

I. Introduction

Since 1967, the United States has invested tremendous political and economic resources in an effort to bring peace to the Arab states and Israel. Evaluating the U.S. role as a mediation leader highlights the interplay between the exercise of U.S. power and the efforts at persuasion and policy innovation. Although earlier typologies such as Underdal (1994) and Young (1991) sought to differentiate between power and innovation during mediation, the US-Arab-Israeli narrative demonstrates both the efficacy of thinking about different components of leadership and the difficulty in cleanly disentangling them. The skill, effort, and status that make Underdal’s instrumental leadership plausible or successful are not wholly distinct from the capabilities of the mediator that Underdal considers a part of coercive leadership. While the American superpower status was never in doubt, the skill of U.S. mediators and the effort put forth by different administrations varied.

What factors have led to negotiating success? U.S. involvement has led to breakthroughs when the administration was highly engaged and kept at the problem after an initial setback; benefitted from an exogenous event; managed that event to the U.S. advantage; and dealt with strong Arab and Israeli partners. On 22 occasions from the late 1960s to 2001, the United States tried to help negotiate an Arab-Israeli agreement. Fourteen cases had high-levels of U.S. involvement, but an agreement was signed and implemented in only half of those cases. There were no successes with a medium level of U.S. engagement, but two breakthroughs at the lowest level of involvement.

The next section addresses different types of leadership that might fit the U.S. effort. Section three presents the total number of cases in terms of the level of U.S. involvement and success. The following section narrates the diplomatic efforts of each

administration from Richard M. Nixon to William J. Clinton, noting what they tried and how they dealt with unexpected events. This narrative is not aimed at explicating Israeli-Palestinian talks because they vary significantly from the negotiations between Arab states and Israel in terms of geography and national identity. Section five interprets these cases followed by some concluding thoughts.

II. *Leadership and the U.S. Role*

U.S. intervention in the Arab-Israeli conflict provides one setting in which to assess the nature of American leadership. The United States sees itself as a leader on Arab-Israeli issues. Drawing on Arild Underdal and Oran Young's work, this section contrasts two forms of leaders: coercive leadership based on the incentives and sanctions that robust capabilities make possible and instrumental leadership focused more on talking, mediation, and innovation. Yet the instrumental leader nonetheless draws on its own material power in terms of skill, status, and effort and is thus not as distinct from the power underlying a coercive leader approach as one might think.

Underdal's leadership framework reflects the role of power and persuasion in international mediation. (See Grubb and Gupta, 2000) With coercive leadership, the leader is inside the negotiations using carrots and sticks to move the negotiating process forward. If states cooperate, they get the goodies and if not, the punishments. Coercive leadership often involves cross-issue linkage and concessions. It is a "relationship of distributive bargaining." Underdal (1994: 186-87) specifically mentions U.S. Presidents Nixon and Jimmy Carter on Arab-Israeli matters as they used "arm-twisting" and "bribery." Young (1991) mentions the same terms in defining structural leadership, bargaining leverage built on one's material resources. Examples of coercive or structural leadership include offering or denying arms, aid, and diplomatic relations. It assumes the

leader has the capabilities to follow through on the promise or threat so it will tend to be exercised by stronger states. (See Kleiboer, 1998: 40)

A second Underdal (1994: 194) category, not based on power, is instrumental leadership. The instrumental leader provides guidance, helping the negotiating states to learn about other options. The leader is a policy innovator seeking to persuade the disputants that ending the confrontation is possible. The guidance might be procedural or substantive. The mediating state provides “intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership.” Young (1991: 298) considered these exact same concepts but framed them as two different leadership categories. With both scholars, the base assumption is that everyone is working toward the same goal and the negotiations are a process by which to find a means to achieve that end.

Underdal describes elements of instrumental leadership: skill, energy, and status. A leader needs strong political and/or technological skills. Young (1989: 355) added, leadership “involves a combination of imagination in inventing institutional options and skill in brokering the interests of numerous actors to line up support for such options.” A strong leader also needs energy and commitment. Lastly, the leader may have a formal role or strong reputation that gives it the status to act as a leader and be accepted by others. (Underdal, 1994: 183)

In the Arab-Israeli talks over the decades, the United States had the status and skill necessary to act as an instrumental leader but effort varied. It was one of two superpowers until the Soviet Union collapsed and it became the lone superpower, involved in countless issues around the globe. “We are the indispensable nation,” then Secretary of State Madeline Albright argued in 1998. (Federation of American Scientists, 1998; Berridge, 1989) In terms of skill, U.S. officials gained the most experience working with Arab and Israeli diplomats. They generated new ideas,

roughly equivalent to offering technological breakthroughs in scientific talks. Energy, or effort, varied across administrations.

III. *Counting U.S. Engagement*

Successful agreements between Arab states and Israel are directly correlated with high levels of U.S. involvement in 22 cases of U.S. attempts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. Each case was a diplomatic effort to address military and political issues with the aim of commencing or strengthening a ceasefire, starting negotiations, addressing substantive issues in an interim fashion, or achieving a final resolution. Some were during crises while others took place during regular international politics. (Stern, 2003, 2009)

In looking at the cases, high U.S. involvement meant the president and secretary of state were directly involved in the talks on a sustained basis or the president clearly and regularly backed the secretary or a top envoy. Medium-level involvement meant the secretary was involved on a sustained basis but without much backing and follow through from the president. With low-level involvement, neither the president nor the secretary was consistently involved in the talks.

