Washington had resurrected the long-obsolete Resolution 194. Within days, the administration took steps to defuse the dispute by saying that the "right of return" resolution was not part of the peace talks, but Tutweiler's words continued to trouble Israeli public opinion. See accounts by Clyde Haberman and Thomas L. Friedman in the *New York Times*, May 15 and 19, 1992, and comments by Moshe Zak and Teddy Preuss in *The Jerusalem Post* (int. ed.), week ending May 30, 1992.
12. Ilan Pappé, in interview, Tel Aviv, October 28, 1987, stressed there were opportunities for informal talks with Jordanian and Syrian representatives at PCC conferences, but that only in a multilateral framework could they make concessions on the refugee problem. See his articles: "Britain and the Palestinian Refugees, 1948-50," *Middle East Focus*, Fall 1986, 20; and "Moshe Sharett, David Ben Gurion and the 'Palestinian Option,' 1948-1956," *Studies in Zionism*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1986, 83.
13. Israel State Archives (ISA), Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, introduction by Yemima Rosenthal to companion volume (in English), xi-xxi. Also interviews with Walter Eytan, Jerusalem, September 21, 1987, and Michael Comay, Jerusalem, September 28, 1987.

14. U.S. ambassador McDonald to Ben Gurion, May 29, 1949, ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, #42, 75-77.
15. Letter from Walter Eytan, head of the Israeli delegation at the Lausanne Conference to Claude deBoisanger, French representative on the PCC, May 25, 1949, *ibid.*, #35, 64. Both men were at the conference.
16. Letter from James Barco, U.S. delegate at PCC, to Harding Bancroft, director of UN Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Geneva, February 27, 1950, National Archives, Dept. of State Central Files (Nat Arch DOS/CF) 351.AC/22750. AmEmbassy Cairo 388, April 13, 1950, *ibid.*, 357.AC/4-1350. On Arab rejection of the PCC proposal for mixed technical committees, see Geneva 559, April 22, 1950, *ibid.*, 357.AC/4-2250.
17. Deptel 4 to Jerusalem, UNPAL 276, July 5, 1951, Nat Arch DOS/CF, *op. cit.*, 357. AC/7-751.
18. Acheson letter to Palmer, July 12, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/7-1251.
19. AmEmbassy Paris 1341, PALUN 437, August 30, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/83051.
20. Memcon, Jones with Jordan minister Yusuf Haikal, September 4, 1951, *ibid.*, 257.AC/9-451.
21. AmEmbassy Paris 2477, PALUN 461, October 27, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/102751.
22. AmEmbassy Paris 2885, PALUN 468, November 14, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/ 11-1451.
23. AmEmbassy Paris 2892, PALUN 469, November 15, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/ 11-1551.
24. AmEmbassy Paris 3003, PALUN 470, November 20, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/ 11-2051.
25. On the security dilemma posed for Israel by its strategic vulnerability see Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1988), chap. 5: "Israel, 1948-79: The Hard Choices of the Security Dilemma," 254-328.
26. Malcolm H. Kerr, ed., *The Elusive Peace in the Middle East* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1975), 8.
27. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 719 and 716, January 17, 1952; and Memcon, Dept. of State, February 13, 1952. On Sharett's speech in the Knesset, see AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 795, February 5, 1952. All four documents in Nat Arch DOS/CF, 357.AC/1-1752, 2-352, and 2-552.
28. S/1376, August 11, 1949. For the circumstances that induced Israel and the Arab states to agree to negotiate, without a formal pledge by Israel to withdraw to the previous (October 14) lines, as demanded by the UN, see Touval, *op. cit.*, 59-62 (see Note 2), and Shabtbai Rosenne, "Israel and the UN: Changed Perspectives, 1945-1976," *American Jewish Yearbook, 1978* (Philadelphia: The American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 15. Rosenne was a participant at Rhodes. Texts of armistice agreements in UN, Treaty Series, vol. 42, registered as: no. 654 (Egyptian-Israeli GAA, signed at Rhodes, February 24, 1949); no. 655 (Israeli-Lebanon GAA, signed at Ras-en-Naqoura, March 23, 1949); no. 656 (Hashemite Jordan Kingdom-Israeli GAA, signed at Rhodes, April 3, 1949); and no. 657 (Israeli-Syrian GAA, signed near Mahanayim, July 20, 1949). It is of political interest that all four were registered at the request of Israel alone. The latter supplied the English language texts, which had been agreed upon by the five countries.
29. From a briefing document for new military observers, dated June 1967, in David Wainhouse, ed., *International Peacekeeping at the Crossroads* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 28.
30. The UNTSO chiefs of staff during the first two decades were: Maj. Gen. Aage Lundstrom (Sweden), July-September 1948; Lt. Gen. William E. Riley (United States), September 1948-June 1953; Maj. Gen. Vagn Bennike (Denmark) June 1953-August 1954; Lt. Gen. E.L.M. Burns (Canada) August 1954-November 1956; Col. Byron V. Leary (United States, acting) November 1956-March 1958; Maj. Gen. Carl C. von Horn (Sweden), March 1958-July 1960; Col. R. W. Rickert (United States, acting), July-December 1960; Lt. Gen. Carl C. von Horn (Sweden), January 1960-May 1963; Lt. Gen. Odd Bull (Norway), June 1963 -July 1970.
31. Memorandum, Bunche to Shiloah, March 27, 1949, UN archives, DAG 13330—box 21.
32. HqMED, unnumbered, Bunche to Mohn (UN representative in Tel Aviv), July 13, 1949, *ibid.*
33. HqMED 724724, Bunche to Vigier, June 25, 1949, *ibid.*
34. Harkabi noted that those who participated in the Rhodes negotiations accepted that the armistice constituted the "termination of the war from a military point of view; peace would mean its termination from the political point of view." Yehoshafat Harkabi, "The Armistice Agreements," *Yearbook of [Israeli] Journalists* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv, 1950, 17.
35. David Ben Gurion, *The Restored State of Israel* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1969), vol. 1, 329.
36. Harkabi, *op. cit.*, 16-25.
37. Harkabi, "The Armistice Agreements—A Retrospective," *Maarachot (Israeli Army Journal)*, July 1984, 294-295, and interview, Jerusalem, November 23, 1987.
38. Quoted in Rosenne, *op. cit.*, 15.
39. Eban to Eytan, June 9, 1949, ISA, Documents, vol. 4, May-December 1949, #63, 101-102.

[40](#). Harkabi, op. cit., 295.

[41](#). Much of this analysis is based on a conversation with Harkabi in Jerusalem, November 23, 1987.

Chapter 3

1. Israel State Archives (ISA), Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel, vol. 5, 1950, (Jerusalem: State of Israel, 1988), companion volume, xxiii.
2. Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1979* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 35-36.
3. Israel's support of the U.S. and Western policy in the UN on the Korean question convinced the Russians that "not only could Israel be discounted as a potential ally, but it could not even be relied upon to remain neutral in a crisis of vital importance for the Soviet Union." Avigdor Dagan, *Moscow and Jerusalem: Twenty Years of Relations Between Israel and the Soviet Union* (London: Abdeldard-Schuman, 1970), 53.
4. Moshe Dayan, "Israel's Borders and Security Problems," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 2, January 1955, 250.
5. *Ibid.*, 258-259.
6. Shimshoni, *op. cit.*, 34.
7. Dayan, *op. cit.*, 260-261.
8. E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1962), 120.
9. Memorandum, Bunche to Shiloah, March 24, 1949. UN archives, DAG 22520—box 17. Bunche was also upset at "Israel intransigence on the question of removing Israeli forces from Lebanese territory even after the armistice agreement would be signed" despite a Lebanese pledge not to allow its territory to be used for warlike acts against Israel. MED 204 & 205, Bunche to secretary general, March 17, 1949, *ibid.*
10. HqMED 700, Bunche (Rhodes) to Vigier (Jerusalem), June 13, 1949, *ibid.*
11. E. H. Hutchison, *Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1951-1955* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1956), 12-16.
12. *Ibid.*, 17.
13. *Ibid.*, 18-19. Israel was periodically faulted by the British and French for withdrawing from local commanders' meetings because border tensions were "greater in periods when this form of armistice machinery [was] not functioning." AmEmbassy Paris 3818, April 9, 1954, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/4-954. From Israel's perspective, the picture was exactly the opposite from that depicted by Hutchison. In line with Dayan's philosophy, Israel far preferred to deal with incidents through the local commanders, a form of direct contact with Jordanian authorities. The problem was that Jordan wanted contact at the lowest possible level and gave its representatives no independent authority; every issue had to be referred to higher quarters. Jordan refused to conclude an overall local commanders' agreement (LCA) in the form of a bilateral agreement even with the UN chief of staff as witness, but to have the arrangement take the form of parallel agreements by each side with the UN. The first LCA was the result of Israeli initiative "in the teeth of Jordanian attempts at procrastination." It was signed after prolonged negotiations on March 5, 1951. From the outset it was clear that Jordanian local commanders had to refer to Amman even the smallest issues. By January 1953, Israel concluded that Jordan had no "intention of allowing the agreement to be carried out" and refused to continue with it. See memorandum by A. Ilan, February 21, 1955, ISA 2429/8.
14. AmConGen Jerusalem 4, July 10, 1953, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/71053.
15. The incident is related from the standpoint of the UN observers in Hutchison, *op. cit.*, 20-29, and at length in the letter of protest to the secretary general from Jordanian foreign minister Azmi Nashashibi, July 31, 1952, contained in Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/8-352.
16. AmEmbassy Amman D-26, July 16, 1952, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/71652, and AmEmbassy Damascus D-35, July 14, 1952, *ibid.*, 357.AC/7-1452.
17. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, 635, October 17, 1952, and 572, October 9, 1952, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 357.AC/10-752 and 10-952.
18. Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1958), 106.
19. AmConGen Jerusalem 70, October 15, 1953. Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/ 10-1553.
20. See the account by Gideon Rafael in *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* (New York: Stein & Day, 1981), 33-34. The incident from the viewpoint of the MAC chairman in Hutchison, *op. cit.*, 43-46, with extensive detail in App B, 156-161. See also AmConGen Jerusalem 73, October 16, 1953, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/10-1643. Jordan's protest in AmConGen Jerusalem 74, October 16, 1953, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/10-1653.
21. British ambassador Evans to Sharett, October 16, 1953, in ISA 2429/5. Text of U.S.-British-French draft resolution in

