



BOOK REVIEW ROUNDTABLE:

Lost Opportunities for Peace in the Middle East

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Summary

Debates in Washington over how to respond to wars involving Israel have a long history. In this review, our contributors consider what lessons to learn from Galen Jackson's book *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1979*.

1. Introduction: A History of Missed Opportunities for Peace

Salim Yaqub

It was a stirring spectacle for that holiday season of 1973: an international conference in Geneva, cosponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, to seek a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Weeks earlier, the October War had not only thrown the Middle East into turmoil but also sharply escalated Cold War tensions, threatening to undo the superpowers' recent efforts to improve their relations. Yet Washington and Moscow had pulled back from the brink, had negotiated a ceasefire, and were now nudging their respective clients toward dialogue in Geneva. "[T]he new US-Soviet detente," wrote an analyst for the *London Observer*, "has emphatically survived the strains of the Middle East war."¹

Or so it seemed. In fact, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who joined Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in co-hosting the Geneva Conference, had little interest in cooperating with Moscow to achieve a comprehensive peace, especially one requiring Israel to withdraw from all of the Arab lands it had occupied since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Kissinger instead favored a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian peace process, brokered by the United States, through which Egypt would be the principal, and perhaps even the sole, Arab country to regain any lost territory. The Soviets would enjoy no meaningful role in such an endeavor, but some soothing talk in Geneva might prevent them, for a time, from grasping what the U.S. diplomat had in mind. "We strove to assemble a multilateral conference," Kissinger later wrote in his memoirs, "but our purpose was to use it as a

¹ Robert Stephens, "A 'Staggering' Answer in Moscow to the Question: 'Why Take a Back Seat?'" *The (London) Observer*, December 9, 1973, 8.

framework for an essentially bilateral diplomacy. Soviet cooperation was necessary to convene Geneva; afterward we would seek to reduce its role to a minimum.”² Sure enough, after a few hours of speechmaking, the Geneva Conference adjourned, never to reconvene.³ Kissinger found other venues for his ballyhooed “shuttle diplomacy.”

Washington’s relentless pursuit of Cold War advantage is the driving theme of Galen Jackson’s important new book, *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1979*. Why, the author asks, did the United States and the Soviet Union fail to cooperate with each other to resolve that consuming conflict? After all, each superpower appeared to have a powerful geopolitical interest in achieving a comprehensive and durable settlement between Israel and its Arab adversaries. Jackson concludes that, while the Soviets did make constructive moves in this direction, their American counterparts seldom played ball. “US decision makers — although they were tempted at points to respond favorably to Moscow’s proposals — were not interested in working with the Soviets, and instead sought to expel them from the Middle East, with the aim of making unilateral Cold War gains at their expense.”⁴

The contributors to this roundtable — Maia Carter Hallward, Alex Hobson, Sergey Radchenko, and Janice Gross Stein — acknowledge the clarity and force of Jackson’s scholarly work. Hallward praises his “use of extensive archival evidence,” which Hobson

² Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 755.

³ In October 1991, the United States and the Soviet Union — the latter just weeks away from dissolution — cosponsored another international conference, this one in Madrid, to seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Madrid Conference itself yielded meager results, but it helped pave the way to the Oslo peace process of 1993 to 2001.

⁴ Galen Jackson, *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1979* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023), 6.

sees as “persuasively challeng[ing] triumphalist accounts of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East during the 1970s.” Stein not only finds *A Lost Peace* “meticulously researched” but deems it so “lively and well-written” that “[t]he story leaps off the page.” These qualities vigorously propel Jackson’s contention that, while U.S. policymakers recognized the dangers of leaving the Arab-Israeli dispute unresolved and were sometimes infuriated by Israel’s insistence on retaining the occupied territories, they repeatedly allowed Cold War calculations to trump the pursuit of a workable settlement.

One overriding question, though, is how much we should blame Washington’s actions — or lack thereof — for the absence of movement toward a multilateral peace. Whereas Hobson embraces the conclusion that “U.S. policymakers [were] most responsible for the failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute through a comprehensive settlement between 1967 and 1979,” Radchenko believes that *A Lost Peace* burdens the Americans with too much responsibility and lets the Soviets off the hook. Declassified Soviet documents, he writes, reveal that Moscow backed its Arab clients with the same zero-sum ruthlessness that marked U.S. support for Israel. Radchenko adds that Soviet behavior in other trouble spots of the era — in Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia — was also far from conciliatory. In light of this record, he asks, “was it all that surprising that Kissinger approached foreign policy with a Cold-War mentality? It was, after all, the Cold War.” While these are excellent points, it’s noteworthy that all of the *Arab-Israeli* examples Radchenko cites come from the period 1967 to 1972. Some of the strongest evidence for Jackson’s argument pertains to the next half-dozen years.