A success was a signed and implemented agreement. Anything short of that, such as a plan signed but not implemented, is considered a failure. A full peace treaty and a cease-fire agreement may both be considered a success.

While diplomats may prefer to get involved when success is more likely, U.S. officials often tout the need for involvement in the face of dour prospects. If the United States frequently tries to get involved when the probability of success is greatly limited, that should mitigate the fear of an endogeneity problem. This question plays directly into a long-running debate among U.S. policymakers about whether 1) the United States cannot want peace more than the parties (Boot, 2009; Brzezinski et al, 2010; Council on

Foreign Relations, 2010) or 2) the United States has a responsibility to stay engaged even when diplomatic prospects appear dim, especially to prevent a descent into violence.

(Cook and Telhami, 2008: 149; Kurtzer and Lasensky, 2008: 34-48; Vance, 1983: 255; Woodrow Wilson International Center, 2004)

In total, nine successes sit aside 13 failures. Seven of the successes came when the United States was highly engaged: Israel-Syria (1974), Israel-Egypt (1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1979), and Madrid (1991). Washington also had seven failures when highly engaged: Geneva Conference (1973, 1977), Reagan Plan, Baker Plan, and Israel-Syria (1993-96, Shepherdstown, Geneva). With medium U.S. involvement, there were six failures: Rogers Plan I and II, Interim Canal Settlement, Israel-Lebanon (1983), Hussein-Arafat (1985-86), and the Shultz Initiative. When the United States was less involved, the comparison was two successes, both Israel-Jordan in 1994.

IV. U.S. Administrations leading the way

Reviewing U.S. presidential administrations highlights many examples of the United States acting as a coercive and instrumental leader and aspects of U.S. skill and energy. In terms of success and failure, the first important factor was a high-level U.S. commitment. Second, the administration persisted after an initial diplomatic setback. Third, it managed an unexpected event in a manner that benefited diplomacy. Fourth, as Quandt (2009) noted, it dealt with strong Arab and Israeli actors.

Nixon/Ford. Both Presidents Nixon and Gerald R. Ford were themselves less deeply engaged in the peace process than their secretaries of state. The result was that William P. Rogers, Nixon's first secretary of state, and Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security advisor and then second secretary of state, led the U.S. diplomatic effort.

Nixon's first term included a medium-level U.S. effort to effect negotiations. It lacked significant presidential involvement and included major bureaucratic infighting between the Department of State and the White House. Rogers was unable to get the Arabs and Israelis to agree. The Nixon/Ford administration's breakthrough, four agreements between Israel and Arab states, came in the mid-1970s under Secretary of State Kissinger. Kissinger played a much larger role than the presidents, but it was widely perceived that he had presidential support.

In Nixon's first term, the major U.S. proposals to bridge Arab-Israeli differences were the first and second Rogers Plans, including State Department support for UN special representative Gunnar Jarring's mediation, and work aimed at an interim Egyptian-Israeli settlement along the Suez Canal. Most of the attempts led nowhere, although the implementation of the second Rogers Plan was mixed. In February 1969, the new administration made a decision to become "actively involved" in peacemaking, rejecting low-key diplomacy. (Quandt, 1971: 41-2) The first Rogers Plan, articulated in public in December 1969, did not lead to a breakthrough; Nixon "failed to endorse the [first] Rogers Plan publicly or back it politically." (Spiegel, 1985: 187; Quandt 1971: 42, 1977: 93)

Rogers succeeded in negotiating an end to Egypt and Israel's War of Attrition in 1970, but he was never able to build diplomatically on this initial breakthrough of the second Rogers Plan. On May 1, Gamel Abdel Nasser, Egypt's president, appealed publicly to Nixon with the hope that the United States would stop aiding Israel militarily. Nasser stated his opposition to direct talks with Israel, but he called for a new beginning in Arab-American relations, complete Israeli withdrawal from occupied lands, and the implementation of UNSC Resolution 242. (Arab Report and Record, 1970: 276; Anderson, 1970) He coupled his appeal with interviews calling for peace. (Quandt 1971:

44) In a June 19, 1970 letter, Rogers called for a three-month Egyptian-Israeli cease-fire; more talks under the auspices of Jarring that would lead to a “just and lasting peace;” and agreement to abide by UNSC Resolution 242. (New York Times, 1970; Hess, 1970) Egypt, Israel, and Jordan all accepted the plan that summer, and the ceasefire went into place in August 1970. It largely held. But Egypt and Israel violated some of the terms of the agreement, and no political process emerged.

Lastly, in 1970-71, Rogers worked to secure an interim canal settlement as a stepping stone toward Egyptian-Israeli rapprochement. But the White House was not invested in the process, and the bureaucratic infighting was detrimental. (Quandt, 2001: 92; Spiegel, 1985: 204, 206-07) He failed.

