
Israeli Settlements, American Pressure, and Peace*

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The settlement issue was often at the heart of U.S.-Israeli differences during the Obama administration. However, the crisis that erupted between the two countries appeared to be completely unnecessary. A settlement freeze had never been a precondition for negotiations when the 1993 Oslo Agreements were originally signed. Israeli-Palestinian negotiations continued with no settlement freeze under successive Israeli governments as well. When the Netanyahu government actually agreed to a ten-month moratorium on settlement construction, its importance was discounted by the Palestinian side, which only came to negotiate with Israel in the last month of the moratorium. Settlements turned out to be a far less important issue for determining the course of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

THE FAILURE OF THE SETTLEMENT FREEZE

Upon coming into office, the Obama peace team was seized with the idea of a settlement “freeze” as a confidence-building measure to lure the reluctant Palestinians into negotiations with Israel. President Barack Obama’s peace envoy, former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, had been associated with the freeze concept since the Middle East peace commission he headed in 2001 concluded that “Israel should freeze all settlement activity, including the ‘natural growth’ of existing settlements.” The Bush administration signed on to the freeze idea in 2003, when it joined with the European Union, Russia, and the UN secretary-general to promulgate the “Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” The Roadmap requires, in Phase I, that, “Consistent with the Mitchell Report, the Government of Israel freezes all settlement activity (including natural growth of settlements).”¹

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But even with this language, the 2003 Roadmap, which was a multilateral declaration and not a binding international treaty, did not halt Israeli construction. Parallel to the Roadmap, the Bush administration worked out bilateral understandings with Israel that defined how Washington understood the settlement freeze that it proposed. The critical factor in the administration's thinking was that new construction not entail Israel seizing more land. Thus if construction continued within the outer perimeter of the current line of building in each settlement, then that settlement construction did not violate the Roadmap freeze. The United States and Israel reached understandings in this regard during the Bush administration.

In an effort to placate President Obama, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu imposed on his cabinet a major concession on November 25, 2009. He announced a ten-month freeze on construction permits for new residences and the (actual) start of new residential construction in the settlements. "We have been told by many of our friends that once Israel takes the first meaningful steps toward peace, the Palestinians and Arab states would respond.... I hope that this decision will help launch meaningful negotiations to reach a historic peace agreement that would finally end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians." George Mitchell said, "We did get a 10 month...moratorium on new housing construction starts on the West Bank, which was less than what we asked for, less than what the Palestinians wanted, but was more than any government of Israel had ever done on that subject, and it was a significant action which I believe the Palestinians should have responded to by getting into negotiations earlier."²

But, for nine of the ten months of the freeze, Netanyahu's concession did not have the intended effect. For all but the last month, Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas refused to resume negotiations even with the freeze, saying it fell short of the total freeze in Jerusalem that President Obama had promised him. "At first, President Obama stated in Cairo that Israel must stop all construction activities in the settlements. Could we demand less than that?"

Mitchell later said, "The real loss was that we didn't get a full ten months. We didn't get nine months or eight months. We got one month—less than a month, and it was not enough time to gain traction and get the parties invested in continuing the process."³

The administration was disappointed that Abbas exploited the president's firm position on settlements and made it into a precondition. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the demand for an absolute settlement freeze as a precondition for talks was unprecedented. Settlements have "always been an issue within the negotiations.... There's never been a precondition."⁴ Mitchell later said, "It was not a precondition. The mistake was to not make that as clear as we could have. The president's position was...not stated as preconditions, although, unfortunately, they were then adopted as preconditions."⁵ Abbas had negotiated with six previous Israeli prime ministers—Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu (in his first term), Barak,

Sharon, and Olmert—without the precondition that he now demands of Netanyahu. Mitchell said on September 22, 2009, “We do not believe in preconditions. We do not impose them. And we urge others not to impose preconditions.”⁶ A Middle East Quartet Statement of March 19, 2010, called for “the resumption without preconditions of direct bilateral negotiations that resolve all final status issues, as previously agreed by the parties.”⁷

The administration was confounded by Abbas’s refusal to use Netanyahu’s concession as an opening to peace talks. Later, after leaving office, Mitchell observed that:

I personally negotiated with the Israeli leaders to bring about a ten month halt in new housing construction activity. The Palestinians opposed it on the grounds, in their words, that it was worse than useless. So they refused to enter into the negotiations until nine months of the ten had elapsed. Once they entered, they then said it was indispensable. What had been worse than useless a few months before then became indispensable and they said they would not remain in the talks unless that indispensable element were extended.⁸

But the Obama administration issued no sharp words to admonish Abbas in public for refusing to negotiate, as it had admonished Netanyahu repeatedly for construction activity in settlements. In refusing to meet with Israel, Abbas violated one of the most important commitments his predecessor Yasser Arafat made at the start of the Oslo process, which included this pledge to then-prime minister Yitzhak Rabin on September 9, 1993: “The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process, and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two sides, and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.”⁹ Abbas also violated the pledge that he himself made two years earlier at the Annapolis Conference, witnessed by foreign ministers of forty-seven countries on November 27, 2007: “We agree to immediately launch good-faith bilateral negotiations in order to conclude a peace treaty, resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues without exception, as specified in previous agreements. We agree to engage in vigorous, ongoing and continuous negotiations.”¹⁰

But the Obama team said little to blame Abbas for his refusal to negotiate and his violation of these solemn commitments.

BEFORE OBAMA, CONSTRUCTION DID NOT STOP PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

In confronting the Israeli government, it was not Obama’s intention to undermine

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Israeli confidence and produce a crisis in the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Clearly Obama thought that he was doing what was necessary to promote peace.

But what is remarkable about the Obama diplomacy is that the decision to spurn past commitments made by the Bush administration, and defy the Israeli consensus on Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem, seems to have been made without a clear understanding of the past history of the relationship between settlements and peace in previous negotiations under the leadership of other American presidents.

President Bill Clinton did *not* ask Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin to freeze all housing construction in settlements, including Jerusalem, in order to get the Oslo process started. Had he made such a demand, *Rabin would have refused*. Rabin told the Knesset, “I explained to the president of the United States that I wouldn’t forbid Jews from building privately in the area of Judea and Samaria...I am sorry that within united Jerusalem construction is not more massive.”¹¹

The same year as the famous handshake on the White House lawn, 1993, the Rabin government completed the construction of more than six thousand units in the Pisgat Zeev neighborhood of East Jerusalem, out of a total of thirteen thousand units that were in various stages of completion in areas of the city that had been outside Israeli lines before 1967.

Nevertheless, Arafat did sit down with Rabin, even while Israel’s construction in Jerusalem continued. And, on September 13, 1993, the Oslo peace accord was signed—by the same Mahmoud Abbas who refuses to sit down today. And on October 14, 1994, Rabin, who built homes for Jews in East Jerusalem, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Altogether, Rabin’s government completed thirty thousand dwelling units in the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem in the four years before the prime minister’s assassination. Even the January 9, 1995, announcement of a plan to build fifteen thousand additional apartments in East Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the 1967 borders (especially Pisgat Zeev, Neve Yaacov, Gilo, and Har Homa) did not stop negotiations, which resulted in the Oslo II accord of September 28, 1995. Israeli construction continued while Abbas and Rabin signed a historic accord.

And what was the Clinton administration’s reaction to Rabin’s construction of Jewish homes in East Jerusalem? Mild annoyance.

On January 3, 1995, in response to the Rabin government’s announcement of expanded construction, the State Department spokesman said placidly, “The parties themselves...have to judge whether it presents any kind of a problem in their own dialogue. The important thing is to continue to meet.” The spokesman added on January 10, 1995, “We admit that settlements are a problem, but we...enjoin the parties to deal with these issues in their negotiations.”

Clinton’s Middle East peace adviser, Martin Indyk, told the U.S. Senate on February 2, 1995, that Rabin’s government had recently “given approval for something

like 4,000 to 5,000 new housing units to go up in settlements around the Jerusalem area." But, he said, Clinton had decided to stay out of it. "To take action now would be very explosive in the negotiations, and frankly, would put us out of business as a facilitator of those negotiations." Had Clinton taken Obama's approach, it might well have derailed the negotiations and brought the Oslo process to a halt.