Stein similarly finds that Jackson places too much weight on U.S. decision-making — and, for that matter, on Soviet decision-making, too. “To treat the Middle East as a window into the superpower relationship,” she writes, “. . . is to ignore a great deal of what is important to the leaders and peoples of the region. It is ultimately to deprive them of

agency in the making of agreements that are far more important to them than they are to powers outside the region.” Stein also suggests that it is unfair to fault the United States for failing to sponsor an Arab-Israeli agreement that went beyond Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula, whose geographical simplicity is not replicated elsewhere in the Israeli occupied territories. She notes that when President Bill Clinton tried, two decades later, to broker an Israeli-Palestinian agreement over the West Bank, he was overcome by the intricacy of the task. As with Radchenko’s critique, however, time period matters. By the 1990s, the advanced state of Israel’s colonization of the West Bank made the job of disentangling the parties far harder than it would have been had Washington insisted on a West Bank withdrawal in the mid- or late 1970s.

While Hobson strongly endorses Jackson’s argument overall, he does question the author’s treatment of the role of domestic politics. On the one hand, Hobson writes, “Jackson is intent on showing that the ‘domestic factor was not decisive’” in the formation of U.S. Middle East policy. On the other hand, the actual text of *A Lost Peace* seems to tell a different story. Hobson does not fully develop this criticism, but the book is replete with instances — especially in 1971, 1975, and 1977 to 1978 — when the fear of alienating pro-Israel Americans played an important role in convincing U.S. leaders to abandon their plans to pressure Israel to conduct a broad-based withdrawal from Arab land. Jackson is aware of this apparent contradiction and makes a sophisticated effort to resolve it. Still, readers may question how successfully he does so.⁵

⁵ I pursue this critique more extensively in my own review of *A Lost Peace*; see Salim Yaqub, “American and Israeli Intransigence Prevented Peace in the Middle East,” *Catalyst Review*, June 29, 2023, <https://catalyst-journal.com/2023/06/galen-jackson-a-lost-peace-review>.

Apart from this matter, Hobson, like Hallward, does not substantively challenge *A Lost Peace*. The two contributors instead offer friendly extensions of its arguments. Hobson broadens the geopolitical aperture by stressing the significance to Jackson's story of the Palestinian issue. The dozen years the book covers were a crucial period for the Palestinian movement. From 1967 to 1973, the Palestine Liberation Organization emerged as an independent political and military force and won the embrace of the global Left. Over the next six years, the international community became committed to a two-state settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, and the Palestine Liberation Organization began moderating its territorial demands to bring them into alignment with that scenario. Ironically, 1974 to 1979 also was the period in which the United States established a diplomatic framework that would make a two-state solution nearly impossible to achieve. By mediating the bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace process, which culminated in those two nations' 1979 peace treaty, Washington facilitated the subtraction of Egyptian power from the Arab-Israeli equation. Relieved of military pressure to its southwest, Israel was thereafter free to consolidate its occupation of Palestinian land, accelerate the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and take other actions that, over time, have made a viable Palestinian state increasingly difficult to imagine.

But there is a nuance to this story that Hobson detects. Although Kissinger tirelessly promoted the bilateral strategy and labored to sideline the Palestinian issue, other U.S. officials recognized that, absent a serious effort to address Palestinian national claims, a broader Arab-Israeli settlement would remain elusive. This insight was more prevalent in the State Department, but occasionally the White House's chief occupant — especially President Jimmy Carter but even, at times, as hard-bitten a figure as President Richard Nixon — gave it voice. The coexistence of such thinking with the Kissingerian approach, combined with the limited ability of the former to temper the latter, lends an element of poignancy to this history.

Hallward's extension is both geopolitical and temporal, drawing our attention to the Palestine issue as it has unfolded in recent decades. Although Egypt's neutralization in the 1970s gave an early boost to Israel's efforts to dominate Palestinian land, there has been no shortage of subsequent U.S. action, or inaction, to facilitate this process. Not only has Washington failed "to enforce its own policy goals of limiting changes to the *status quo* in the West Bank," writes Hallward, but it has also blocked efforts in the United Nations to promote Palestinian statehood. Moreover, she sees grim continuity in President Joe Biden's military and diplomatic support for the brutal, ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza, in response to Hamas' shocking raids of Oct. 7, 2023.