Nixon did not fully back Rogers’s efforts. One version is that Nixon liked to play State and the NSC staff against each other. (Spiegel, 1985: 188, 216-217; Qaimmaqami and Howard, 2008) In his memoirs, Kissinger claimed that Nixon did not back much of Rogers’s work though Nixon also was not comfortable directly confronting Rogers. Kissinger later called State’s work with Jarring in 1971 “activity for its own sake amid self-generated deadlines that could be met only by papering over irreconcilable differences” and noted that it was “conducted without any real coordination with the White House.” Kissinger (1979: 1278-1279, 1289. See also pp. 577, 580, 589, 590, 1277, 1281) preferred a stalemate to force Arab regimes to work through Washington rather than Moscow. In 1972, Nixon wanted quiet until after the election so that meant no major diplomatic push. (Kissinger, 1979: 1285, 1287; Quandt 1971: 51; Spiegel, 1985: 209, 213) Kissinger became more involved but that meant both Rogers and Kissinger were pursuing policies. U.S. policy was “conducted with a marked lack of coherence.” (Spiegel, 1985: 218, 180-181, 215)

In the early 1970s, Egypt became increasingly frustrated with Israeli and U.S. complacency about Israel's occupation of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and eventually Egypt launched the 1973 war. The war played a crucial role in setting the stage for successful U.S. diplomacy. Under new president Anwar Sadat, Egypt sought a diplomatic resolution in 1971. Israel was not opposed to diplomacy but the massive triumph of 1967 had left Israel particular about the details. In 1973, Egypt used a war to shake up the status quo. Egypt's initial strong military performance (e.g., surprise attack; moving soldiers onto the Israeli-occupied east bank of the Suez Canal) restored Egyptian pride battered in 1967; Sadat became the "hero of the crossing." Egypt "used the war to remove a psychological obstacle to negotiating peace." (Saunders, 1985: 253; Sheehan, 1976: 7) Israel and the United States became much more receptive to talks. (Miller, 2008: 134-35; Khouri, 1985: 376; Ross, 2004: 25)

During Nixon's second term and the Ford administration, Kissinger shuttled between the capitals and negotiated an expansive ceasefire and three interim agreements. Egypt and Israel signed the six-point agreement (November 1973), a Separation of Forces Agreement (Sinai I on January 18, 1974), and the Sinai Interim Agreement (Sinai II on September 4, 1975). The result was Israeli withdrawal from part of Sinai, the return of Egyptian forces to positions east of the Suez Canal, and commitments to allow non-Israeli ships to pass through the canal and not to settle matters by force. (Saunders, 1985: 251) The agreements laid the groundwork for the Camp David Accords (1978) and Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (1979) and for additional U.S. aid and arms for both Egypt and Israel, a demonstration of the depth of U.S. resources.¹ (Kriesberg, 1987: 383) Egypt and Israel have not fought a war since 1973. On May 31, 1974, Israel and Syria signed an Agreement on Disengagement that led to the end of post-war artillery fights, a partial Israeli pullback, and the introduction of UN peacekeepers. The border has usually

remained quiet since then. Earlier, as Kissinger struggled to attain an Israeli-Syrian agreement, Nixon promised his “full support” and pledged to “go very far if necessary” to end Israeli intransigence. (Quandt, 2001: 150) Such language could be read as a threat, something ultimately dependent on U.S. power.

Kissinger’s effort under Nixon/Ford was a central element of reaching the agreements and illustrates the skill and effort necessary for instrumental leadership. In Nixon/Ford, the conflict “became America’s top foreign policy priority.” Kissinger “had successfully exploited the opportunity provided by the October [1973] War to initiate shuttle diplomacy.” During the war, he had “snatched control of events.” Kissinger’s control was especially important because Nixon was politically weak (Watergate), and thus Kissinger “was in real measure running the world.” (Spiegel, 1985: 312, 314; Sheehan, 1976: 14-15) Kissinger “positioned the United States as the key mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict.” (Miller, 2008: 140, 156; Mandell, 1990: 220-21) Kissinger’s “tactical skills as a negotiator and mediator were unsurpassed.” Quandt, however, criticized Kissinger on the Palestine question; he had a “blind spot.” (Quandt, 2001: 172-73; see Khouri, 1985: 385; Chada, 1986: 54; Sheehan, 1976: 25; Spiegel, 1985: 313) Others complained Kissinger’s step-by-step approach was too narrow to yield a comprehensive peace. Yet Kissinger shepherded the first major Arab-Israeli agreements since the 1949 armistice deals.

In terms of Sinai II, Ford himself played an important role. When he and Kissinger felt Israel was being obstinate in the spring of 1975, he “lent his weight” to a reassessment of Israeli-U.S. ties. Although it did not lead to a new U.S. approach, it made Yitzhak Rabin, Israel’s prime minister, “anxious to end the painful and costly confrontation with the United States” and it nicely illustrates coercive leadership. Ford later wrote that when he did not bow to “home-front political pressure” then Israeli

leaders “were ready to resume serious bargaining.” Ford met with both Sadat and Rabin to spur the process forward, becoming “very much involved.” (Quandt, 2001: 164, 166; Ford, 1979/1980: 238-241, 277-283, 298-300)

Under Presidents Nixon and Ford, one sees examples of both coercive and instrumental leadership. U.S. effort, skill, and status helped shape the successful agreements.