Nor was this example of construction in Jerusalem while diplomacy made progress an isolated exception. Two years after Oslo II, in January 1997, Abbas and Arafat sat down with another Israeli prime minister, Netanyahu, to sign the Hebron Protocol, which provided for the withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces from 80 percent of the very sensitive area of Hebron in the West Bank. Arafat and Abbas had no illusions that Netanyahu intended to freeze Israeli construction in East Jerusalem. In fact, Netanyahu had announced that he would proceed with the building of Har Homa, a controversial Israeli suburb conceived by Rabin.

Nor, another eighteen months later, did the Palestinians' fierce objections to Har Homa stop them from joining the Wye Plantation negotiations from October 15–23, 1998. These talks led to an agreement known as the Wye River Memorandum, in which Netanyahu, under considerable pressure from President Clinton, agreed to pull the Israel Defense Forces out of an additional 13 percent of the West Bank. This move was fiercely opposed by Netanyahu's right flank, and it led to his downfall in January 1999 when the hardliners in his coalition defected.

Had Clinton demanded that Netanyahu freeze construction in Jerusalem and Arafat made it a precondition for negotiations, neither the Hebron nor Wye agreements would have been signed.

The Labor government that was elected in the wake of Netanyahu's ouster in 1999 continued the pattern of building in Jerusalem while moving forward in negotiations with the Palestinians. At the Camp David Summit (July 11–25, 2000), then-prime minister Ehud Barak went beyond Israel's known "red lines," offering the Palestinians most of the West Bank and a capital in Jerusalem, along with land swaps. But, at the same time that he was taking these unprecedented steps, Barak was accelerating the construction of Har Homa and other Jerusalem communities on former Jordanian territory. While the talks accelerated, Barak also moved ahead with the Ras al-Amud neighborhood on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. President Clinton said he "would have preferred that this decision was not taken." But Clinton added that the United States "cannot prevent Israel from building in Har Homa." Haim Ramon, Rabin's minister for Jerusalem affairs, said, "I would like to make it clear that the government has no intention of stopping the building at Har Homa."

Here again, had Clinton taken Obama's position and issued an ultimatum demanding that all construction in Jerusalem stop, and had Arafat made that Ameri-

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can demand a precondition to begin negotiations, the Camp David Summit of 2000 and the Taba talks in January 2001 would not have occurred.

The next Israeli government, headed by retired general Ariel Sharon, did not seek any breakthroughs in negotiations with the Palestinians. But Sharon ordered the most dramatic territorial concession in Israel's history since 1967: the withdrawal of all Israeli soldiers from every square inch of Gaza along with the abandonment of twenty-one settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank. In the "unilateral disengagement" of August-December 2005, Sharon pulled eight thousand Israeli settlers from their homes against fierce opposition from his right flank.

Four months after the disengagement from Gaza, on January 4, 2006, Sharon went into a coma. His deputy, Ehud Olmert, became prime minister. Olmert sought a resumption of negotiations with the Palestinians. Following the Annapolis Conference in November 2007, Abbas, who had taken over as president of the Palestinian Authority and head of the PLO after Arafat's death in November 2004, agreed to begin intensive negotiations with Olmert. While Abbas expressed his unhappiness with continued Israeli construction in East Jerusalem and the settlement blocs, he did not make cancellation of these projects a precondition for talks. Abbas did not cut off negotiations when Olmert said publicly to Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* in April 2008, "It was clear from day one to Abbas...that construction would continue in population concentrations—the areas mentioned in Bush's 2004 letter.... Beitar Illit will be built, Gush Etzion will be built; there will be construction in Pisgat Zeev and in the Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem...areas [that] will remain under Israeli control in any future settlement."¹²

These negotiations produced significant results: on September 16, 2008, Olmert offered Abbas 93 percent of the West Bank, partition of Jerusalem, and a land swap. The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, boasted to a Jordanian newspaper that Abbas had achieved considerable progress with the Olmert government between the November 2007 Annapolis talks and the end of 2008 in as many as 288 negotiation sessions by twelve committees—all while Israeli construction continued.