To be sure, the current crisis contains significant elements of discontinuity, too. The Palestine Liberation Organization was a deeply flawed organization, but by the late 1970s its mainstream leadership was clearly willing to make the concessions necessary for achieving a two-state settlement. The same can hardly be said of Hamas, which at best has shown an ability to observe lengthy ceasefires. The latter group has also racked up a record of vicious attacks on civilians that far surpasses anything compiled by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Even sharp critics of Israeli policies have been hard-pressed to chart a path toward a two-state settlement as long as Hamas plays a decisive role in Palestinian governance. True, the current Israeli government itself adamantly opposes a two-state solution, but this stance is best understood as a case of continuity, not discontinuity. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gives naked expression to an intransigence that some of his predecessors pursued more circumspectly. In short, it is a lot harder now than it was a couple of decades ago to say what, precisely, should be done to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hallward obliquely acknowledges this conundrum when she describes the outlook of some Israeli peace activists: "while they

may not know the exact formula for peace between Hamas and Israel, they know that bombing Gaza is not the answer.”

And yet, at a more basic level, past and present are inescapably bound up with one another. The failure to achieve a comprehensive settlement in the 1970s allowed the Arab-Israeli conflict to fester and mutate. It has since taken forms only dimly foreseeable a half-century ago. Toward the end of Jackson’s chronology, new modes of religious fundamentalism began gathering sway among Muslims and Jews in the Middle East, as well as among Christians in the United States. All three varieties of that phenomenon have gained, in their respective spheres, a purchase on political power that dangerously polarizes the dispute. Over those same decades, however, the language of Israeli-Palestinian compromise has grown more familiar, more sophisticated, and more widely shared across the globe. A vast international consensus now holds that Israelis and Palestinians should, and can, coexist in the land they commonly claim. So we are caught in a strange tug-of-war between possibility and impossibility, much like the one that bedeviled the brief gathering in Geneva in the closing days of 1973.

Salim Yaqub received his Ph.D. in U.S. history from Yale University in 1999. He is now a professor of history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and director of its Center for Cold War Studies and International History. He is the author of three books: *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Cornell University Press, 2016), and *Winds of Hope, Storms of Discord: The United States since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). He has also written several articles and book chapters on the history of U.S. foreign

relations, the international politics of the Middle East, and Arab-American political activism.



2. Repeating the Mistakes of the Past

Maia Carter Hallward

In the wake of Hamas' brutal assault against Israel on Oct. 7 and with Israel's full-scale military response still under way, reading a book on lost opportunities for Middle East peace is a particularly poignant experience.

In *A Lost Peace*, Galen Jackson provides a historical retrospective with which to examine the current circumstances, in which the United States has refused to call for a full and immediate ceasefire even as multiple international experts label the killing of over 30,000 Palestinian civilians and the systematic destruction of Palestinian infrastructure as genocide.⁶ In reading the text, one can see several historic junctures when U.S. policy might have been recalibrated to avoid the current tragedy.

Jackson sets out to ask why the superpowers were unable to cooperate for Arab-Israeli peace, and, in the end, he argues that U.S. behavior is largely responsible for the missed opportunity of achieving a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace in the time period in question. The historical role of the United States as a party to the conflict in the region often remains unexamined to this day, and Jackson's book provides useful insights. For example, amid regional tensions in the run-up to the 1973 October War, Jackson observes that the Soviets denied arms to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and also waited for

⁶ For more on the Oct. 7 attack see, for example, "Hamas's October 7 Attack: Visualizing the Data," Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 19, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/hamass-october-7-attack-visualizing-data>; "Statement of Scholars in Holocaust and Genocide Studies on Mass Violence in Israel and Palestine since 7 October," Raz Segal, December 9, 2023, available at <https://contendingmodernities.nd.edu/global-currents/statement-of-scholars-7-october/> (accessed January 15, 2024).

President Richard Nixon's re-election so that he would have more political freedom to act. Nixon felt that a political settlement with the Arab states would be in Israel's interest and told his cabinet that the United States should "have policies ... which don't allow an obsession with one state to destroy our status in the Middle East."⁷ However, for a variety of reasons, including Henry Kissinger's "blind spot" and "hesitancy" in terms of pushing for an agreement between Israel and the Arab states,⁸ the October War happened anyway.

To this day, the United States often remains hesitant to act with gumption in the region, particularly when an election is at stake. President Bill Clinton tried to wrangle an agreement at Camp David at the end of his second term, and President George W. Bush gave a half-hearted attempt in the Annapolis Conference in 2007 after he was a lame duck. In the latter case, Bush failed to make any reference to the Arab Peace Initiative that had been offered in 2002 and again in 2005, reflecting a lack of acknowledgement of efforts being made by Arab states — a common thread in the history of U.S. foreign policy.