Carter. The Carter administration is another example of intensive, high-level involvement that followed failure with a success. Carter officials initially sought to build on the 1973 Geneva Conference format and convene a multilateral Arab-Israeli meeting. The idea did not succeed; they were “way offtrack.” Miller (2008: 157) The United States provoked an outcry, first with a U.S.-Soviet communiqué on October 1, 1977 and then with an Israeli-U.S. working paper on October 5, 1977. (Quandt, 2001: 189-90) The former statement was taken as too supportive of the Arab position while the latter document was seen as too close to the Israeli viewpoint.

On November 9, 1977, Sadat shocked the region by announcing he would be willing to travel to Israel. Egypt had ascertained whether Israel would withdraw from Sinai as part of a peace treaty. (Meital, 1997: 162) Sadat arrived in Israel amid much fanfare later in November and spoke in the parliament. His act of public diplomacy, a radical innovation from the Arab side, opened the door to direct Egyptian-Israeli talks and a U.S. shift away from the Geneva model. The following September, the United States successfully negotiated the blueprint for an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Carter, Sadat, and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin reached the Camp David Accords in 1978. The accords included not only details about Egypt and Israel but also a separate framework for dealing with the Palestinian question. When the Egyptian-Israeli treaty negotiations were foundering in 1979, Carter again successfully inserted himself,

travelling to Egypt and Israel in March 1979. Kelman highlighted the “vital” US role: “In the end, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty would not have materialized without active engagement of the Carter administration before, during, and after the Camp David summit.” (Kelman, 1992: 21) The United States was “indispensable.” (Telhami, 1999: 382)

Carter’s skillful diplomacy was crucial: “the only way to really get things done [on the peace process] is the way Carter did it. He and his Secretary of State doing it personally. He and Cyrus Vance.” (Cluverius, 1990) Most people Miller (2008: 159, 172, 175) talked to said “no Carter, no peace treaty.” Carter’s “persistence proved invaluable,” and Carter was the key at the Camp David summit. In short, “Carter’s centrality to the success of the summit cannot be overemphasized.” Quandt (2001: 241), a U.S. official at Camp David, was more restrained: “American leadership” was a necessary but not sufficient condition for success.

The process demonstrates both coercive and instrumental leadership. Not only did U.S. capabilities allow for financial and military support, but the two Camp David frameworks offer a textbook example of issue linkage. On the instrumental side, Carter officials demonstrated effective negotiating skills in developing a wholly new pathway toward Arab-Israeli peace. (Pressman, 2013) Carter’s use of a single negotiating text is a specific tactical example of diplomatic innovation that helped lead to an agreement. (Kaufman, 2012) That the 1978 Camp David framework on Palestinian matters included some elements later incorporated into the 1993 Oslo Accords also served as an example of the kind of longer time frame that Young (1991: 298) highlighted when thinking about intellectual leaders introducing new ideas.

Reagan. While President Ronald Reagan was not initially focused on the Arab-Israeli peace process, his administration became involved in the diplomatic track in

response to ongoing events. The level of U.S. engagement fluctuated throughout his two terms but never produced a peace agreement. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 sparked the Reagan peace plan (September 1, 1982) and mediation of an Israeli-Lebanese deal (signed May 1983). The Hussein-Arafat agreement (February 1985) led to a year of Secretary of State George Shultz and other U.S. officials pursuing an Israeli-Jordanian-Palestinian breakthrough. Lastly, the outbreak of the first intifada (December 1987) led to the Shultz initiative and the commencement of the U.S.-PLO dialogue. In most cases, Shultz led the U.S. effort with the general backing, but not direct and sustained involvement, of the president. When failure happened, the U.S. diplomatic effort lessened until events drew the United States back in.

The first Reagan foray was his plan that was part of a U.S. response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. Reagan's plan of September 1, 1982, was similar to the Camp David accords but explicitly called for Palestinian "association" with Jordan. It was never adopted. According to Shultz (1993: 112, 197, 233), the United States missed its best opportunity for Israeli-Lebanese peace by failing to follow up on the Reagan Plan. Part of the problem was that later in September 1982, Israel tried unsuccessfully to independently negotiate an agreement with Lebanon. Shultz later blamed "the abortive effort," in part, for wasting crucial time when a U.S. effort might have been successful. A diplomatic window may have been open in September-October 1982, but U.S. timing and political commitment did not match. Inbar (1991: 81) disagreed, but Samuel Lewis (1998²), former U.S. ambassador to Israel (1977-1985), concurred: "During the long period of stalemate in the Fall [1982], for which [Ariel] Sharon was responsible, whatever opportunity for success we had was lost. The agreement that was finally reached could have been achieved in the Fall, and would have had a far better chance of

approval then because Syria was far weaker and less confident than it was six months later.”