- USUN 245, November 7,1953, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/11-753. Account of Security Council meeting in U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Participation in the United Nations for the Year 1953* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954), 75.
- [22.](#) Security Council Resolution 101 of November 24, 1953, adopted 9-0-2 (USSR and Lebanon). See account, U.S. Department of State, 1954, *ibid.*, 76-77.
 - [23.](#) Shalev's letter, October 19,1953, in ISA 2429/5.
 - [24.](#) Burns, *op. cit.*, 58-60 (see Note 8).
 - [25.](#) AmEmbassy Damascus D-246, December 29, 1954, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/12-2954.
 - [26.](#) Moshe Sharett, *Personal Diary* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 1978), vol. 3, entries for October 15,16, 20,1953,39-43, and November 18,1953,162-164. An added concern was the quiet but forceful opposition of U.S. Jewish leaders to the reprisal policy in the aftermath of Qibya. U.S. Jewry "pressed for greater conciliation and cooperation [and] in effect it was supporting Sharett's soft line against Ben Gurion...." Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 139.
 - [27.](#) Eytan, *op. cit.*, 107.
 - [28.](#) Memorandum from A. Eilan to the director general of the Foreign Ministry (Eytan), November 22,1953, in ISA 2428/4.
 - [29.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem 139, March 24,1954, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357. AC/32454, and Hutchison, *op. cit.*, 30-46.
 - [30.](#) Sharett, *op. cit.*, entries for March 17,18,19,1954, especially 403-408.
 - [31.](#) Deptel 139 to Jerusalem, March 24, 1954, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/32454. See also U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.*, 76-77.
 - [32.](#) Sharett to Bennike, Personal and Confidential, April 27,1954, ISA 2425.
 - [33.](#) Byroade address of March 28,1954, and later tough warning (U.S. Department of State *Bulletin*, May 10, 1954), along with Eisenhower's demonstrative support of the United Nations and distaste for Israeli retaliatory policy, in Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 53, 56-58. See also D. Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1980), 44.
 - [34.](#) Eban to Sulzberger, April 8,1954, in ISA 2429/6.
 - [35.](#) Bennike to Sharett, April 20,1954, ISA 2425.
 - [36.](#) Hammarskjöld to Lodge, September 27,1954, with attachment. Nat Arch DOS/CF 357. AC/9-2754.
 - [37.](#) Burns to Dayan, September 20,1954, ISA 2429/8, and AmConGen, Jerusalem 74, September 10,1954, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/9-1054.
 - [38.](#) See Burns letter to Eytan, February 8,1955, and report on Tekoah meeting with Burns, February 10,1955, ISA 2429/8.
 - [39.](#) Hammarskjöld to von Horn, chief of staff, UNTSO, Jerusalem, UNHq 482 and 483, July 2,1958, containing text of Hammarskjöld letter to Rifai to be transmitted urgently. UN archives DAG 1/22550—box 1.
 - [40.](#) Nissim Bar-Yaacov, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice: Problems of Implementation, 1949-1966* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967), 9,50-52.
 - [41.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 53. Bunche's "explanatory note" of June 26,1949, quoted in full in letter to Sharett, on 57-59.
 - [42.](#) Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 68-71.
 - [43.](#) S/2049, March 21,1951. Riley's memorandum concluded that, in draining the Huleh Lake, Israel would not enjoy any military advantage not equally available to the Syrians. However, he ruled that the company should cease all operation in the zone "until such time as a mutual agreement is arranged through the Chairman between Syria and Israel for continuing the project." See also Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 73.
 - [44.](#) S/2067, April 4,1951. Minutes of 59th ISMAC meeting of March 7,1951; 60th of March 19; and 61st (emergency) of April 3. UN archives, DAG 1 /22520—box 40. See also Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 73-74, 77.
 - [45.](#) S/2084, April 12, 1951. Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 79, n38. It was agreed that although Bossavy would continue to be chairman of the commission the then acting chief of staff, Col. B. de Ridder, would preside at meetings in which incidents in the preceding four weeks were to be discussed. The tendency soon became for the UNTSO chief of staff to occupy the chair at ISMAC meetings on critical occasions.
 - [46.](#) See minutes of 62d ISMAC meeting, May 28,1951, UN archives, DAG 1/ 22520—box 40.
 - [47.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem 213, May 20,1951, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/52051.
 - [48.](#) Letter, el-Khoury to George McGhee (assistant secretary of state), June 13, 1951, Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/6-1351.
 - [49.](#) AmLegation Amman D-319, June 20,1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/5-2051.

- [50.](#) Riley to Eban, August 8, 1951, and cover memo for USUN, August 17, 1951, *ibid.*, 357.AC/8-1751.
- [51.](#) Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 114, citing S/3122, October 23, 1953.
- [52.](#) S/3122, October 23, 1953, and Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 119-128.
- [53.](#) Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 129, and U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.* (*U.S. Participation*), 73-74 (see Note 21).
- [54.](#) Bar-Yaacov, *op. cit.*, 130-140. Despite thirty months (1953-1955) of sustained diplomatic effort by Eric Johnston, President Eisenhower's special representative, to negotiate an agreement entitled "The Unified Development of the Water Resources of the Jordan Valley Region" the plan finally collapsed. Failure was largely attributed to rejection by the Arab League and, as Gen. Burns later noted, particularly Syria's refusal to "agree to anything that would benefit Israel, even if the Arab states would thereby achieve greater benefit." Burns, *op. cit.*, 113 (see Note 8).
- [55.](#) Report of 68th (emergency) meeting of ISMAC (second part), June 2, 1954. Report is dated June 3, 1954, from Damascus. UN archives DAG, 1/22520—box 40. Copy in ISA 2434/4.
- [56.](#) See ISMAC minutes: 67th (emergency) meeting, March 15, 1954; 69th meeting, July 3, 1954; 71st, July 29, 1954; and 72d, December 12, 1954. UN archives, *ibid.* This pattern of erratic participation continued through the 1960s as well.
- [57.](#) One of the few documents in the Israel State Archives reflecting a tone of unreserved amity and good feeling toward UNTSO is a letter from Eytan to Burns of October 10, 1954, expressing Sharett's thanks and appreciation for UNTSO's "energetic and effective intervention" in helping Kibbutz Ein Hashofet recover a flock of sheep. The kibbutz was particularly pleased at this "great triumph" because the sheep were returned on *Simchat Torah*, the festival celebrating the Rejoicing of the Law. Both letters in ISA 2429/7.
- [58.](#) Replying to a letter from Burns reporting on incidents of September 1 and 2, 1954, Sharett stated that Israel would be glad to see the work of the commission "restored to its proper footing." Letter, September 22, 1954, marked 2/943/aleph in ISA 2429/7.
- [59.](#) The issue of anti-Jewish bias arose even as the armistice agreements were being negotiated. Bunche and Riley viewed "with serious concern" remarks attributed to a Commander Sutherland (USN) who had just completed a six-month tour as senior UN Observer in Jerusalem. He was quoted in the *Palestine Post* of February 23, 1949, as accusing the Jews of breaking every promise in the same way as Hitler did. He had come to Palestine hoping to settle a fight between two belligerents but found that "Jews would not honor agreements made" giving their word to observe the cease-fire and then breaking it by "new facts accomplished in the field." Bunche assured Eytan that Sutherland's was an irresponsible act and in no way reflected the policy or opinion of UNTSO. Bunche to Eytan letter, dated March 28, 1949, in UN archives, DAG 13330—box 21.
- [60.](#) Brian E. Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 135, and interview, New York, June 16, 1987.
- [61.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem 64, October 6, 1953. Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/ 10-653.
- [62.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem 10, July 18, 1953, *ibid.*, 357.AC/7-1953.
- [63.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem, August 4, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/8-454, and Amman 40, August 15, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/8-554.
- [64.](#) USUN 715, May 11, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/5-1154, and USUN 682, May 3, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/5-234.
- [65.](#) Letter from Harry F. Kern to Secretary of State Dulles, June 13, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/6-354.
- [66.](#) Interview with author, New York, June 16, 1987.
- [67.](#) Aden 287, April 3, 1953, in Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/4-353.
- [68.](#) USUN 571, March 20, 1953, *ibid.*, 357.AC/3-2053.
- [69.](#) AmEmbassy Damascus D-658, April 23, 1953, commenting on Deptel 359 to USUN, March 26, 1953, *ibid.*, 357.AC/4-2353. Moose's position is reflected in an article by two authors close to the U.S. diplomatic establishment of the 1950s and published five years later. Richard H. Nolte and William R. Polk exhorted Washington to give more sympathetic understanding to Arab resentment of the "wholehearted" financial, diplomatic, and moral support from the United States for the establishment of Israel, and they faulted U.S. administrations (including Eisenhower's) for failing to respond to Arab "dominant desires and fears" and to the "constructive force" of Arab nationalism. "Toward a Policy for the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1958, 649-652.
- [70.](#) AmConGen Jerusalem D-198, June 30, 1953, enclosing Ben Gurion letter, Nat Arch DOS /CF 357.AC/6-3053.
- [71.](#) Hutchison, *op. cit.*, 80 (see Note 11). Chapter is titled "Israel vs. the UN."
- [72.](#) AmEmbassy Tel Aviv D-854, April 12, 1954. Nat Arch DOS /CF 357.AC/ 4-1254.
- [73.](#) AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1253, June 3, 1954, *ibid.*, 357.AC/6-354.
- [74.](#) Memorandum on Fundamental Questions of Security Policy, December 1953, ISA 2408/9.
- [75.](#) Sharett, *op. cit.*, entry for January 9, 1955, vol. 3, 634, and Brecher, *op. cit.*, 400-401 (see Note 26).
- [76.](#) Interview with Brian E. Urquhart, New York, June 16, 1987.