A Lost Peace illustrates repeatedly where Arab actors, as well as Soviet actors, were very much in alignment with U.S. policy preferences, and yet the United States chose not to act, whether for domestic political reasons, the *realpolitik* preferences of Kissinger, or another reason. The Soviets cautioned the United States about the imminence of war and its probable repercussions, but Washington ignored the warnings.⁹ Further, even as the Soviets tried to dissuade Arab states from engaging in military action, the United States

⁷ Galen Jackson, *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1979*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023), 96.

⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 97.

⁹ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 99-100.

did not do the same with Israel. Jackson quotes Sadat as saying, “Every door I have opened has been slammed in my face by Israel — with American blessings.”¹⁰

Lack of Accountability

This historical perspective on the U.S. role in actively contributing to the failure of possible peace settlements portrayed in Jackson’s book is consistent with the frustration of many in the Arab world, and Palestinians in particular, with the United States. Far from being an “honest broker,” the United States has repeatedly lost opportunities to hold both sides accountable to terms of agreement and to leverage its power to rein in violations. The failure of the United States to enforce its own policy goals of limiting changes to the *status quo* in the West Bank led to the rapid expansion of Israeli settlements in the 1990s and 2000s, making the creation of a two-state solution virtually impossible. Palestinians went to the United Nations seeking recognition as a state in 2012 precisely because of a loss of faith in the U.S. willingness to advance a negotiated two-state settlement and a desire to “breathe new life” into a stagnant peace process.¹¹ Although a majority of countries in the world supported the creation of a Palestinian state (138–9, with 41 abstentions), U.S. opposition effectively blocked any such measure from passing in the U.N. Security Council, continuing a history of U.S. vetoes in that chamber in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In December 2023, a U.N. General Assembly resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza passed with 153 countries voting in favor and 23 countries abstaining — however, the United States and Israel voted against the ceasefire, along with

¹⁰ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 101.

¹¹ “General Assembly Votes Overwhelmingly to Accord Palestine ‘Non-Member Observer State’ Status in United Nations,” General Assembly 11317, November 29, 2012, <https://press.un.org/en/2012/ga11317.doc.htm>.

eight other countries. The United States had vetoed a similar Security Council resolution earlier.¹²

The Arab (and Palestinian) perspective that the United States is not an honest broker in the region has deep roots. Indeed, *A Lost Peace* identifies several occasions where the United States actively encouraged Israel to engage in conflict rather than to work for peace, such as urging the Israel Defense Forces to advance on Damascus during the October War.¹³ While the Soviet Union was seeking to put pressure on the United States “to force Israel to abide by the agreement,”¹⁴ the United States prioritized superpower rivalry over actual work toward peace, which would be in the interest of all concerned parties, Israel included, as Jackson notes. Similarly, in the wake of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, the Biden administration authorized several weapons transfers to Israel without congressional approval.¹⁵ The concern of several Democratic senators regarding a Democratic president’s actions reflects themes raised in Jackson’s book, which repeatedly suggest that, while U.S. domestic concerns were at times a factor, U.S. presidents and their administrations have taken their own path in relations with Israel, pursuing their own interests. During the time period covered in Jackson’s book, that was particularly true in relation to keeping the Soviets at bay.¹⁶

¹² Nidal Al-Mughrabi and Bassam Massoud, “UN calls for immediate ceasefire in Gaza, Biden warns Israel is losing support,” Reuters, December 12, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hunger-rises-gaza-un-prepares-vote-ceasefire-resolution-2023-12-12/>.

¹³ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 113.

¹⁴ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 115.

¹⁵ Alex Gangitano and Al Weaver, “Senate Democrats scoff at Biden’s Israel arms sale,” *The Hill*, January 3, 2024. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4387824-senate-democrats-scoff-at-bidens-israel-arms-sale/>.

¹⁶ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 126-128.