Was Lebanon a central part of the process or a distraction? Wat T. Cluverius, IV, (1990) a U.S. diplomat, suggested the Reagan Plan stalled because U.S. attention shifted toward an Israeli-Lebanese agreement. He explained: “A lot of time and psychic energy was wasted on trying to make another peace treaty in the Middle East. With Lebanon of all places.” As a result, in 1983, the “Peace Process in a wider meaningful sense was still largely on hold, and was going to stay that way.” Lewis (1998) was “convinced that after [the Reagan Plan] was launched, it had been presented in the worst light and at the worst possible moment.” Israel was miffed about the lack of advance consultation and also was too focused on Lebanon to consider the Palestinian question.

The Reagan administration almost achieved a major breakthrough with an Israeli-Lebanese accord on May 17, 1983, but the agreement soon collapsed. Shultz himself traveled to the region to finalize the agreement from April 25-May 6, 1983. Shultz (1993: 201, 206, 208-211, 213) hit on a theme: “Peace can come through negotiations.” He was deeply involved with writing and editing the draft agreements. The U.S. role was “crucial.” (Inbar, 1991: 80)

But the agreement failed, and the Government of Lebanon officially abrogated the deal in April 1984. Syria strongly opposed the agreement and was highly influential in Lebanese politics. Israel eventually “lost its determination to make [the agreement] stick.” (Inbar, 1991: 82) In August-September 1983, when the United States wanted Israel to hold its military position in Lebanon’s Shouf Mountains for longer, Israel delayed its departure by only a few days. Shultz (1993: 223-224, 225, 436) was displeased: “This was a critical moment: the Israeli pullout deeply undercut the May 17

agreement.” (See Inbar, 1991: 82) Reagan officials did not again directly try to bring about Israeli-Lebanese peace.

In 1985, Shultz led an effort to address the Palestinian question by involving Jordan, but it ended in failure. In response to a February agreement between Jordan’s King Hussein and the PLO’s Yasser Arafat, Shultz sought “direct Jordanian-Israeli negotiations within a year.” Israeli-Jordanian talks would, he later suggested, “be an immense breakthrough,” perhaps even analogous to Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem in 1977. Shultz traveled to the region in May and regularly consulted with the president. Shultz’s (1993: 445, 447, 448, 453, 454) effort to get a U.S.-Jordanian-Palestinian meeting “was consuming a good chunk of my time almost daily.” After a setback in August, his reflections suggested continued engagement: “Somehow I had to keep a peace process visibly in play.” He decided to make “still another attempt.”

Hussein and Arafat did not make easy partners for Shultz as their positions shifted in ways that made the orchestration of Arab-Israeli talks difficult. By the end of 1985, Shultz (1993: 458, 462) had made no progress: “all efforts at diplomacy had been thwarted, the military confrontation had escalated, and the peace process was on the ropes again.” The Jordan-PLO process collapsed in February 1986, leaving the United States “back where we had started. I felt a sense of deep frustration.” For the second time, a major setback was followed by U.S. disengagement.

The final push during the Reagan administration, the Shultz initiative (March 1988) and the start of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, followed the outbreak of the second intifada in December 1987. Shultz sought direct negotiations and an international conference. Neither aspect came to fruition under Reagan, though one could argue that the Madrid process under Bush (41) looked a lot like the Shultz initiative. Coming in the last year of Reagan’s term, Shultz had no time left to launch a follow-up initiative.

Reagan officials were not dealing with especially strong governments. Begin had started out strong but faded. He resigned in September 1983. In the 1984 election, Labor and Likud, Israel's two largest parties, were forced to form a unity government. The result was a government with a challenging decision-making apparatus at the top; political rivals, Yitzhak Shamir (Likud) and Shimon Peres (Labor), with divergent opinions about important questions, were supposed to co-habit. The best example of the dysfunction was the way in which Shamir scuttled the Peres-King Hussein breakthrough, the London Agreement of 1987.

Meanwhile, the Arab leadership with which Shultz had to relate was not especially strong either. The PLO suffered from its forced withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982 and re-establishment in distant Tunisia. The PLO was fairly effective at co-opting the intifada, but the uprising did not break out until late in Reagan's term in office. King Hussein's regime was seen as fragile.

Shultz led the U.S. effort with the backing, but rarely direct involvement, of Reagan. According to Lewis (1998), "Reagan didn't have the same sense of commitment to Middle East peace as Carter had." (Chada, 1986: 154, 156; Spiegel, 1985: 402-04) Unlike some other administrations, Reagan officials were not able to manipulate the major unexpected Arab-Israeli event of its first term, the war in Lebanon, in a way that bolstered peace efforts. The 1982 Israeli invasion hurt rather than helped peacemaking attempts. Shultz (1993: 85-6) understood the need to plan for later even as the war "ragged," but the actual results were not promising.

The Reagan administration rarely fell back on U.S. power resources to try to advance the Arab-Israeli peace process. New promises of aid or threats were not central; one does not see much in the way of direct coercive leadership. In terms of instrumental

leadership, the key was varied U.S. effort. Reagan did not delve deeply into the conflict most of the time, and his administration often stepped back.