Chapter 4

1. Rosalyn Higgins, *United Nations Peacekeeping 1946-1967, I—The Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 151.
2. Moshe Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1965-1966), 4; S/3183 and corr. 1, Report of Chief of Staff, 1 March 1954. More broadly, as Jean Lacouture pointed out, although the 1948 defeat festered, Palestine remained marginal in Nasser's concerns. See Lacouture's *Nasser: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1973), 267-268.
3. Higgins, op. cit., 151; S/3319, November 16, 1954; S/3373, March 17, 1955; S/3390, April 14, 1955.
4. Dayan, op. cit., 5. On the evolution of the fedayeen into a Palestinian political movement with the ultimate objective of "the recovery of Palestine by and for its former Arab inhabitants," see Alfred Friendly, "The Middle East: 2. The Fedayeen," *The Atlantic*, September 1969, 12-20.
5. Israel responded positively to Egyptian probes for rapprochement in March 1953, indicating readiness to talk about demands for border adjustments, including a land link to Jordan, and refugee compensation. Secret contacts were initiated, including extensive correspondence between Nasser and Sharett. But these talks wound down in mid-1954 and by the end of the year, the Israeli government was convinced that Nasser was engaged in delaying tactics. Gideon Rafael, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* (New York: Stein & Day, 1981), 38-39.
6. AmEmbassy Cairo D-2382, April 5, 1954; Nat Arch DOS/CF 357.AC/ 4-554.
7. E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1962), 18; Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (New York: Linden Press, Simon & Schuster, 1981) 29-35; Brian E. Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 136; Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 255-256.
8. Jonathan Shimshoni, *Israel and Conventional Deterrence: Border Warfare from 1953 to 1979* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 77-78; Uri Ra'anana, *The USSR Arms the Third World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), 46-47; Rafael, op. cit., 44-45. Lacouture (op. cit. 268) agreed with Rafael that Bandung was the point at which Nasser broke with the West.
9. Gaza raid described in S/3365 and S/3367; AmEmbassy Cairo 1256, March 1, 1955; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1955-1957, vol. 14 (Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1955), no. 31; Burns, op. cit., 17-21; U. S. Department of State, *U.S. Participation in the UN for the Year 1955* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), 65-68.
10. AmEmbassy Cairo 1256, March 1, 1955; 1263, March 1, 1955; and 1279, March 4, 1955; in FRUS, op. cit., nos. 31, 36, 39.
11. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 740, March 1, 1955; 754, March 4, 1955; 757, March 4, 1955; and 760, March 4, 1955; in FRUS, op. cit., nos. 33, 40, 41, 42.
12. Memorandum, Russell to Under Secretary Hoover containing summary of points of agreement with British Foreign Office on Operation Alpha, February 2, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 13; Deptel 456 to Tel Aviv, February 14, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 22.
13. Text of Dulles "oral message" in Deptel 510 to Tel Aviv, March 9, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 45; Sharett reply in AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 777, March 13, 1955, Nat Arch DOS/CF 674.84/A/3-1355.
14. S/3378, March 29, 1955, and S/3379, March 30, 1955. For action by Security Council, see editorial note in FRUS, op. cit., 1955, no. 34; U.S. Department of State, op. cit. (*U.S. Participation*), 67-68; Burns, op. cit., 21.
15. See AmEmbassy Cairo 1378, March 21, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 34; Neff, op. cit. 44-47, 72-73; Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israel Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 50-58.
16. AmEmbassy Cairo 1373, March 20, 1955; Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.74/32055; and Cairo 1480, April 5, 1955, *ibid.*, 774.00/4-555; memorandum, Burdette to Hart, April 14, 1955, *ibid.*, 774.000/4-1544; and memcon, Fawzi to Dulles, June 24, 1955, *ibid.*, 611.74/6-2455.
17. AmEmbassy Cairo 1774, May 24, 1955, *ibid.*, 774.00/5-2455.
18. Dayan, op. cit., 5, 7; Higgins, op. cit., 151; Shimshoni, op. cit., 82-83.
19. Burns, op. cit., 76-83; AmConGen Jerusalem 37, August 11, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 189.
20. AmEmbassy Cairo 292, August 24, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 217.

21. S/3430, September 6, 1955; Higgins, op. cit., 151; Shimshoni, op. cit., 84-85.
22. On Khan Yunis and aftermath see Burns, op. cit., 91-92; Shimshoni, op. cit., 84-85; Urquhart, op. cit., 136-137; Rafael, op. cit., 43-44.
23. Urquhart, op. cit., 136. On UNTSO's problems with control of fedayeen see Burns, op. cit., 91-92, and Higgins, op. cit., 151; for UNTSO's report on Gaza events since August 22, 1955, see S/3430, September 5, 1955, and S/3432, September 7, 1955.
24. AmConGen Jerusalem 93, September 21, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 292; Burns, op. cit., 92-96; Urquhart, op. cit., 137. See Higgins, op. cit., 147-150, for rulings of EIMAC on status of zone contained in reports of UNTSO chief of staff, S/2049, March 21, 1951, and S/2338, November 8, 1951.
25. MED 112 and MED 113, Bunche (Rhodes) to UNHq, February 11, 1949, UN archives, DAG 22520—box 17.
26. AmConGen Jerusalem 98, September 26, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 309; Burns, op. cit., 95-103; Shimshoni, op. cit., 85-86.
27. Burns, op. cit., 96-98.
28. Burns, op. cit., 102-106.
29. Moshe Dayan, *Avnei Derech* (Milestones), (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976), 155-156.
30. Shimshoni, op. cit., 87 (see Note 8).
31. Summary in AmEmbassy Tel Aviv D-669, January 3, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.5/1-356, which also contains text of Ben Gurion's Knesset remarks.
32. Memcon, Eban and Shiloah with Allen, February 6, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.5/2-656, and with Secretary Dulles, February 10, 1956, 784A.5/2-1056. See also Sharett-Lawson exchange in AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 693, January 10, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 15 (Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1-July 26, 1956), no. 13.
33. Memcon, October 11, 1955, Allen with Eban and others, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 14, no. 333, 570-576. See also Abba Eban, *Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 184-185.
34. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 10, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 784A.5/2-1056.
35. *New York Times*, February 25, 1956.
36. *New York Times*, March 8, 1956.
37. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 915, March 9, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.56/3956.
38. See, for example, Allen's memorandum to Dulles, April 11, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.13/4-1356, and Memcon, Allen with Eban, March 21, 1956, 784A.56/3-2156.
39. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1037, April 5, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.56/4556.
40. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv D-413, January 7, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 4.
41. Memcon, Dept. of State, Johnston with Allen and Shuckburgh, January 21, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 8; AmEmbassy Beirut 836, February 20, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 25; AmEmbassy Cairo 1141, February 10, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 17; and AmEmbassy Cairo 1098, February 3, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 14.
42. Memorandum, Russell to Hoover, February 2, 1955, with attached "points of agreement" on Arab-Israel settlement, FRUS, op. cit., no. 13.
43. Deptel 446, February 9, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 16; AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 683, February 14, 1955, and 105, February 12, 1955, *ibid.*, nos. 23 and 19.
44. Memorandum, Dulles to Undersecretary Hoover, June 6, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 117; memcon, Dulles with Hoover, Allen, and Russell, June 8, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 120; AmEmbassy Cairo 181, June 9, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 123.
45. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 156, August 25, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 218; memcon, Eban and Shiloah with Allen and Bergus, September 6, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 264.
46. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 246, September 10, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 267.
47. Deptel 1230 to Cairo (also sent to Tel Aviv and London), December 10, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 446.
48. Letter, Sharett to Dulles, December 12, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 448.
49. Deptel to Tel Aviv 195, September 14, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 273; AmEmbassy Cairo 461, September 14, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 274.
50. AmEmbassy Cairo 318, August 27, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 226.
51. AmEmbassy Amman 93, August 28, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 232, and AmEmbassy Jidda, August 28, 1955, *ibid.*, no. 231. Not recorded in the diplomatic documents but related by a U.S. diplomat was the reaction of the ruler of Qatar, who quoted an Arab verse: "I see the ashes of your fire but don't know what coals are burning beneath them."