Another persistent theme in *A Lost Peace* that directly relates to current events is that, even when Israeli leaders have been intransigent, the United States has continued to give them political backing. Even Kissinger, who as a Jew lost many family members in the Holocaust and held Israel as a personal concern, called the Israeli leadership under Yitzhak Rabin “villains” and “bastards.”¹⁷ Kissinger lamented Israel’s treatment of the United States and questioned “whether a nation of three million Jews can hold the security of the U.S. and the world in their hands.”¹⁸ Later, Kissinger called another round of Israeli leaders “treacherous, petty, deceitful — they didn’t treat us like allies.”¹⁹

Decades later, in the wake of the Israeli response to the Oct. 7 attacks, many in the world have questioned unconditional U.S. support for an Israeli leader whose anti-democratic policies were resulting in massive street protests in Israel prior to Oct. 7.²⁰ While much of the world was appalled by Hamas’ brutal actions, Israel’s disproportionate killing of Palestinian civilians (including more than 10,000 children)²¹ and targeting of civilian infrastructure (including schools, hospitals, and churches and mosques) have raised many concerns. Further, the fact that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government was previously supporting Hamas via funding from Qatar and has allowed settlers in the West Bank to carry out indiscriminate attacks on civilians has raised concerns from U.S. constituents worried about human rights violations and the use of U.S.-provided

¹⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 134-135.

¹⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 134.

¹⁹ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 157.

²⁰ “Hundreds of thousands march in Israel against Netanyahu’s judicial overhaul,” Associated Press, July 22, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/07/22/1189627225/israel-protests-netanyahu-judiciary>.

²¹ See, for example, “Gaza: 10,000 children killed in nearly 100 days of war,” Save the Children, January 11, 2024, <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-10000-children-killed-nearly-100-days-war>.

weapons.²² While the Biden administration has tried to add more nuance to its policy in the lead up to the 2024 election, particularly given declining support from Arab-Americans and young voters, Biden has avoided criticizing Netanyahu publicly, even as he is privately irritated with Netanyahu's actions.²³

The Need for a Comprehensive Peace

Even Kissinger asserted that “Israel would be safer if it could negotiate a peace settlement” and noted that “Israel’s hope of survival over the long term ... is to work toward normal relationship with its neighbors.”²⁴ Indeed, the field of peace and conflict studies affirms that negotiations between equals and addressing the root causes of violent conflict can lead to enduring peace and human security more effectively than ongoing military assault. As a number of Israeli peace activists speaking in webinars

²² Alon Pinkas, “Netanyahu Wants to Make Qatar the Fall Guy for Oct 7 Massacre. Don’t Let Him,” *Haaretz*, January 1, 2024, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-01/ty-article/.premium/netanyahu-wants-to-make-qatar-the-fall-guy-for-october-7-massacre-dont-let-him/0000018c-c45d-dcff-adbf-cefff5250000>. Jeet Heer, “Why Netanyahu Bolstered Hamas,” *The Nation*, December 11, 2023, <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/why-netanyahu-bolstered-hamas/>. Jamie Dettmer, “Prominent settler leader pushes Netanyahu to rebuild Israeli homes in Gaza,” *Politico*, November 16, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/prominent-settler-pushes-pm-benjamin-netanyahu-rebuild-israeli-homes-gaza/>. Isabel Debre, “With the world’s eyes on Gaza, attacks are on the rise in the West Bank, which faces its own war,” Associated Press, November 20, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/palestinians-israel-west-bank-war-gaza-hamas-settlers-army-raid-militants-c1386ab6a633971cc18b2497169210d3>. Blaise Malley, “Sanders calls for probe into Israeli human rights violations,” *Responsible Statecraft*, December 15, 2023, <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/sanders-israel-us-weapons/>.

²³ Kevin Liptak and MJ Lee, “Biden growing more frustrated with Netanyahu as Gaza campaign rages on,” CNN, February 12, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/12/politics/biden-netanyahu-israel-gaza/index.html>.

²⁴ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 137.

about the Gaza crisis in recent months have asserted, while they may not know the exact formula for peace between Hamas and Israel, they know that bombing Gaza is not the answer, since many rounds of intense attacks on Gaza since 2007 have not solved the problem. Instead, as numerous commentators have argued, having a political horizon and a clear path toward a negotiated solution would be a much better way of undermining Hamas' power.²⁵ Such leading experts affirm what U.S. officials have acknowledged over the decades but have not acted on — that Israel's security in the long run will be better served by a comprehensive peace than by ongoing war. Further, as Jackson's use of extensive archival evidence affirms, Jordan and Egypt have long accepted Israel's existence,²⁶ and the peace agreements between those countries and Israel, while "cold" rather than warm, have endured for decades, even in the midst of extreme regional challenges including the second *intifada* and the waves of uprisings during the so-called Arab Spring.