Bush (41). Under President George H. W. Bush, Secretary of State James Baker set up the Madrid process, a multilateral Arab-Israeli peace conference. But like earlier successes, Bush and Baker first overcame a failed peace proposal. They also used an unexpected event, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and first Persian Gulf War, to pivot toward a rejuvenated peace process.

Building on a “modest” Israeli proposal of April 1989, Baker (1995: 116) put forward a plan for addressing Israeli-Palestinian differences that included procedures for selecting Palestinian negotiators. Egypt and the PLO seemed supportive, but Israel rejected the idea in early 1990. Soon thereafter, the United States suspended the U.S.-PLO dialogue because Arafat refused to condemn an attempted terrorist attack launched by the Palestine Liberation Front. By mid-1990, U.S. policy was “seemingly adrift.” (Quandt, 2001: 301) U.S. and other peace efforts had “exhausted themselves.” (Tessler, 1994: 736)

With this collapse, Baker professed that he “learned some valuable lessons that would help refine my strategy for future efforts toward Middle East peace.” Baker came to believe a new effort needed an “Arab state dimension.” Moreover, Baker (1995: 116, 415-417) felt he would have to corner Shamir so Israel could not say no. If the United States could get Arab actors in direct talks then Shamir could not refuse “since for over forty years Israel had said she wanted direct negotiations with her Arab neighbors.” (See also Leep, 2010: 341)

The status quo in the Middle East was shaken in August 1990 when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait, setting in motion a chain of events that contributed to a successful Arab-Israeli opening. Baker promised the United States would try to generate movement

on Arab-Israeli issues after addressing the Iraqi invasion. (Kriesberg, 2001: 379) In October, Bush (1990) noted, “In the aftermath of Iraq’s unconditional departure from Kuwait, I truly believe there may be opportunities...for all the states and the peoples of the region to settle the conflicts that divide the Arabs from Israel.” (Bush 1990) Saddam himself tied Iraq’s policies to Israel by launching SCUD missiles at Israel to try to draw Israel into the fighting and thereby fracture the anti-Iraq coalition. Just after the war ended, on March 6, 1991, Bush (1991) told Congress:

We must do all that we can to close the gap between Israel and the Arab States—and between Israelis and Palestinians....There can be no substitute for diplomacy.... The time has come to put an end to Arab-Israeli conflict.... The quest for solutions to the problems in Lebanon, in the Arab-Israeli dispute, and in the Gulf must go forward with new vigor and determination. And I guarantee you: No one will work harder for a stable peace in the region than we will. (See also Baker, 1995: 412-414)

Following the war, Baker orchestrated the Madrid conference, a clear success. Baker made eight trips to the region between March and October 1991. (Quandt, 2001: 303) Madrid was a major breakthrough: the first comprehensive talks since Geneva in the mid-1970s, direct Palestinian participation, and attendance by a wide array of Arab parties. (Kelman, 1992: 19) Face-to-face Arab-Israeli negotiations were unusual. Madrid shattered a major taboo.

Baker and the United States were a key factor in bringing about the conference at Madrid. Under Bush (41), “[d]iplomacy was active and sustained, emanating from policy that the president prioritized and clearly articulated.” (Kurtzer and Lasensky, 2008: 15) According to Kelman (1997: 187), Baker “was energetic and effective in pressuring all of the parties to enter negotiations within the framework that he constructed.” Baker’s effort was “impressive” and “future students of diplomacy will study the elaborate, multi-track structure of negotiations that Baker created.” (Hudson, 1996: 335, 340) According to Peres (1995: 370), who was in the Israeli opposition at the time, Madrid was “an

important and promising milestone, a significant achievement for the American administration.” Baker “proved an adept and gifted arm-twister; he exercised precisely the right amount of pressure on all parties to ensure that the conference took place, and that it ended on a positive note.” The conference would have been unlikely without Baker’s repeated efforts.

A sustained effort from the president on down and Baker’s skills was what the United States needed for effective instrumental leadership. But the Bush administration was also reliant on coercion, offering carrots and sticks to advance the process. For example, Bush officials suspended the dialogue with the PLO; considered cornering Shamir; and linked the issues of Iraq and Arab-Israeli negotiations.

Clinton. Bill Clinton’s opening approach tended toward lower levels of U.S. involvement. But the September 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles (Oslo I), facilitated by Norway, quickly brought Middle East peace issues to the center of the Clinton presidency. By the end of Clinton’s second term, he and his administration were deeply involved in the effort to achieve both Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian treaties. They failed.

The first major failure was on the Israeli-Syrian track. During Clinton’s first term, the United States was involved but never tried anything comparable to Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy or Carter’s summit. (Quandt, 2001: 339. See 327, 330-332, 335-336, 337-338, 373, 375, 376) In Clinton’s second term, the United States tried a summit in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. In January 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak got cold feet and, despite Clinton’s presence, proved unwilling to meet Syrian demands on the exact delineation of the Israeli withdrawal. Clinton tried again in March 2000 by meeting an ill Hafez al-Asad in Geneva, but that meeting immediately collapsed when

Asad rejected Clinton's phrasing of the border delineation. (Pressman, 2007) Both the United States and Israel misread Syria's bottom line for a mere bargaining position.

