
The Middle East is so loaded with war potential and the prospects for peace are so dim that any plan for peace in the area deserves our attention. The Quakers, who initiated the study which led to this publication (but, as is their tradition, do not endorse it officially as an organization), can claim some success for their particular branch of peace-making.

An approach very similar to the one used here to deal with the Israeli-Arab conflict was previously employed by the American Friends Service Committee to suggest ways to bring the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. closer together. The Friends called for both sides to recognize that neither is wholly right, that both are caught in a mutually reinforcing cycle of mistrust. They encouraged each side to take unilateral steps leading toward psychological disarmament and military disengagement, which would, in turn, open the way for lasting political settlements. The Friends put little credence in holistic settlements, in jumps from conflict-ridden situations to permanent peace with direct negotiations serving as the vaulting pole. Lack of trust, rampant hate, and fear in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. are viewed as preventing the antagonists from realistically perceiving each other and the dangers of war. The Quakers suggest that tensions must be reduced before diplomatic negotiations can effectively be initiated.

This psychological theory of war and peace is elaborated by the eminent psychologist Charles Osgood, in several articles and in his book Neither War Nor Surrender, and is developed in one of my previous works, The Hard Way to Peace. The theory urges that the measures to be taken must be unilateral and cannot be based on prior negotiations, because the "atmosphere of trust" needed for successful negotiations is not available. Unilateral initiatives, sizable enough to be a credible indication of peaceful intentions, but not so big as to expose one side, are recommended. These initiatives, the theory holds, can be reciprocated without prior meetings between the sides. The resulting sequences of "reciprocal unilateral initiatives," are expected to reverse the spiral of mutual acrimony and hostile gestures. When this is achieved, the stage is set for negotiations and bilateral, previously agreed upon, actions.

Unlike many theories, this one did withstand an empirical test: when John F. Kennedy—to some degree following the advocacy of the theory, to a large extent for other reasons which need not be explored here—decided to unilaterally initiate the reduction of tensions in June, 1963, the Soviet Union reciprocated as predicted. It welcomed the initiatives and matched them with counter tension-reducing gestures not previously negotiated. In this way, a test ban was introduced first by a Kennedy declaration, then by U.S.S.R. reciprocation (the treaty itself came later); U.S. announcement of cuts in the military budget were "matched" by the U.S.S.R.; and so on. The final outcome also substantiates the theory—a detente followed, the first major breakthrough in the Cold War, which led to productive negotiations. (I documented in detail the steps and results of the Kennedy experiment in my paperback, Studies in Social Change, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.) Unfortunately, the Kennedy experiment was cut short by an assassin's bullet four months after its initiation, and Lyndon Johnson escalated the Vietnam War before one could establish how far the whole experiment could have been extended.

The Quaker (or position) paper under discussion applies the psychological theory of peace-making to the Middle East. It is most effective in listing the belligerent images the sides have of each other. "Each side is the victim of what it is convinced is the aggression of the other side. Everyone feels deeply aggrieved at an enemy from whom he cannot escape, whom he suspects and fears... All are caught in a web of self-justification, bitterness, and hatred. Each side feels that force is the only language the other side will understand." The Israelis believe the Arabs are out to "throw them into the sea," while the Arabs believe the Israelis' ambition is endless expansion. Neither side is willing to make concessions when they consider the question to be one of survival. The commitment to peace is on all lips, the Quakers continue, but there is very little willingness to pay a price or take a risk for peace.

The reader, whatever his position is in the Israeli-Arab situation, cannot but be struck...
by the Quaker's assumption of symmetry: Israel and the Arabs are treated as interchangeable. This is far from accidental; the same assumption was made by the Friends about the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. during the height of the Cold War. Actually, one of the virtues of the position is the insight one gains when one sees how much symmetry there actually is and to what extent the paranoias of one side do contribute to those of the other.

Aside from reflecting their view of the situation, the assumption of symmetry is essential for the role the Friends seek to play in this and other conflicts: they wish to be heard by both sides to help them get together. Hence, any leaning toward one of the sides is supposed to be out of the question.

The question, though, must be asked—how much symmetry is there in the Middle East? Are the differences in the policies of both sides minor ones which can be ignored or are they basic and essential to the issues at hand?

Most friends of Israel would argue that Israel is the one that is continually attacked; that the Arabs seek to destroy her; and that the Arabs are the ones who refuse to negotiate for peace. They would maintain that the Israelis are willing to negotiate any place, any time, on "all issues"; that they are just "waiting for the phone to ring." The Quakers point out that the Arabs, especially the Palestinian Arabs, fear violation of their basic right of self-determination and sincerely fear an interminably expansionist Israel. The Quakers also depict as insincere the Israeli commitment to negotiate. To substantiate this claim, they refer to the Israeli insistence upon direct negotiations, although, they say, Israel fully realizes that the Arabs are either unwilling or unable to engage in such negotiations. Furthermore, the Quakers cite various statements by Israelis which indicate "this or that" territory which they consider to be nonnegotiable.

As I see it, despite the Friends' sincere effort, their position is based on two major errors: the situation is not symmetrical at many key points and the Friends frequently take an implicitly pro-Arab position. There is very little doubt in my mind, having lived in the Middle East for 21 years, and having visited there about once a year since I left in 1957, that the Arabs, given a chance, would destroy Israel, killing everyone in sight, ship-

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Friends do not draw any conclusions from the fact that while the Israelis are willing to negotiate, at least in one form, the Arabs renounce all forms of negotiation.