The durability of the peace agreements between Egypt and Israel (45 years) and Jordan and Israel (30 years) suggests that it is possible to reach agreements with former enemies. Further, the Oslo Accords were signed at a time when the Palestine Liberation Organization was still a designated terror organization by the United States and Israel, which implies that the concerned parties also could overcome such obstacles for negotiating with Hamas if the political will existed. Hamas has demonstrated its capacity for holding long ceasefires, even when Israel did not reciprocate. However, the literature on negotiations also suggests that such efforts are more successful when there is a semblance of power balance between the parties — at present, particularly with United

²⁵ Zaha Hassan, Daniel Kurtzer, Omar Dajani, Diana Buttu, Peter Mansoor, Daniel Levy, Ehud Olmert, Eugee Kontorovich, Elliot Abrams, "How Will this War End? How can the next one be prevented?" *Foreign Policy*, December 7, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/12/07/israel-hamas-gaza-palestine-how-war-end-peace/>.

²⁶ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 139.

States backing Israel, such symmetry is nonexistent. This quest for greater symmetry of power is a more likely explanation for why Hamas captured and is holding hostages, as that has demonstrably been the most precious currency for finding leverage vis-à-vis Israel, as evidenced in the case of Gilad Shalit — an Israeli soldier who was held by Hamas for more than five years and released in exchange for more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners — among others.

Jackson ends the book quoting Martin Indyk, who noted that, “As long as the Palestinians are unable to realize their aspirations ... the Middle Eastern order will not be stable and Israel’s ‘moral substance,’ as Kissinger put it, will erode.”²⁷ The tragic events of Oct. 7 support this assertion — as even the recent normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states²⁸ have been insufficient to bring a durable peace to the region absent a focus on the substantive issues remaining between Israel and the Palestinians.²⁹ While we cannot reverse the clock to the 1970s, when Jackson suggests that the United States and Soviet Union may have been able to settle the dispute, we can take lessons from history and use them to adjust foreign policy decisions going forward.

A Lost Peace illustrates how the frame one uses to approach a situation shapes the possible strategies and outcomes one sees as possible. As Jackson notes, “if US strategists had thought about the problem differently, there might have been a very

²⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 195.

²⁸ Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates signed “The Abraham Accords Declaration” in 2020–2021.

²⁹ Maia Carter Hallward and Taib Biygautane, “Arab State Narratives on Normalization with Israel: Justifying Policy Reversal,” *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, February 13, 2024,

<https://doi.org/10.1177/23477989231220444>.

different outcome.”³⁰ It also identifies the flaws with great-power logic that seeks to maximize relative gains over objective ones. If the United States had focused more on common strategic interests with the Soviets, the landscape of the Middle East might be quite different today.

Jackson’s narrative identifies how U.S. officials repeatedly noted the Israeli government’s intransigence when it came to working for any kind of peace agreement. Yet, the United States continued to resist putting significant pressure on Israel for a range of reasons, including pressure from a pro-Israel domestic lobby that U.S. politicians found to be even more difficult to deal with than the Israelis. This dynamic continues today — for example, pro-Israel groups have targeted U.S. lawmakers who are critical of Israel’s military response with campaign ads and funding for opponents in the midst of election season.³¹ However, Biden is facing growing criticism from the political left for his unconditional support of Israel. One commentator even labeled him “Genocide Joe,” alleging that the president has placed domestic political concerns over Palestinian lives.³²

The book also documents the U.S. preference for “constructive ambiguity” and telling different stories to different actors,³³ which does not pave the way for a comprehensive peace. Absent a strong voice calling for a ceasefire and an end to attacks on civilians as well as on cultural, health, and educational infrastructure, Washington allows Israel to

³⁰ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 193.

³¹ Tom Perkins and Joan E Greve, “Pro-Israel groups target US lawmakers critical of Israel’s war ahead of primaries,” *The Guardian*, November 11, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/nov/11/israel-ads-attack-rashida-tlaib-us-politicians>.

³² Philip Weiss, “Biden became ‘Genocide Joe’ thanks to the Israel lobby,” *Mondoweiss*, November 29, 2023, <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/11/biden-became-genocide-joe-thanks-to-the-israel-lobby/>.

³³ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 150.

assume that it is acting with U.S. support, particularly when the United States and other countries take actions such as withdrawing funding from international organizations like the U.N. Relief and Works Agency, which supports schools, hospitals, and other services for Palestinian refugees.

Absent a solid U.S. effort to pursue policies that lead to a sustainable and comprehensive peace agreement in the interest of all parties in the region, there will continue to be deadly violent outbreaks punctuating periods of negative peace. A reframing of the situation to look for ways to pursue mutual gains with an eye for the provision of *human* security would provide a better path forward, as well as listening to the real concerns of Israeli and Palestinian civilians who are calling for more democratic, more accountable leaders than those currently in power.