52. AmEmbassy Cairo 442, September 11,1955, and 461, September 14,1955, FRUS, op. cit., nos. 268 and 274.
53. Deptel to Secretary in New York, Tedul 2, September 19, 1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 284; editorial note, *ibid.*, no. 286; Memcon (phone), Dulles with Eisenhower, September 23,1955, *ibid.*, no. 303.
54. Dulles to Hoover, Dulte 4, September 27,1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 314.
55. AmEmbassy Cairo 362, October 1,1955, *ibid.*, no. 321.
56. AmEmbassy Cairo 654, October 3,1955, *ibid.*, no. 325.
57. Memcon, Eban with Allen, October 11,1955, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 774.56/ 10-1155; and FRUS, op. cit., no. 333. Dulles-Eban exchange reported in Deptel 141 to AmEmbassy Amman, October 2,1955, *ibid.*, no. 322.
58. AmEmbassy Damascus 328, from Johnston, October 7,1955, FRUS, op. cit., no. 130; AmEmbassy Cairo 684, from Johnston, October 8,1955, *ibid.*, no. 331.
59. AmEmbassy Cairo 1439, January 30, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 15 (Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1-July 26,1956), no. 52; SNIE 30-56, "Critical Aspects of the Arab-Israeli situation," February 28,1956, *ibid.*, no. 137.
60. Memorandum, Russell to Dulles, February 23, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 116, especially attachments 2 and 3.
61. Eisenhower diary entry, January 11,1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 15; Memcon, Eisenhower and Dulles with Anderson, January 11,1956, *ibid.*, no. 14.
62. Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1948-1979* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 123.
63. Messages from Anderson to State Department, Cairo, January 19, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 21; Cairo, January 20,1956, *ibid.*, no. 27; and Cairo January 24, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 30. See also Anderson messages to Dulles from Jerusalem, January 23,1956, *ibid.*, no. 29; January 24,1956, *ibid.*, no. 31; January 25,1956, *ibid.*, no. 35; and January 25,1956, *ibid.*, p. 71, note 2.
64. See Touval, op. cit., 129,132.
65. Anderson message from Cairo, March 21, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 211; Deptel 696, to Tel Aviv, March 22, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 214; Memcon, Dulles with Eban, March 28,1956, *ibid.*, no. 221.
66. Memorandum by director of Office of Near Eastern Affairs (Wilkins), March 14,1956, FRUS, op. cit, no. 192,352, 355-356; and revisions in follow-up memorandum of March 21,1956, *ibid.*, no. 209.
67. Memorandum prepared in the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, March 28,1955, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 222.
68. Memorandum, Dulles to Eisenhower, March 28, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 223; and memorandum of conference with president at the White House, March 28, 1956, *ibid.*, nos. 224 and 225; diary entry by the president, March 28, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 226.
69. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, March 28,1956, *ibid.*, no. 221.
70. Memcon, Russell with Shiloah, March 29,1956, *ibid.*, no. 228.
71. At a meeting with Dulles in Paris on October 26,1955, then prime minister Sharett requested favorable consideration of a shopping list for arms and a security guarantee without the conditions mentioned by the secretary of state in his August 26 statement. Dulles replied that it would not be profitable to promote an arms race in the area and, in any event, "our intelligence figures indicate Israel has superiority in most [arms] categories." But "this does not mean that we rule out arms for Israel on a modest and normal basis." Secto 38, Geneva, October 26, 1955, FRUS, 1955, vol. 14, no. 359.
72. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, March 2,1956, FRUS, vol. 15 (January 1-July 26,1956), no. 151.
73. See especially Anderson message from Cairo, March 5, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 162.
74. Deptels 518 and 519 to USUN, March 2, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 684A.86/3-256.
75. Editorial note in FRUS, op. cit., no. 206; on tripartite decision to engage "UN procedures" see FRUS, *ibid.*, p. 160.
76. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 985, March 22,1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 215.
77. S/3575, April 4,1956, and Higgins, op. cit., nos. 152,179. Specifically, the resolution called for withdrawal of opposing forces from the armistice demarcation lines; full freedom of movement for observers in the demilitarized zones and the "defensive areas," and, arrangements for prevention of incidents and prompt detection of violations.
78. Burns, op. cit., 139-142 (see Note 7). Report of UN observer's investigation in EIMAC, ORIC 1956,130, April 6,1956, copy in ISA 2437/6.
79. Shimshoni, op. cit., 90 (see Note 8); Brecher, op. cit., 261 (see Note 7).
80. Higgins, op. cit., 153 (see Note 1); Dayan, op. cit., 188 (see Note 2).

- [81.](#) Urquhart, op. cit., 139-140 (see Note 7).
- [82.](#) Higgins, op. cit., 153; Dayan, op. cit., 18; Urquhart, op. cit., 141-145, contains the fullest and most authoritative account from the UN perspective. According to U.S. ambassador Byroade, Nasser's "virtually unreserved cooperation with the Hammarskjöld mission" up to this time engendered considerable friction with the military leaders. Byroade predicted, accurately as it turned out, that the negative reaction of the military presaged a less amenable policy by Nasser when Hammarskjöld revisited Cairo. AmEmbassy Cairo 2124, April 24, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.74/4-2456.
- [83.](#) Higgins, op. cit., 152-154. Report of secretary general in S/3596, May 9, 1956.
- [84.](#) AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-III, August 23, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.5/8-2356.
- [85.](#) Report of secretary general, annexing report of UNTSO chief of staff, in S/ 3659, September 12,1956, 58-61.
- [86.](#) Exchange of letters in ISA 2437/4.
- [87.](#) Hammarskjöld aide-mémoire of April 20, with Israel foreign ministry covering note of April 22; updated draft statement for Ben Gurion, and précis by G. Rafael dated April 18, in ISA 2437/4.
- [88.](#) S/3659, Report by secretary general to the Security Council, S/3659, September 12,1956.
- [89.](#) Brecher, op. cit., 261 (see Note 7).
- [90.](#) AmEmbassy London 5313, May 16, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 774.00/51656.
- [91.](#) Deptel 2780 to AmEmbassy Cairo, May 18, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.74/5-2156. Within two months, as noted below, the United States would renege on a pledge of financial help for the Aswan dam.
- [92.](#) Memorandum, Rountree to secretary of state, June 8, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.84A/6-856.
- [93.](#) State Department press release 517, August 26, 1955. See my *Security Guarantees in a Middle East Settlement* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1976), 3-4. As there noted, after the Yom Kippur War, Israel spurned a Big Four proposal within the UN context to provide a joint security guarantee as part of a settlement involving Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai.
- [94.](#) Memcon, Eban with Allen, July 3, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.13/7356. USUN 1111, June 20,1956, *ibid.*, 784A, 13-2056.
- [95.](#) Memorandum, Rountree to Dulles, September 28, 1956, *ibid.*, 601.84A/ 11/9-2856.
- [96.](#) AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-131, September 4,1956, *ibid.*, 784A, 5/9-456.
- [97.](#) Higgins, op. cit., 156 (see Note 1).
- [98.](#) Higgins, op. cit., 225.
- [99.](#) On Sévres and the negotiations leading up thereto, see Brecher, op. cit., 265-274 (see Note 7), and editorial note in FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 16 (Suez crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956), no. 373. A retrospective by the State Department's intelligence research bureau, prepared some six weeks afterward, concluded that the British were "accessories both before and after the fact" in the "collusion and deception." Memorandum by special assistant for intelligence (Armstrong), December 5,1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 637.
- [100.](#) AmEmbassy London 2322, October 29, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 405.
- [101.](#) Memorandum of White House conference, October 29, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 411.
- [102.](#) Summary of Security Council action and text of U.S. resolution in editorial note, *ibid.*, no. 439; Lodge's remarks in the Department of State *Bulletin*, November 12, 1956, 749-751. Dulles characterized the Anglo-French ultimatum as "about as crude and brutal as anything" he had ever seen, FRUS, op. cit., no. 427.