It may seem a paradox to those who supported Obama's decision to confront Netanyahu about settlements. But the historical record reveals the opposite of what Obama thought to be the relationship between settlements, pressure, and peace. Limited Israeli construction in Jerusalem and the settlement blocs can be reconciled with peace negotiations. Netanyahu is building fewer houses at a slower pace and in fewer and less contested places than many prime ministers who preceded him. What has undermined peace negotiations in the Obama years is not that Netanyahu has accelerated construction but that Obama has adopted a policy of confrontation about settlements. Obama has created unrealistic expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

SETTLEMENTS AND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

For those who want to drive a wedge in the U.S.-Israel relationship, moving the settlement issue to the UN Security Council means taking the perfect issue to the perfect venue. It is a place where the Palestinians have many friends and the Israelis have few. Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, described the Security Council thirty years ago, and it has changed little today:

What takes place in the Security Council more closely resembles a mugging than either a political debate or an effort at problem-solving.... Israel is cast as villain...in [a] melodrama...that features...many attackers and a great deal of verbal violence.... The goal is isolation and humiliation of the victim.... The attackers, encountering no obstacles, grow bolder, while other nations become progressively more reluctant to associate themselves with the accused, out of fear that they themselves will become a target of bloc hostility.¹³

The Arabs have long sought to make the Security Council an imperium where final status issues between Israelis and Palestinians will be arbitrated and Arab terms can be imposed on Israel. At the same time, bringing the settlements issue there is a tactic to put the United States in the hot seat. It is a way to defy an American president to veto an anti-Israeli resolution, and rivet attention on a high-visibility issue where Israel has the least sympathy and American-Israeli differences are deepest.

If a president abstains to allow a one-sided resolution condemning Israel to pass, or even votes for it, he contributes to Israel's global isolation and delegitimization. He may even create a basis for sanctions against an American ally. But if he blocks an Arab draft resolution by using the American veto, he is accused of inconsistency with his own principles and capitulation to the pro-Israeli lobby. Either way, the Security Council tactic is an opportunity to amplify American resentment, taunting that Israel's policies have put the president in this position.

The proponents of these resolutions at the Security Council further sharpen the dilemma by using U.S. leaders' own words in the resolution. When Abbas brought the issue to the United Nations in January 2011, he said: "We drafted it using the same words that Secretary Clinton is using and so we don't see why the U.S. would veto it."¹⁴

In reality, all draft resolutions condemning Israeli settlements that have been promulgated by supporters of the Palestinians in the Security Council contain language that no administration has in fact supported since 1980. Without exception, all such drafts assert that Israeli communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank

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are “illegal,” and that is not U.S. policy. For example, the resolution introduced by supporters of the Palestinians in January 2011 said that “all Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, are illegal” because of “the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.”¹⁵

This is not the declared position of the United States. Successive U.S. administrations have deplored settlement activity as an obstacle to peace, but no American president—except Jimmy Carter—has taken the view that building Jewish homes in Jerusalem is a violation of the Geneva Conventions. If an American president were to take the position that all Israeli construction outside the former line is illegal, it would have the effect of criminalizing the Jewish communities of the eastern sector of Jerusalem, where 40 percent of the Jews in that city live, as well as the settlement blocs proposed by President Clinton and acknowledged by President Bush to be part of Israel. It would be an enormous act of legal aggression against Israel by its foremost ally.¹⁶

President Jimmy Carter was an exception, and subsequent administrations have not followed his example. Carter said in April 1980: “We do not think they are legal,” because, his secretary of state explained, “Article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the territories,” including Jerusalem. It says, “The Occupying Power shall not...transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.”¹⁷ But many American experts doubt that this can be applied properly to the Israeli case.¹⁸ Obligations under the Geneva Convention apply to territory occupied by one state but *legally recognized as the property of another state*. The West Bank and East Jerusalem were under Jordanian control before 1967, but they were not legally recognized (even by Jordan) as the sovereign territory of Jordan before coming under Israeli control in 1967. They are, therefore, properly understood as “disputed” rather than “occupied” territories, so the convention does not apply.