Dr. Maia Carter Hallward is Professor of Middle East Politics in the School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding and Development at Kennesaw State University and Director of the Ph.D. in International Conflict Management program. She is associate editor of the Journal of Political Science Education, and served as Executive Editor of the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development from 2015 to 2023. She received her Ph.D. in International Relations from American University's School of International Service, with concentrations in Peace and Conflict Resolution and Critical Geopolitics. She is the author or co-author of seven books, including NGOs and Human Rights (University of Georgia Press, 2021), Understanding International Conflict Management (Routledge, 2020), and Struggling for a Just Peace: Israeli and Palestinian Activism in the Second Intifada (University of Florida Press, 2011). She was a Fulbright Scholar in Jordan in 2022 and has led multiple study trips to the Middle East.



3. The Futility of Great-Power Politics

Alex Hobson

“The question,” President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger agreed, “is whether a nation of three million Jews can hold the security of the U.S. and the world in their hands.”³⁴ It was 1974, and Kissinger wanted a second Sinai disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt. He believed such an agreement would maintain the illusion of progress toward resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute after the October 1973 war and thereby stave off the risk that Arab states would resume an oil embargo against the United States. However, Israel’s Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to go along. Kissinger’s fury at Israel’s leadership crescendoed during the spring of 1975. “These guys,” Kissinger told Ford of Rabin and his cabinet, “are the world’s worst shits.”³⁵ Kissinger’s anger reflected his conviction that a great power’s “requirement for survival” ought not to be treated with contempt by a smaller power dependent on it.³⁶

In Kissinger’s mind, Rabin had concluded that the Ford administration was too weak to pressure Israel for anything. Most galling to Kissinger was that he had designed his “step-by-step” approach *precisely* to “buy” the Israelis time. According to Kissinger’s design, the United States would stagger the negotiations for disengagement of forces on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts. These disengagement agreements would be separate and bilateral, with the Egyptian-Israeli front taking precedence. Israel would cede some

³⁴ Galen Jackson, *A Lost Peace Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-79*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023).

³⁵ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 134.

³⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 427.

Egyptian land seized in 1967 in return for financial compensation from the United States, free passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal, and, most importantly, the alleviation of international pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. Where was the gratitude? “Almost blind with rage,” Kissinger promised that “the next time I’ll finish them. A great power cannot be treated this way.”³⁷

In his anger, Kissinger devised a course of “psychological warfare” against Israel. He would continue to dangle the prospect of reconvening the Geneva Conference for a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute, which had convened once in December 1973. The new conference would involve representatives from the United States, the Soviet Union, Jordan, Egypt, and Israel, potentially in addition to Syria. Kissinger, who in fact did not want to reconvene this conference any more than the Israelis did, expected that this threat would lead Rabin’s cabinet to come around. Instead of capitulating, however, the Israelis launched a public relations campaign on Capitol Hill and in the U.S. press aimed at quashing the Ford administration’s pressure. This campaign compelled the Ford administration to abandon any confrontation with Israel in order to achieve the Sinai II agreement that September. Paradoxically, then, Kissinger’s efforts to alleviate outside pressure on Israel to withdraw from occupied land had also undermined America’s great-power prerogative to pressure Israel, which he found enraging. So, it turned out that when it came to Israel and the United States, a great power could be treated “this way.”

Why did the United States and the Soviet Union fail to achieve the comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute that many U.S. and Soviet officials (along with most

³⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 134.

of the world) claimed to want between 1967 and 1979? That is the question at the heart of Galen Jackson's new book *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1979*. As Jackson puts it, "That they [the superpowers] were unable to cooperate is surprising, given the incentives that existed for them to do so, and raises an obvious question: How is that outcome to be understood?"³⁸ Conventional wisdom places much of the blame on the Soviet Union. Soviet officials, in this view, sought to undermine a settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute for political and ideological reasons. The Soviets and the Arab parties they supported, adherents to this interpretation believe, were never serious about recognizing Israel's "right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force," required by U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which provided the international framework for a comprehensive peace.³⁹ Instead, Soviet leaders, along with their so-called rejectionist Arab clients, aimed to destroy Israel.

Jackson explains, however, that this picture — however convenient for U.S. policymakers to have believed — is misleading at best. In fact, the superpowers had a mutual interest in lowering tension in the Middle East, not raising it. And publicly they were mostly in agreement that a comprehensive settlement would lower tension. Furthermore, the superpowers had shown the ability to cooperate to reach mutually acceptable agreements on other important matters during this era of détente. Yet, as Jackson puts it, "that is not what happened" in the Middle East.⁴⁰ Why?

³⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace, 1967-1979*, 4.