Chapter 5

1. Even as the UN peacekeeping force was being formed, the Eisenhower administration, on November 3, 1956, proposed that a General Assembly committee be established as a successor to the moribund Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC) to explore solutions to outstanding Arab-Israeli problems. A month later the administration tried again. Both times, it was discouraged from doing so by Hammarskjöld, who thought it would likely interfere with the peacekeeping initiative. See editorial note in FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 16 (Suez crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956), no. 485, USUN Delga 307, December 10, 1956; and Depcirtel 482 to USUN, December 8, 1956, *ibid.*, nos. 645 and 642.
2. FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 455, 302d Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, Nov. 1, 1956, on p. 906. Thirty years later, recalling British resentment at the time, Henry Fairlie criticized Eisenhower's "isolationist intervention" of appealing to the UN and the "figment" of world opinion to stop the British and French from acting at Suez to protect Western interests. Henry Fairlie, "Ike at Suez," *The New Republic*, December 8, 1956.
3. Memorandum, Hollister to the secretary of state, October 31, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 446; and Memcon, Dulles with senior staff, October 31, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 447.
4. Memcon (phone) Eisenhower with Dulles, November 1, 1956, editorial note, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 454; Memorandum of discussion at NSC meeting, November 1, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 455; and, Memcon (phone) Eisenhower with Dulles, November 1, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 456.
5. Memcon, Eban with Dulles, November 1, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 462.
6. Memcon, Dulles with Heeney, November 2, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 473, and Murphy with Heeney follow-up conversation, November 3, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 479. The British and French reaction to the proposal for a UN force did not initially accord with the Canadian "off the hook" rationale for a UN force to replace the combatants. In his statement to the House of Commons, Eden declared on behalf of both Britain and France that they would stop military action only if the following conditions were met: both Egypt and Israel agreed to accept a UN force to keep the peace; the UN maintained such a force until an Arab-Israeli peace settlement was reached; and "satisfactory arrangements" made with regard to the canal. Eden also said that until the UN force was constituted, Anglo-French troops would continue to be stationed between the combatants. Quoted in Eden letter to Hammarskjöld, November 3, 1956, A/3269.
7. Resolution 999 (ES-I), A/3275. The Israeli aide-mémoire dated November 3 affirmed that "Israel agrees to an immediate ceasefire provided a similar answer is forthcoming from Egypt." A/3279, November 4, 1956.
8. Message, Eisenhower to Eden, November 6, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 527.
9. AmEmbassy Moscow 1074, November 5, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 503. Text of the Bulgarian letters, November 5, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 505. Soviet note to United Kingdom and France, November 5, 1956, in A/3298. The "brutal, blunt and belittling" letter sent to Israel is described in Michael Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 284, and in Moshe Dayan, *Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), 184-186. Dayan gives the text of the letter.
10. AmEmbassy Moscow 1083, November 5, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 506. Shepilov's cable to the president of the Security Council in S/3736. A message from Eisenhower to Bulganin was sent five days later, November 11, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 569.
11. AmEmbassy Cairo 1350, November 6, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 526, and Deptel 1457 to Cairo, *ibid.*, no. 530.
12. Memcon, Hammarskjöld with Lodge, along with W. Park Armstrong, special assistant for intelligence in the State Department, November 7, 1956, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 553.
13. Memcon, Eisenhower with Dulles, Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C., November 7, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 542. That same day, the president told Acting Secretary Herbert Hoover, Jr., that it was of "critical importance that we get SYG [UN Secretary General] to move ahead as rapidly as possible to get the peace force in position." The president also felt there was a need now to get "really tough" with the Israelis if they were taking a stand on nonwithdrawal from Sinai. Memorandum by the director of the executive secretariat (Howe), November 7, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 541.
14. USUN, Delga 127, November 19, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 590.
15. Brian E. Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 195.
16. That this continued to be Israel's attitude is argued by Bjorn Skogmo, *UNIFIL: International Peacekeeping in Lebanon, 1978-1988* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1989), 186.
17. Quoted in Rosalyn Higgins, *United Nations Peacekeeping 1946-1967, I—The Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 230.

18. Brecher, op. cit., 292. See also Terence Robertson, *Crisis: The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy* (New York: Athenaeum, 1965), 277-278, and editorial note in FRUS, op. cit., no. 534.
19. Message, Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, November 7, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 550, and Memcon, Hoover with Shiloah, November 7, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 551. See also account in Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (New York: Linden Press, Simon & Schuster, 1981), which reflects sentiment in the Near East office at the State Department.
20. In a letter dated November 8, 1956, A/3320. See also Abba Eban, *An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1977), 231. Apart from the Soviet threat, Eisenhower's adamant stand, and Israel's isolation when Britain and France agreed to withdraw, the absence of the critically ill Dulles, from early November to mid-December, removed the one person with whom Israel felt it might negotiate better terms for withdrawal. Acting Secretary Herbert Hoover, Jr., was considered as exerting a "negative influence" on Israel's position. See Haggai Eshed, *One Man Mossad: Reuven Shiloah, Father of Israeli Intelligence* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Edanim Publishers, 1988), 223.
21. Message, Ben Gurion to Eisenhower, November 8, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 560, and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 574, November 11, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 567.
22. The text of the aide-mémoire was circulated as Annex II to the secretary general's report of November 21, 1956, on compliance with General Assembly Resolutions 997 (ES-I) and 1002 (ES-I) calling for the cease-fire and withdrawal. A/3384.
23. Memcon, Eban with Rountree, November 26, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 615. Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles cautioned that withdrawal of the British, French, and Israeli forces from Egypt as contemplated would tend to leave a vacuum of power in that country. A UN force might have "high moral authority" but could not be expected to engage in military action. Memorandum to Acting Secretary Hoover, November 10, 1956, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 564.
24. USUN, Delga 231, November 29, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 625. Memcon, Rountree with Eban, December 3, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 635, and memcon, Meir with Acting Secretary Hoover, December 7, 1956, *ibid.*, no. 640.
25. Brecher, op. cit., 293-294. On his discussions with Israeli representatives, Hammarskjöld told U.S. ambassador Lodge on January 11 that as a result of the "cool reception" Foreign Minister Meir had received from various UN delegations, the Israeli attitude had softened somewhat. See USUN, Delga 490, January 11, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1957), no. 31, note 2.
26. Urquhart, op. cit., 203-204.
27. Memcon, Shiloah with Murphy, January 22, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 30.
28. A/3512, January 24, 1957; see also USUN, Delga 571, January 23, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 32.
29. Memcon, Shiloah with Wilcox, February 1, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 49, and USUN, Delga 647, February 3, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 55. Lodge statement in Department of State *Bulletin*, February 25, 1957, 326; texts of two resolutions, *ibid.*, 327.
30. USUN, Delga 647, February 3, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 55, especially 85, 87.
31. USUN, Delga 651, February 4, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 58.
32. Message, Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, February 3, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 54; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: The White House Years 1956-1961* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 184. See also accounts in Brecher, op. cit., 295-296, and Urquhart, op. cit., 206.
33. Message, Ben Gurion to Eisenhower, February 8, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 68, and Memcon, Murphy with Eban and Shiloah, February 8, 1957, National Archives, Department of State Central Files (Nat Arch DOS/CF), 674.84A/2-857.
34. Eban, op. cit., 234 (see Note 20).
35. Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 78.
36. Memcon (phone), Eisenhower with Dulles, February 9, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 70.
37. Text of aide-mémoire, in FRUS, op. cit., 132-134, and in Eisenhower, op. cit., appendix J, 684-685. See also Brecher, op. cit., 296, and S. Finer, *Dulles Over Suez* (Chicago: Quadrangle Press, 1964), 473-475.
38. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 11, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 77.
39. Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., February 15, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 99. Text of Israeli aide-mémoire, FRUS, *ibid.*, 165-170.
40. Memcon (phone), Eisenhower with Dulles, February 15, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 98.
41. Dulles was not unaware that in the Suez crisis the United States was the "effective power" behind the UN. Two months earlier, when Nasser resisted the UN plan for hastening clearance of the Suez Canal until the last Israeli forces left the Sinai, Hammarskjöld counseled Washington not to use its influence in Cairo to make Nasser change his mind. Hammarskjöld should realize, Dulles told Lodge, that he is "the fellow who has the titular responsibility" in the matter, but it was only U.S. pressure that could produce action. After all, it was the United States that "take[s] the blame when

things go wrong." Memcon (phone), Dulles with Lodge, December 26, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 16, no. 665.

42. Memorandum on Thomasville meeting, February 16, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1957), no. 102. Eisenhower, op. cit., 186.
43. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 16 and 17, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., nos. 103 and 105.
44. Record of Bipartisan Legislative Meeting, White House, February 20, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 120. On meeting with the congressional group, see also Eisenhower, op. cit., 186-217, and the *New York Times*, February 20, 1957.
45. Text of address in Department of State *Bulletin*, March 11, 1957, 387-391, and the *New York Times*, February 21, 1957. See also Eisenhower, op. cit., 188; Brecher, op. cit., 298-299; and Finer, op. cit., 476-486.
46. Message, Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, February 20, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 121. Eisenhower, op. cit., 186-187.
47. Message, Ben Gurion to Eisenhower, February 22, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 130; letter, Shiloah to Rountree, February 20, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 122; and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 990, February 21, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 124.
48. Memcon, Dulles with British ambassador Caccia, February 22, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 135. Memcon, Dulles with French ambassador Alphand, February 23, 1957, PRUS, *ibid.*, no. 140.
49. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 24, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 143.
50. Urquhart, op. cit., 209-210; Brecher, op. cit., 298-299; Finer, op. cit., 485-489.
51. Urquhart, op. cit., 210.
52. Note from Dulles to the president, with attachments, February 26, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 154.
53. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 26, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 159.
54. Memcon, Dulles with Meir, February 27, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 162.
55. Memcon, Eban and Shiloah with Wilcox and Phleger, February 27, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 165. Rountree's version in PRUS, *ibid.*, no. 272, note 2.
56. Notes of secretary's staff meeting, February 28, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 166.
57. Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., February 28, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 167. Text of Israeli declaration revised following meeting in the secretary of state's office, *ibid.*, 313-317. See Brecher, op. cit., 299; and Eban's account in his *Autobiography*, op. cit., 246-252.
58. Memcon (phone), Dulles with Lodge, February 28, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 168.
59. Depcirtel 720 to Certain Diplomatic Missions, February 28, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 170.
60. Notes of secretary of state's staff meeting, March 1, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 174, and Memcon, Wilcox with Dulles, March 1, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 176.
61. Memcon, Dulles with Arab ambassadors, March 1, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 177.
62. USUN, Delga 819, February 28, 1957, PRUS, op. cit., no. 172, and Memcon, Lodge with Dulles, March 1, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 175.
63. Urquhart, op. cit., 210.
64. UN, General Assembly Official Records (GAOR), Eleventh Session, 66th Plenary Meeting, 1275-1276; Urquhart, op. cit., 211; Brecher, op. cit., 299-300.
65. At the meeting on the night of February 28, Eban glanced through the draft and said it seemed to be admirable. Dulles said there would be some changes but the "general tenor" would remain unchanged. There was no foreboding that the Lodge statement, as delivered in the General Assembly the next day, would produce serious strains in U.S.-Israel relations. FRUS, op. cit., no. 173.
66. Memcon, Dulles with Eban and Shiloah, March 2, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 181; Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., March 3, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 185. Eban, op. cit., 254.
67. Message, Eisenhower to Ben Gurion, March 2, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 182, and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1021, March 3, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 183. Dulles and Eban conversation, March 3, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 187.
68. Memcon (phone), Eisenhower and Dulles, March 3, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 186.
69. USUN, Delga 834, March 4, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 190.
70. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1022, March 4, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 189. See also Brecher, op. cit., 300-301; Urquhart, op. cit., 211; Eisenhower, op. cit., 189.
71. News conference of March 5 in Department of State *Bulletin*, March 25, 1957, 483, and of March 26, *ibid.*, March 15, 1957, 599.