President Ronald Reagan rejected Carter’s position and said the settlements were “ill-advised” and “unnecessarily provocative,” but they were “not illegal.”¹⁹ All American presidents since Reagan have followed his approach, and none has repeated Carter’s formulation that settlements are “illegal.” President Obama, for example, has said that settlements “undermine efforts to achieve peace,” but he, too, has not said that they are “illegal.”²⁰ So the drafts branding Israeli settlements as illegal do not express established U.S. policy.

Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. Congress have been united and resolute in urging presidents to exercise the veto to defend Israel from such one-sided resolutions at the Security Council—even when the issue is the controversial matter of settlements. For example, on June 21, 2010, a bipartisan letter to Obama from eighty-seven senators said, “We ask you to stand firm in the future at the

United Nations Security Council and to use your veto power, if necessary, to prevent any...biased or one-sided resolutions from passing.” As a presidential candidate, Obama called on the Bush administration to veto resolutions that blame only Israel.

For nearly forty years, since Richard Nixon’s first veto in Israel’s defense on September 10, 1972, every American president has used the veto to block anti-Israeli resolutions. Richard Nixon vetoed two; Gerald Ford four; Ronald Reagan eighteen (!); George H. W. Bush four; Bill Clinton three; George W. Bush nine; and Barack Obama one. Even Jimmy Carter mustered the courage to veto one, on April 30, 1980, because it was inimical to the Camp David Accords he had brokered.

In all, eight American presidents have recorded forty-two vetoes in Israel’s defense at the UN Security Council. Lack of balance in the forty-two draft resolutions vetoed was the reason stated or implied most frequently for casting a veto. In about half of the forty-two veto statements, the American representative acknowledged that the United States shared concerns about a given Israeli action but objected to the wording of the resolution or questioned the appropriateness of bringing the issue to the Security Council.

The actual number of anti-Israeli resolutions and Presidential Statements that have been prevented from coming to a vote at all because of the credible threat of an American veto was probably far larger than these forty-two recorded votes. Céline Nahory, an expert on the Security Council, says they “must add up to many hundreds...in closed-door informal consultations [where] the Council largely conducts its business.”²¹

The record is similar on the subset of draft resolutions that dealt specifically with the settlements question. No president since Carter has permitted anti-Israeli Security Council resolutions on settlements to pass. Ronald Reagan vetoed two: a draft vetoed on August 2, 1983 (while Menachem Begin was Israeli prime minister) and a draft vetoed on January 30, 1986 (during Shimon Peres’s term). And Bill Clinton vetoed three draft resolutions condemning Israeli settlements, one while Yitzhak Rabin was prime minister, draft Resolution S/1995/394 vetoed on May 17, 1995;²² and two while Benjamin Netanyahu was prime minister the first time, draft Resolution S/1997/199 vetoed on March 7, 1997²³ (even though it was sponsored by the United Kingdom and France) and draft Resolution S/1997/241 vetoed on March 21, 1997.²⁴

Most recently, on February 18, 2011, President Obama vetoed draft resolution S/2011/24 condemning Israeli settlements.²⁵ U.S. ambassador Susan Rice presented the U.S. reasoning:

Our opposition to the resolution before this Council today should... not be misunderstood to mean we support settlement activity. On the

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contrary, we reject in the strongest terms the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity.... [But] every potential action must be measured against one overriding standard: will it move the parties closer to negotiations and an agreement? Unfortunately, this draft resolution risks hardening the positions of both sides. It could encourage the parties to stay out of negotiations and, if and when they did resume, to return to the Security Council whenever they reach an impasse.... While we agree with our fellow Council members...about the folly and illegitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity, we think it unwise for this Council to attempt to resolve the core issues that divide Israelis and Palestinians.²⁶

In addition to these six vetoes, successive U.S. administrations since Carter have defeated by “silent veto” many other antisettlement initiatives at the Security Council that did not reach the voting stage because fervent American opposition dissuaded their proponents from pressing the issue.