The Clinton administration had no time left to re-group. It was the last year of the Clinton administration. Syria's Asad died in June 2000 and was replaced by his son, Bashar al-Asad, who was considered unlikely to pursue a deal with Israel until he consolidated power. Events that might have served as launching pads for U.S. learning and new initiatives had they come earlier instead sealed the negotiating failures for Clinton.

One challenge for Clinton was the profound weakness of the Barak government and the illness of Hafez al-Asad. Barak's parliamentary coalition was falling apart in mid-2000. Parties departed the governing coalition. Foreign Minister David Levy refused to attend the Camp David summit in July 2000 and resigned shortly thereafter. The Knesset supported an initial call for early elections. (ABC News, 2000) Barak's government was replaced within weeks of Clinton leaving office. Asad's illness meant that the peace process had to compete with Syrian succession issues. Clinton officials were not dealing with strong, stable partners.

Clinton's first term did include two successes on the Israeli-Jordanian track, but neither was due to high-level U.S. involvement. The Washington Declaration of July 1994 set the stage for the peace treaty that was signed in October 1994. Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher were involved, but at most major steps in the process, the Israelis and Jordanians took the initiative and drafted the key documents. (Sciolino and Friedman, 1994; Eisenberg and Caplan, 2003: 97-98) U.S. officials were not involved in a sustained way because the parties themselves did not need them.

The Clinton administration is the hardest to categorize in terms of leadership because several important negotiations were driven by the participants themselves or

other mediators. At times, the U.S. effort was intensive, such as during 1999-2000 on Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, while at other times, especially early in the presidency, U.S. officials were quieter. On the coercive front, the issue of aid and arms came up during 1999-2000, for example, but without an agreement the United States did not have to fulfill any pledges. When the Israeli-Syrian talks fell apart, the United States did not try to use incentives or threats to force an agreement.

V. Explaining Success and Failure

For Nixon/Ford, Carter, and Bush (41), a major policy failure was not an endpoint. In each administration, an initial approach failed, but the administration kept at it. The Nixon administration's Rogers Plan II was accepted but then went nowhere. Carter unsuccessfully pushed for a multilateral conference. Baker formulated a plan, but Israel rejected it. The Israeli Likud-Labor national unity government fell and was replaced by a Likud-led government.

Quandt (2009) suggested that a key variable was also the political strength of the Arab and Israeli leaders at the time. Miller (2010) seconded the idea: "big decisions require strong leaders." Quandt (2009) listed eight cases where agreements were reached and implemented, all of which had strong Arab and Israeli leaders.³ Seven of the eight cases occurred under Nixon/Ford, Carter, or Bush (41). He found three cases where strong Arab and Israeli leadership did not result in implemented agreements.

The three administrations with successful, high-level involvement also share another characteristic in that they all benefitted from an external event – what Miller (2010) called *Fortuna* and a "tectonic plate shifting somewhere" – between the initial failure and the later success that opened the door to a second, modified push.

Nixon/Kissinger had an Arab-Israeli War (1973), Carter had Sadat's trip to Jerusalem

(1977), and Bush/Baker had the Persian Gulf crisis (1990-1991). These events facilitated rather than hindered the push for agreements. The 1973 War ended U.S. and Israeli complacency with the status quo, Sadat's trip pushed the Egyptian-Israeli track to the fore and wowed Israel, and the Persian Gulf War demonstrated American power and discredited Arab rejectionists.

The point is not that the United States was totally reactive in the face of these events. Kissinger (1982: 468) made sure the 1973 war ended in a helpful way: "From the moment war broke out, Kissinger knew where he wanted to go, and he got there by striving with remarkable effectiveness to bend and manipulate events." (Miller, 2008: 137) He made sure Israel did not destroy Egypt's Third Army so that Egypt's initial feeling of pride would not be erased. He correctly argued that an Egypt that felt positive about its military performance would be in a better position to make post-war concessions. Some of the push for Sadat's trip came from Carter. (Kelman, 1985: 215) Bush and Baker did not just wait for results of the Persian Gulf War to lead to a renewed peace process. They actively drew Syria into the anti-Iraq coalition; managed and restrained Israel during the war itself and later pressed Israel about settlements and loan guarantees; and in key statements set out the rhetorical basis for turning to the Arab-Israeli peace process after the war. They did not cause the events but they worked to position the ending in a helpful manner for post-war aims.

How do such factors look in the Reagan and Clinton? Reagan's failures were sprinkled throughout his presidency and were each followed by a lull in U.S. activity rather than a quick turnaround and new approach. Clinton's most important policy failures came at the end, in 2000, so there was little time left to initiate new approaches.