72. Aharon Levran, "Territory—Still a Security Must," *The Jerusalem Post* (int. ed.), week ending January 15,1992. Brig. Gen. (Res.) Levran of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at the Tel Aviv University is a leading military commentator.
73. Based largely on letters from Richard B. Parker (dated October 28 and November 30,1992) reviewing a conference in Washington about the diplomacy on the eve of the Six Day War and on William B. Quandt, "Lyndon Johnson and the June 1967 War: What Color Was the Light?" *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1992.
74. USUN, Delga 848, March 5,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 194.
75. Ibid. Hammarskjöld was eager to get the statement of reassurance from Dulles before the secretary's departure for the ministerial meeting of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in Canberra.
76. Memcon (phone), Dulles with Hammarskjöld, March 6, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 196, and Lodge-Hammarskjöld conversation in USUN Delga 854, March 6,1957, ibid., no. 197.
77. Message, Ben Gurion to Eisenhower, March 7,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 201, and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1056, March 8,1957, ibid., no. 204.
78. Memo of conference with president, March 8,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 203; State Department Memorandum on U.S. Policy Objectives and Policy for Egypt, March 8,1957, ibid., no. 206.
79. Letter, Meir to Secretary Dulles, March 6, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 200. See also Deptel 860 to Tel Aviv, on Eban meeting with Acting Secretary of State Herter, March 9,1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 674.84A/3-957.
80. Urquhart, op. cit., 213-215; Eisenhower, op. cit., 189; Burns, op. cit., 271.
81. USUN 608, March 11, 1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 674.84A/3-1157; Deptel 689 to USUN, March 11, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 211; Deptel 2993, March 12, 1957, FRUS, ibid., no. 214; *New York Times*, March 12,1957, news story and editorial.
82. Urquhart, op. cit., 215-216. Hare's account of his encounter with Nasser is in AmEmbassy Cairo 2887, March 13, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 217.
83. Memcon, Dulles with Meir et al., March 18,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 233.
84. USUN 644, March 15,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 228.
85. AmEmbassy Cairo 2905, March 15,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 227.
86. USUN 691, March 28,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 252.
87. Memcon, Rountree with Shiloah, March 29,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 256. The report by a working committee on the Gulf of Aqaba recommended to the Bermuda conference on March 23, 1957, that the U.S. and British governments "coordinate their views" on the "procedure for obtaining either an advisory opinion or a decision by the International Court" on freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran. FRUS, ibid., no. 247.
88. Urquhart, op. cit., 220-222, 227, and interview with author, June 16,1987. The black market accusation revived charges about the venality of UNTSO observers that circulated in Israel. Undocumented, these charges were fairly widespread and naturally resented by the UNTSO and the UN Secretariat; they had an appreciable effect on the mutual antipathy that erupted from time to time.
89. Ben Gurion to Hammarskjöld, draft letter, undated, ISA 2448/7.
90. Tekoah memorandum to foreign minister and Gideon Rafael, director general of Foreign Office, May 8,1957, ISA 2448/7.
91. Urquhart, op. cit., 224-225. See also report of press conference at which Hammarskjöld took this optimistic position, in ISA 2448/7.
92. Urquhart, op. cit., 227. In his progress report on the UN Force for the period between October 1957 and August 1958, Hammarskjöld stated that virtually unbroken quiet had prevailed along the armistice line. Only ninety-five incidents had occurred during the period; all but very few were minor. See *United Nations Yearbook* for 1958,52-53.

Chapter 6

1. *New York Times*, March 6,1957. See also Moshe Dayan, in his *Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 203.
2. In an interview with Michael Brecher in 1966, Ben Gurion admitted that "I made a few mistakes in that speech. But you see, Mr. Brecher, the victory was too quick. I was too drunk with victory." Brecher, *Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 283.
3. Report on Dulles's remarks and Ben Gurion's speech in the Knesset in the *New York Times*, March 6,1957. Text of Dulles news conference, Department of State *Bulletin*, March 25,1957,482-489.
4. At the time of the Six Day War, Israel extended the nullification doctrine to other Arab-Israeli fronts, informing the UN that in the Israeli government view "the sole function and concern of General [Odd] Bull and his staff [at UNTSO and in the mixed armistice commissions] is with the cease-fire resolutions of the Security Council and no longer with the General Armistice Agreements." Apprised of the Israeli position by Col. F. M. Johnson (USMC), then acting chief of staff of UNTSO, Bunche was quick to reaffirm that UN policy remained the same as in Hammarskjöld's day. Quoting from Secretary General U Thant's annual report to the General Assembly, Bunche declared that "there has been no indication either in the General Assembly or the Security Council that the validity and applicability of the Armistice Agreements have been changed as a result of recent hostilities or of the war of 1956; each agreement in fact contains a provision that it will remain in force 'until a peaceful settlement between the parties is achieved.'" Memoranda, Johnson to Bunche, Jerusalem, September 21,1967, and Bunche to Johnson, September 26,1967, UN archives, DAG 1/22520.
5. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 11, 1957, and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 966, February 14,1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957), nos. 77 and 100.
6. Draft appended to Memcon, Dulles with Eban, February 28,1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 173, especially 328.
7. Legal memorandum dated June 26,1955, in ISA 2428/3. The relevant portion of the Tripartite Declaration reads: "The three governments, should they find that any of these states was preparing to violate frontiers *or armistice lines* [emphasis added], would, consistently with their obligations as members of the United Nations, immediately take action, both within and outside the United Nations, to prevent such violation."
8. Draft dated April 20,1956, attached to briefing materials for Ben Gurion's "victory speech" to the Knesset on November 7,1956. See ISA 2428/3.
9. Memorandum, Rosenne to foreign minister et al., November 6,1956, in ISA 2428/3.
10. See Eytan's handwritten note in Hebrew to Lourie, of November 6,1956, in ISA 2428/3. The Hebrew word normally employed in the documents was "levatel," which, depending on the context, could mean rescind, abrogate, nullify, annul, or denounce.
11. Memorandum, Kahane to Eban, "A Possible Development: Approval of a Revised Armistice Agreement," January 20,1957, ISA, 2448/6.
12. Eban letter to Hammarskjöld, January 25,1957; copy in ISA 2448/7. See also the *New York Times*, January 24,1957.
13. Gabriella Rosner, *The United Nations Emergency Force* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 110-115.
14. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-569, March 13,1958,Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.00 (W)/3-1358.
15. See H. G. Nicholas in Anthony Moncrieff (ed.), *Suez Ten Years After* (New York: Random House, 1966), 130-133.
16. See George L. Sherry, "The United Nations, International Conflict, and American Security," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 5,1986,764. It might be noted that the Korean conflict also ended in a protracted truce, although the truce was supposed to be followed by a political conference (which took place in 1954 in Geneva), a treaty, and a peace settlement. See Alan Nevins and H. S. Commager, *A Short History of the United States*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 598.
17. E.L.M. Burns, *Between Arab and Israeli* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1962), 188.
18. USUN, Delga 231, Eban, Rafael, Kidron conversation with Lodge, November 29, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 16 (Suez crisis, July 26-December 31, 1956), no. 625; Memcon (phone), Eban with Rountree, November 30,1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 627; Memcon, Meir with Herter, December 7,1956, *ibid.*, no. 640; and, Meir with Dulles, December 28,1956, *ibid.*, no. 671.
19. Amos Perlmutter, *Israel: The Partitioned State (A Political History Since 1900)* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 183. See also Fred J. Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma*, 3d ed. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985),

20. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Waging Peace: The White House Years, 1956-1961* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1965), 189-190.
21. Brian E. Urquhart, *Hamarskjöld* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 226.
22. Briefing paper for Foreign Ministry's press conference, January 20, 1957, ISA 2448/6.
23. Memcon, Dulles with Meir, March 18, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957), no. 233.
24. UN Doc A/Res./395, November 8, 1956; United Nations, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of UN Peacekeeping* (New York: United Nations, October 1985), 44-49; E.L.M. Burns, op. cit., 188-194.
25. Burns, op. cit., 188.
26. United Nations, *Blue Helmets*, op. cit., 50-51, and Urquhart, op. cit., 190-192.
27. ISA 2425/10.
28. Letters, Eban to Hamarskjöld, January 2, 1957 and January 25, 1957, ISA 2448/6; and February 10, 1957, ISA 2448/7.
29. The issue was raised in May 1967 when Nasser demanded UNEF's withdrawal. U Thant concluded that he had to comply with the demand on the ground that the force was on Egyptian territory only with the consent of its government and could not remain there without it. Although some members of the Advisory Committee argued for delay and deliberations in the General Assembly, the UN establishment concluded that to maintain UNEF in Egypt against the nation's will would have created a dangerous precedent that would have deterred potential host governments in other cases consenting to accept UN peacekeepers on their soil. U Thant's approach to Israel to accept UNEF on its side so as to maintain the buffer was declared entirely unacceptable to Israel. United Nations, *Blue Helmets*, op. cit., 76.
30. Urquhart, op. cit., 224; Burns, op. cit., 276.
31. "Agreed position concerning the prospect of a Palestine settlement," March 23, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 245.
32. Memorandum from Villard to Undersecretary Herter, August 6, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 349 and no. 360; Memorandum, Villard to Secretary Dulles, November 21, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 407; Memorandum, Villard to Undersecretary Herter, December 3, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 416.
33. Memcon, Engen with Villard, December 17, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 427, and Memcon, Dulles with Engen, November 25, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 410.
34. Memorandum, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, December 4, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 417; and Memorandum of discussion at State Department—JCS meeting, December 13, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 424.
35. Memcons, Dulles with Nuri al-Said, December 5, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 419, and December 10, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 442.
36. Memcon, Dulles with Selwyn Lloyd (British foreign secretary), October 25, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 389, at which Malik conversation was discussed. Memcon, Malik with Dulles, October 17, 1957, in Nat Arch DOS/CF, 611.84/10-1757.
37. Various called the Eisenhower, American, or Middle East Doctrine, the idea was proposed by Dulles on his return from a NATO meeting in December 1956. The doctrine was embodied in a congressional resolution, adopted 72 to 19 on March 5, and signed into law on March 9. It declared that the United States regarded as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East. To that end, if the president so determined, the United States was prepared to use armed forces to assist any such nation or group of nations requesting assistance against any country controlled by international communism. Eisenhower, op. cit., 182. Finer, op. cit., 467. Text of Joint Resolution as amended, along with statements by President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles in Department of State *Bulletin*, March 25, 1957, 480-481.
38. Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., November 29, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 415.
39. Memcon (phone), Eban with Rountree, November 30, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 16 (July 26-December 31, 1956), no. 627; Israel note, November 30, 1956, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.84A/11-3056; Dulles's reply, December 7, 1956, FRUS, op. cit., no. 639. Statement in support of Baghdad Pact, press release, November 29, 1956, Department of State *Bulletin*, December 19, 1956, 918.
40. On the purpose of Richards's mission, see editorial note, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957), no. 207, and Eisenhower's announcement of March 9 in Department of State *Bulletin*, March 25, 1957, 480; on cancellation of trips to Arab capitals, editorial note, FRUS, op. cit., no. 297, and footnote, FRUS, *ibid.*, p. 597. On Israeli visit, Tripoli 728 (Richards to State Department), May 4, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 317, and announcement of May 21, in Department of State *Bulletin*, June 17, 1957, 968, along with Israel communiqué. Richards's statement to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 27, 1957, *ibid.*, 969.
41. Deptel 1025 to Tel Aviv, May 2, 1957, and AmEmbassy Tel Aviv 1358, May 9, 1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 611.84A/5-257 and 5-957. On the Jordan crisis and U.S. reaction, see Eisenhower, op. cit., 194-195.
42. Notes of secretary's staff meeting, February 28, 1957, FRUS, op. cit., no. 166, and AmEmbassy Cairo 2744, February

28,1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 171.

43. Depcirtel 720 to certain diplomatic missions, February 28,1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 170.
44. Memcon, Rountree with Azzam Pasha, May 9, 1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 321, and Memorandum, Rountree to secretary of state, May 10,1957, *ibid.*, no. 324.
45. Editorial note, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 332. Texts of statement by Arab chiefs of mission and U.S. reply of June 27 in U.S. Department of State, *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents* (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1957), 973-979,985-988.
46. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, August 6, 1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 361, and Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., September 12, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 371. Dulles's briefing paper for the August meeting also observed that the situation in the region was "considerably better" than it had been a year ago. Though Soviet-inspired propaganda against Israel, aimed at increasing influence with the Arabs, continued to be troublesome, the situation did not indicate there existed "a tangible threat to Israel's independence and security." Memorandum, Rountree to secretary of state, August 8,1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.84a/8-657.
47. Memcon, Dulles with Eban et al., September 12,1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 371.
48. Memorandum, Rountree to secretary of state, August 23,1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 366.
49. AmEmbassy Cairo, 540, August 24, 1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 367, and Memcon, Dulles with Ambassador Hussein, October 8, 1957, FRUS, *ibid.*, no. 381.
50. AmEmbassy Moscow 1938, February 22, 1957, and 1955, February 14, 1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF, 780.00/2-1157 and 780.00/2-1457. The audience the Soviets had in mind was clear from the fact that the Soviet-proposed declaration linked the "basic principles" not only to the aims and principles of the UN Charter but to those of the Bandung Conference.
51. Deptel 1520 to Paris, February 26,1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF 780.00/2-2357.
52. Draft of note to Moscow contained in Deptel 2024 to AmEmbassy London, September 11,1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF 780.00/9-1157.
53. Memorandum, Rountree to Herter, October 11,1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF 780.00/10-1157.
54. On October 10,1957, Soviet Communist party secretary Nikita S. Khrushchev accused Turkey of concentrating troops on the border in preparation for an assault on Syria, which had just entered into an arms deal with Moscow, and accused "U.S. rulers" of impelling Ankara into "this dangerous course." At a press conference that day, President Eisenhower expressed concern about Soviet meddling in the Syrian-Turkish crisis and warned that "certainly, if there is an attack on Turkey by the Soviet Union, it would not mean a purely defensive operation by the United States, with the Soviet Union a privileged sanctuary from which to attack Turkey." U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.*, 1957,1045-1047.
55. Memcon, Herter with Meir, October 12,1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 383.
56. Memcon, Dulles with Eban, October 31, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17, no. 391.
57. Message, Dulles to Ben Gurion, November 12, 1957, FRUS, *op. cit.*, no. 396.
58. Haggai Eshed, *One Man Mossad: Reuven Shiloah, Father of Israeli Intelligence* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Edanim, 1988), 187-188.
59. Memcon, Deputy Undersecretary Murphy with Israel Embassy Minister Herzog, July 18, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 780.00/9-1858. On a strategy of the periphery and Reuven Shiloah's connection with it, see Eshed, *op. cit.*, 19, 59, 258-265.
60. Letter, Ben Gurion to Eisenhower, July 28, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 684A.00/7-2858.
61. Memorandum, Rountree to Dulles, January 17, 1959, *ibid.*, 611.84A/11759; Ben Gurion's letter, *ibid.*, 780.00/1-1959.
62. Rountree briefing memorandum, January 17, 1959, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.84A/1-1759. The State Department remained lukewarm, but Israeli diplomacy never abandoned the peripheral doctrine. Thirty years later, an Israeli newsman wrote that despite disappointments, setbacks, and mutual enmities, the four regional "peripherals"—Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, and Israel—shared a vital interest in resisting the "hegemonic tendencies of the Arab ... majorities in the region." The United States, he argued, had an interest in supporting its "beleaguered friends and allies." Yo'av Karny, "Byzantine Bedfellows," *The New Republic*, February 2, 1987. Karny was then the New York correspondent of the Tel Aviv daily *Ha'aretz*.
63. Memorandum, Rountree to acting secretary, "Background information on U.S.-Israel Relations," October 20,1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.84A/10-2058.
64. Memorandum for record: briefing of Ambassador Ogden R. Reid, June 11, 1959, *ibid.*, 6-1159.
65. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-88, August 11,1959, *ibid.*, 8-1159.
66. Memcon, Jones with Blaustein on "Israel-U.S. Relations," December 12, 1959, *ibid.*, 12-1759.
67. Memcon, Malik with Secretary Dulles, October 17,1957, *ibid.*, 10-1757.

- [68.](#) Memcons, AmEmbassy Damascus, June 24 to 27, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 13 (Near East), 621-625.
- [69.](#) AmEmbassy Cairo 1827, January 24, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 611.74/1-2458.
- [70.](#) A full account of the UN's involvement in the Lebanon-Jordan crisis in United Nations, *Yearbook of the UN*, 1958, chapter 4, 36-49. See also U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Participation in the UN: Report...for the Year 1958* (Washington, D.C., 1959), 73-88. See also the *New York Times*, May 14, 1958, on Chamoun appeal to the UN.
- [71.](#) AmEmbassy Cairo 620, August 22, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 780.00/81258.
- [72.](#) Eisenhower letter to Khrushchev in White House press release, July 20, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF, *ibid.*, 7-2058; Dulles-Gromyko talk reported in USUN, Secto 3, August 13, 1958, *ibid.*, 8-1358.

Chapter 7

1. The growth in the proportion of African and Asian states in UN membership from 1955 to 1964 is striking. This group increased from 30 percent (23 out of a total of 66) in 1955 to 51 percent (57 out of 112) in 1964. See Harold K. Jacobson, "The Changing United Nations," in Roger Hilsman and Robert C. Good, eds., *Foreign Policy in the Sixties* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 69.
2. Alan James of the University of Keele, Staffordshire, England, has divided the purposes of UN peacekeeping into three categories: face saving, fire watching, and finger pointing. *Face saving* involves sending a mission or presence to help pacifically minded (or exhausted) states to get out of a predicament. Facesaving removes the issue of right or wrong, let alone the attempt to name the aggressor. The key factor, James noted, is that "discomforted disputants" voluntarily accept the services of a UN mechanism so as to permit a graceful disengagement.