The Quaker theory calls for the Big Four Powers (the U.S., the Soviet Union, France, and England) and the U.N. to take a major role in the negotiations. The Big Four are to help arrange for the peace and the United Nations is to help enforce it. The Big Powers are, of course, relevant, for the Israeli-Arab conflict is nourished by them. Should they miraculously disappear from the Middle East, or should they agree to limit their meddling to nonviolent acts, the prospect for peace would be much brighter and the danger of new clashes would be reduced. A side effect of big power projection into the conflict is the escalation of the potency of the weapons used and, consequently, a rise in the level of casualties. The Israelis and the Arabs started with hand grenades and piper-cub planes. They would not have advanced to supersonic bombers and SAMS 3 without foreign instigation.

As the big powers are unlikely to go away, the best chance for peace lies in their agreeing to curb their level of intervention, keeping a close watch on each other to insures that the agreed-upon limitations are observed. But this is not quite what the Quakers have in mind. They see a much more active role for the Big Four in working out the specifics of a peace settlement in the area. Again, their fondness for seeing things symmetrically blurs their vision. Soviet foreign policy in many parts of the world may be conservative and cautious; in the Middle East, however, the Soviets play a daring game, risking the kind of entrapment the U.S. has allowed itself to become involved in elsewhere, particularly in Vietnam. On the other hand, in the Middle East the U.S. has been rather restrained, holding back its commitments at least partially, because it is over-committed elsewhere. For instance, the U.S. Sixth Fleet, once in charge of the Eastern Mediterranean, now rarely ventures in this part, while the Soviet fleet, in effect, blocks most naval actions Israel may wish to take. If there is a symmetry here, it is worldwide. A big-power solution might be found in a Vietnam-Middle East deal, although, unfortunately, the U.S.S.R.'s strained relations with China and world disapproval with U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia make Soviet interest in U.S. disengagement from Vietnam disappointingly limited. As a result, Soviet willingness to limit its Middle Eastern role in exchange is not at all assured. Locally, there is no symmetry at all.

The psychological theory of war and peace, elaborated by Charles Osgood, urges that the measures to be taken must be unilateral and cannot be based on prior negotiations, because the "atmosphere of trust" needed for successful negotiations is not available.
Moreover, the Big Four together provide a biased international forum. While the U.S. is friendly to Israel, its commitment is balanced by strong ties to the Arab world, ranging from oil interests to State Department clerks' romanticization of the Arabs. There is no such balancing effect in the Soviet commitment to the Arabs; it is one-sided and reinforced by an extreme anti-Israeli stance. France is now very actively pro-Arab and Britain is anxious not to antagonize the Arabs anymore. All said and done, asking Israel to allow the focus of potential negotiations to shift to this court is tantamount to favoring the Arab side.

Unfortunately, something of the same must be said about the United Nations. When it comes to Israel, this body is very much affected by the same big power constellation just depicted. In addition, there is a big Arab bloc and an even bigger Moslem bloc in the U.N., while Israel has one vote and few reliable friends. Hundreds of United Nations resolutions calling for a cessation of provocations in the area have been so routinely ignored by the Arabs (and, frequently, by the Israelis), that it is difficult to expect the Israelis to suddenly place their confidence in the U.N. Nor can one let the hope one has for the U.N.'s future obscure the fact that, at present, it cannot impose large-scale settlements which the sides invoked do not wish imposed. The U.N. can best serve to ratify and enforce agreements, not to introduce them where they do not exist.

The Quakers' disregard of these considerations is not accidental. They abhor power relations and hence tend to ignore them. For them the Big Four do not seem to be four superpowers bent on advancing their national interests and largely limited by domestic conflicts and the power of the other three. Instead, they are regarded as an impartial arbitration agency which, as a third party, could help form an acceptable peace settlement. The U.N. is mistakenly seen not as a body governed differentially by those who have more power but as an international organization whose title evokes the fondest of men's dreams for peace.

Despite these faults in their theory and their incomplete neutrality in the Middle East conflict—at one point the position paper even uses the Arab phrase "Jewish views" when actually the authors mean to refer to "Israeli" ones—there is much soundness in the basic Quaker concepts. One way to try to break the deadlock is for the three-time victor, to make some limited unilateral gestures aimed at reducing tensions. Some possible actions are the release of some Arab prisoners or the opening of a Swiss bank account to be used by Arab refugees. Renewed declarations by Israel that all issues are negotiable, that it would try to help solve the refugee problems, that it has no expansionist goals, and that it would buy a relaxed version of direct negotiations, may all help to set a better context in which new, concrete, tension-reducing gestures would be more credible to the Arabs.

Most likely the Arabs would disregard and distrust such gestures. This would call for some more Israeli gestures, none of them entailing a risk to its security. If a sequence of these leads to no reciprocations, Israel will have at least demonstrated to those who increasingly doubt the sincerity of its commitment to a peaceful settlement that its intentions are firm. If the Arabs do respond with some psychological de-escalation, the process of reciprocal unilateral initiatives will have begun, and the main problem would be to keep it going. Such reciprocations would inevitably lead to some psychological disarmament in the Middle East. If this happens, the door may be opened to military disengagements, possibly to the positioning of a peace-keeping force on the banks of the Suez, and other such measures. Tension reduction and military de-escalation could open the way to a political settlement. However, these conditions are so visionary in the present context that it is difficult to seriously speculate about the shape of such a settlement.

The Middle East situation is so explosive and dangerous that every stone must be overturned to see if there is a means of trying the Friends' approach even if one does not accept many of the specifics they advocate and does not buy all the assumptions they make.