In terms of Arab and Israeli governments, both presidents faced a challenging environment. Reagan initially dealt with a strong right-wing Israeli government but one

whose energy was sapped by the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. This coalition was followed by Israeli national unity governments that were designed more for maintenance than dramatic breakthroughs. Meanwhile, the PLO was based in Tunis with no formal grounding in the occupied territories. Jordan's stability had long been in question, and Lebanon was fragmented in the midst of its civil war. For Clinton, the weakest leader was Israel's Barak whose governing coalition was collapsing. But Prime Ministers Rabin (1992-1995) and Benjamin Netanyahu (1996-1999) struggled as well. Political fragility, not strong leaders, was the norm.

Lastly, events that took place were not managed so as to further negotiations. Reagan tried to capitalize on the Lebanon issue in 1982, but his peace plan went nowhere and he withdrew U.S. peacekeepers months after major attacks on the marine barracks and the U.S. embassy. Clinton tried with his empathetic approach after the Rabin assassination (1995) and Sharm el-Sheikh summit after the outbreak of the second intifada (2000), but he too was stymied by events undermining the peace process.

VI. Conclusion

The U.S. desire to bring about Arab-Israeli agreements has illustrated both instrumental and coercive leadership. U.S. officials demonstrated structural, entrepreneurial, and intellectual leadership. The combination of skilled U.S. cajoling and introducing new ideas helped advance some negotiations. The factor that varied most was the level of U.S. effort as some administrations were more deeply engaged in the pursuit of peace. On the coercive side, U.S. material capabilities have allowed for financial, military, and political rewards, threats, and linkage. Such resources also define the United States as the world's lone superpower, a status that itself forms an important component

of U.S. *instrumental* leadership. Coercive and instrumental leadership are not wholly distinct.

A sweeping evaluation of U.S. leadership risks missing changes on related issues that might affect U.S. diplomacy. Among Arab states and Israel, the two major shifts were the signing of peace treaties in 1979 and 1994. In addition, the decades also saw the rise of the Palestinian movement as a national-political force with its own leaders and aspirations and its own negotiating track starting in the 1990s. Meanwhile, the conflicts shifted from inter-state battles to Israeli fights with non-state actors such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

When the United States started seeking talks in the years just after the 1967 war, Arabs and Israelis had no diplomatic relations; they lived in a state of war. The period of greatest U.S. success, the 1970s, facilitated the transition to a more mixed picture. Each peace treaty increased the overall plausibility of the U.S. approach. If *some* Arabs and Israelis could make peace, the possibility that *all* Arabs and Israelis could make peace became more real though not guaranteed.

In addition, as recognition of Palestinian nationalism grew and Israel and the PLO developed a formal relationship, what the United States could hope for with Arab states and Israel evolved. When Egypt and Israel talked in the late 1970s, Egypt would not sign an agreement only on matters with Israel. Rather, at Camp David (1978) they needed, and received, a framework that dealt with the Palestinian question, however imperfectly. But once Israel and the PLO formalized an official relationship, other Arab states could take care of their own business. Jordan would not have signed a treaty with Israel in 1994 without the Israel-PLO breakthrough at Oslo in 1993. Palestinians had brushed aside the view that Jordan could serve as the future Palestinian state. In the 1990s, the United States addressed the Israel-Syria track on its

own merits. One can see a growing recognition of Palestinian nationalism from 1967 when UNSC Resolution 242 refers only to the humanitarian angle for Palestinian refugees but not the national-political one all the way to the public call by Clinton in January 2001 for a two-state solution including an independent Palestinian state.

The core element of U.S. mediation for Israel with Egypt, Syria, and the Palestinians - the land-for-peace principle – did not change. U.S. diplomacy never embraced other principles such as imposing a peace or the ‘peace-for-peace’ idea whereby Israel would sign peace treaties without territorial withdrawal.

What about the success or failure of U.S. endeavors? U.S. engagement may help lead to successful outcomes in the Arab-Israeli peace process when the United States is highly-engaged, stays engaged after setbacks, is working with strong Arab and Israeli leaders, and manages unexpected events in a way to advance the process. The United States is only partially in control of the key variables. But Washington can contribute to a positive outcome, whether the parties are ready to talk or need help creating constructive conditions.

Though seven of nine successful agreements came with high levels of U.S. engagement, U.S. involvement is not the only pathway to successful implementation. Israel and Jordan succeeded with only limited U.S. diplomatic assistance. It might be that what often is needed is mediation, whether or not that comes from the United States.

Yet the question of historical timing lingers. Direct U.S. successes have vanished in the last two decades. That may be due to U.S. ineptitude, but it may also be that the nature of what needs to be resolved has changed and become much more difficult. The question of Palestine has confounded all negotiators to date. In that pessimistic vein, Baker (1995: 130) expressed his envy of his underlings who worked on the conflict: “If I

had another life, I'd want to be a Middle East specialist just like you, because it would mean guaranteed permanent employment.”

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¹ After the accords, one of Carter's (1982: 401) first phone calls was to his predecessor, Gerald Ford.

² Based on the interview text, the 1998 interview date seems erroneous. It was likely 1988 or 1990.

³ Unlike Quandt, I consider Rogers II a failure because it never moved beyond the ceasefire provisions of the plan. I add two successes: the six-point agreement (1973) and the Washington Declaration (1994).