Fire watching is the familiar mode of peacekeeping. The purpose is to maintain quiet along a line of confrontation by interceding between warring parties, preventing small incidents from escalating, and sounding the alarm to alert the Security Council when a crisis gets out of hand. Usually demilitarized or limited forces zones are established as a buffer between the warring parties. The peacekeepers are not in the business of imposing peace on the combatants but of interposing and providing early warning.

Finger pointing is the third mode. The UN intervenes in the context of pronouncing which party is guilty and which is victim, thus undermining the creative idea that peacekeeping must not be punitive and that it works because it avoids faultfinding. The Security Council or General Assembly operates in a judgmental rather than diplomatic mode. Alan James, "Politics in the UN System: The Issue of Peace and Security," paper presented to the International Studies Association, Washington, D.C., February 13, 1985, and his more elaborate discussion in L. S. Finkelstein, ed., *Politics in the United Nations System* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1988), 79-101.

3. AmEmbassy Cairo, Airgram G-107, October 4, 1958, National Archives, Department of State Central Files (Nat Arch DOS/CF), 611.84A/10-458. Egypt and Syria merged in February 1958 into a single unit comprising the southern (Egypt) and the northern (Syria) regions, with Nasser as president and the capital in Cairo. As an initial step toward creating a pan-Arab union, the republic abolished Syrian and Egyptian citizenship, termed its inhabitants Arabs, and called the country "Arab territory." In 1961 Syria withdrew from the union after a military coup, and Yemen (which had joined in a loose federation with the UAR) soon followed. Egypt, however, officially retained the name United Arab Republic.
4. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-39, July 16, 1957, *ibid.*, 7-1657.
5. U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Participation in the UN: Report...for the Year 1958* (Washington, D.C., 1959), 67-68.
6. *Ibid.*, 1959, 56-58; similar accounts for succeeding years in reports for the years 1960-1966.
7. *Ibid.*, 1960, 86, and 1961, 146.
8. On June 23, 1949, Jordanian and Israeli representatives signed an agreement that drew a line, sometimes referred to as the "civilian line," through the neutral zone around Government House. Because the Jordanian government had refused to ratify the agreement, Jordan considered that it had never come into legal force, but Israel contended it had become binding on signature.
9. Memorandum from director of Office of Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State, August 21, 1957, FRUS, 1955-1957, vol. 17 (Arab-Israeli Dispute 1957), no. 364. For background and account of Security Council meeting, *ibid.*, no. 369.
10. S/3892, report of UNTSO chief of staff, September 25, 1957; *ibid.*, editorial note, 723.
11. Message, Dulles to Ben Gurion, October 23, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 388, and Memcon, Dulles with Eban, October 31, 1957, *ibid.*, no. 391.
12. S/3913, report of UNTSO chief of staff, October 31, 1957.
13. S/3942. U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.*, 1958, 65-66.
14. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-433, January 23, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.00 (W)/1-2358.
15. *New York Times*, December 17, 1957, and January 19, 1958. *UN Yearbook for 1958*, 59. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-433, January 23, 1958, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.00 (W)/1-2358.
16. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-729, May 15, 1958, *ibid.*, (W)/5-1558, and the *New York Times*, May 11, 1958, and May 13, 1958.
17. S/3815, April 23, 1957. See U.S. Department of State, *op. cit.*, 1957, 69-71; 1958, 69; and Nissim Bar-Yaacov, *The Israel-Syrian Armistice: Problems of Implementation, 1949-1966* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1967), 157.

18. U.S. Department of State, op. cit., 1957, 71-72.
19. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-146, September 5, 1957, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.00 (W)/9-557.
20. S/4270, November 4, 1958, Annex 1. For a full and illuminating account of incidents in the southern demilitarized zone and UN responses from 1957 to 1963, see Bar-Yaacov, op. cit., 185-196.
21. AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-292, December 23, 1957, op. cit., 784A.00 (W)/ 12-2357. Von Horn's finding recorded in S/4270, February 23, 1960.
22. On March 17, 1967, UNTSO Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Odd Bull telegraphed UN headquarters that "in order to appreciate the importance" of the 80th "emergency and extraordinary" meeting of ISMAC, one must "bear in mind that ISMAC has not operated normally for the past 16 years." The 79th emergency meeting had been held seven years earlier without Israeli participation. UN archives, DAG 1 /22520—box 37.
23. S/4268, February 19, 1960. Bar-Yaacov, op. cit., 188.
24. S/6061, February 24, 1964, report by the Secretary General concerning an incident on November 13, 1964, in the northern area of the armistice demarcation line. See also UNTSO background material in UN archives, DAG 1/22520—box 17.
25. S/4271, February 25, 1960.
26. See AmEmbassy Tel Aviv, D-622, Nat Arch DOS/CF 784A.00 (W)/4-358, and the *New York Times*, April 1, 1958, and April 16, 1958.
27. *New York Times*, April 8, 1958, and April 9, 1958.
28. *New York Times* account of incident and complaints to the council, December 3 to 6, 1958.
29. See account in U.S. Department of State, op. cit., 1958, 65-66.
30. Letter, Rickert to Major Sherif (Syrian representative on ISMAC), September 25, 1960, UN archives, DAG 1 /22520—box 41.
31. Cable, UNTSO 1171, Rickert to Bunche, October 6, 1960, and expert's report of September 27, 1960, UN archives, DAG 1/22520—box 41.
32. Cables, UNTSO 1174, October 6, 1960, and 1227, October 17, 1960 (Rickert to Bunche), and UN 597, October 8, 1960 (Bunche to Rickert) in UN archives, op. cit.
33. See account in U.S. Department of State, op. cit., 1962, 142-151; S/5093, March 19, 1962; S/5098, March 19, 1962; and S/5102, March 26, 1962; Bar-Yaacov, op. cit., 228-234; *New York Times*, April 5-8, 1962.
34. Bar-Yaacov, op. cit., 200-201.
35. Cable, UNTSO 882, Bull to Urquhart, August 18, 1963, UN archives, DAG 1/22520—box 17.
36. Mainly from accounts in Bar-Yaacov, op. cit., 200-210, and U.S. Department of State, op. cit., 1963, 105-111. See also S/5401, August 24, 1963; S/5407, September 3, 1963; and *New York Times*, August 24 to 26 and September 1 to 4, 1963.
37. George L. Sherry, "The United Nations, International Conflict, and American Security," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 101, no. 5, 1986, 760-764.
38. Keynote speech to Mapai Conference, *New York Times*, May 14, 1958. Just as Israel, with a population of less than 700,000, had absorbed 900,000 Jewish refugees in ten years, Ben Gurion said, so the Arab states should be called upon to "open their gates wide to the Arab refugees."
39. Sherry, op. cit., 764.
40. S/5735, March 4, 1964. The communiqué issued after the round of intercommunal talks held in Vienna, March 31 to April 7, 1977, concluded that it "has not been possible to bridge the considerable gap between the views of the two sides." S/12323, April 30, 1977. Alan James opined that "a mediatory presence was established more in the hope than in the expectation that an agreed settlement could be obtained, for this was, and is, a particularly difficult dispute." *The Politics of Peacekeeping* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 73.
41. Bernard Lewis, "The Arab-Israeli War: The Consequences of Defeat," 46; *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 2, January 1968, 335.
42. Sherry, op. cit., 763.
43. See Aaron Klieman, *Statecraft in the Dark: Israel's Practice of Quiet Diplomacy*, Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, no. 10, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), passim, and interview with the author, Tel Aviv, October 26, 1987.
44. Avner Yaniv, "Israeli Foreign Policy Since the Six Day War," in *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Two Decades of Change*, Yehuda Lukacs and Abdalla M. Battah, eds. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), 12.
45. Saadia Touval, *The Peace Brokers: Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 134-135.
46. Benny Morris in his review of Haggai Eshed's *One Man Mossad, Reuven Shiloah: Father of Israeli Intelligence* (Tel Aviv:

Edanim Publishers, 1988), in the *Jerusalem Post*, int. ed., week ending July 9, 1988.

About the Book and Author

Drawing on previously untapped documents, interviews with key actors, and his own experiences in the Department of State, Nathan Pelcovits takes a fresh look at the impact of UN intervention, as peacekeeper and peacemaker, on the Arab-Israeli conflict during the formative years between 1948 and 1960. He examines the reasons behind the UN assumption of a quasi-custodial role in the dispute and how it is that Israel and the Arab states have come to hold diametrically opposed views of the value of engaging the UN as intermediary, with the UN-Israel relationship cooling into one of mutual suspicion and mistrust. Most relevant to the current peace process, Pelcovits explains why UN action shifted early in the game from an ambitious effort at peaceful settlement to "keeping" the peace of a long armistice.

Pelcovits argues that the wounds of the formative years have affected the dynamic of the peace process to this day. The UN has been accorded a marginal role in the negotiations—ceremonial and passive—and UN peacekeepers are not likely to be enlisted as guarantors of the settlement.

Nathan A. Pelcovits is a former professorial lecturer at The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. During the 1960s and 1970s, he directed the UN planning office at the Department of State and was the chief officer for planning and administering U.S. participation in UN peacekeeping missions in the Congo, in Cyprus, and on Arab-Israeli fronts. He is the author of *Peace-keeping on Arab-Israeli Fronts* (Westview).

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