The Carter administration was the only U.S. government to vote in favor of a UN Security Council Resolution 465 declaring Israeli settlements to be “illegal.”²⁷ Carter subsequently disavowed his ambassador’s vote for this resolution, saying that his instruction had not been properly communicated and that the United States should have abstained. An abstention still would have permitted the resolution to pass. In addition to voting for Resolution 465, Carter did abstain on (and thereby permitted to pass) two other resolutions against Israeli settlements containing similar language: Resolutions 446 on March 22, 1979,²⁸ and 452 on July 20, 1979.²⁹

Resolution 465 said that “the Fourth Geneva Convention...is applicable to the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem.” It said that “all measures taken by Israel to change the...demographic composition...or status of the...territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem...have no legal validity and that Israel’s policy and practices of settling parts of its population... in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.” New York senator Daniel P. Moynihan, who had served as UN ambassador five years earlier, said, “As a direct result of [Carter administration] policy, the Security Council was allowed to degenerate to the condition of the General Assembly.”

Presidents since Carter have had greater clarity about the hazards of moving Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking into a venue that is profoundly hostile to Israel. But each incoming American president must grapple anew with this Hobson’s choice of settlements on the one hand and abandoning an ally on the other. It is a problem that is certain to arise again.

GOADING THE PRESIDENT TO CONFRONT ISRAEL

An enduring feature of American diplomacy in the Middle East is the background chorus calling on the president to put more pressure on Israel. Books, newspapers, magazines, and lecture halls are filled with experts reciting the catechism that Israel is the obstacle to peace in the Middle East, and that only a determined president ready to defy the fearsome Israel lobby can bring Israel to heel. Europeans, Arab governments, State Department Arabists, and even some Jewish propressure organizations reinforce this message.

Some presidents, like George W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, instinctively resist these entreaties (though even they succumbed to the pressure at times). Other presidents, like Barack Obama, are receptive to the pressure argument from the beginning. And of all the issues on the menu of Middle East diplomacy, the one on which the pressure theory is most seductive is the issue of settlements.

The pressure theory had its first full-scale test in the first two years of Obama. And Obama got a result opposite to the one that he was promised, because, contrary to what was promised, we are now further from real peace negotiations than at any time since 1991. A scientist looking at such dismal results in a test tube would conclude that the theory was wrong. But political science being what it is, most of the Middle East pressurists cling to the opposite conclusion. They continue to believe that settlements are the main obstacle to peace negotiations, and that a president who wants to accelerate peacemaking should start with confronting Israel about them. It is an approach that has been proven to be counterproductive, but the pressurists cling to it with every fiber of their being.

There is an alternative that can produce much better results. It is this: before a prime minister of Israel and a president of the United States turn to the vexed issue of settlements they should establish a relationship of cooperation and trust on a wider set of issues. Then, when they have the inevitable dialogue about settlements, they can draw on this reservoir of goodwill. And their dialogue should be conducted in private, protected from the fierce winds of public controversy, while they explore the boundaries of the attainable.

Each side must be willing to take account of the vital interests of the other. The president must respect that framing the issue in maximalist terms, like asking for a total freeze of construction inside the capital of Israel in neighborhoods where 40 percent of the Jews live, is more than any prime minister realistically can do. It is bound to lead to an impasse. The president must find a way to work with less.

The prime minister must understand that unrestricted expansion of West Bank settlements will put a severe strain on relations with the United States and Europe and ignite a diplomatic firestorm. It is in Israel's vital interest to find a sustainable set of limitations that Israeli society can accept, and make it possible at the same time to meet Israel's international needs.

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The art of diplomacy on settlements is to craft a sophisticated set of limitations on which both sides can agree, to reconcile what the United States needs to manage the international diplomatic environment, with the boundaries that the Israeli political system can accept.

For eighteen years from the Madrid Conference up to 2008, presidents and prime ministers found workable solutions to the settlements issue that allowed peace negotiations to progress. If there is to be renewed diplomatic progress between Israelis and Palestinians in the future, the United States will have to find collaborative solutions with Israel instead of relying on confrontation. The diplomacy of pressure leads only to a dead end.

NOTES

* This publication draws on previous work by the present author published in *Commentary* and *Foreign Policy*.

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