³⁹ U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, November 22, 1967, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/90717?ln=en>.

⁴⁰ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 4.

According to Jackson's reading of the documentary record, what most plagued a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute was not Soviet obstruction; nor was it the so-called rejectionism of the Arab states or the Palestine Liberation Organization. The greater obstacles, his analysis suggests, were the persistence of a "Cold War mentality" in the United States, embodied in the figure of Kissinger; the rejection by Israeli leaders of such a peace; and the unwillingness of successive U.S. administrations to confront Israeli leaders' refusal to withdraw from occupied land, because of the perceived cost of such a confrontation in U.S. domestic politics. We can add one other factor: the refusal of U.S. officials to adapt the international framework for a resolution to accommodate even limited Palestinian rights.

As do earlier books by Salim Yaqub, Rashid Khalidi, Khaled Elgindy, and Seth Anziska, Jackson's *A Lost Peace* uses a careful reading of the documentary record to persuasively challenge triumphalist accounts of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East during the 1970s.⁴¹ Far from being examples of U.S. foresightedness and success, Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and President Jimmy Carter's role in brokering the Camp David Accords were, in fact, the products of disastrous diplomacy. This revision is essential, not least to promote a culture of intellectual honesty necessary for present and future decision-making. Most of all, Jackson's book illuminates the futility of great-power politics in the Middle East during this pivotal era of the global Cold War. The failure to achieve a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute harmed the

⁴¹ Seth Anziska, *Preventing Palestine: A Political History from Camp David to Oslo* (Princeton University Press, 2018); Salim Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit: How the US Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013); Khaled Elgindy, *Blind Spot: America and the Palestinians from Balfour to Trump* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2019).

interests of most regional actors, destabilized the Middle East, and sabotaged détente. And for what, Jackson's book leads us to ask.

Kissinger's Stalemate

As national security advisor and secretary of state under President Richard Nixon and Ford, Kissinger did more than anyone to order U.S. priorities regarding Middle East diplomacy. Kissinger embodied what Jackson calls the "Cold-War mindset" at its most doctrinaire. This mindset led Kissinger to see the Middle East primarily as an arena of Cold War competition, where any loss for the Soviet Union would be a gain for the United States. Kissinger therefore prioritized disrupting the Soviet Union's position in the region over other aims, such as progress on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

Kissinger's perspective on the Arab-Israeli dispute co-existed with a different perspective within the U.S. foreign policy establishment. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, a viewpoint emerged within U.S. policy circles that it was in America's interest for Israel to relinquish its hold on most of the territory it seized during the war (including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights). Many U.S. officials took for granted that Israel would need to be compelled to return this occupied land, and they understood that the United States would pay a price if it failed to compel Israel to do so. For example, at a National Security Council meeting on June 14, 1967, Secretary of State Dean Rusk argued that "Israel's keeping territory" it had taken in the war would "create a revanchism for the rest of the century."⁴² Such revanchism, Rusk believed, would undercut the regional stability that the United States sought.

⁴² Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 19.

This thinking was in line with U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which came into effect in November 1967 and received the support of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Israel, among others, and was adopted unanimously by the Security Council. That resolution's first principle was the "withdrawal of Israel [sic] armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict."⁴³ At the same time, National Security Advisor Eugene Rostow warned that under no circumstances could the United States become attached to a "fortress Israel."⁴⁴

Preventing U.S. attachment to a "fortress Israel," according to this perspective, was congruent with the pursuit of U.S. advantages in its Cold War rivalry. During the 1967 war, for example, future president Nixon wrote to Rusk that "unless we can demonstrate that [our] attachment to peace is impartial, we will have given the Soviet Union an unparalleled opportunity to extend its influence in the Arab world."⁴⁵ Taking it a step further, Nixon contended that "the interest of the United States will be served in this case by tilting the policy, if it is to be tilted at all, on the side of 100 million Arabs rather than on the side of two million Israelis."⁴⁶ Twenty years later, Rusk reflected in bitterness that, because Israeli leaders did not want to withdraw from the occupied territories, they had "turned the United States into a twenty-year liar."⁴⁷

At the start of his presidency, Nixon sought to keep Kissinger at a remove from Middle East policy. Nixon believed that Kissinger's Jewish heritage represented a liability to the comprehensive peace he sought. Yet, during the Jordan crisis in 1970-71, Kissinger

⁴³ U.N. Security Council: Resolution 242, November 22, 1967

⁴⁴ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 20.

⁴⁵ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 35.

⁴⁶ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 35.

⁴⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 21.

outmaneuvered Secretary of State William Rogers to exert his influence on U.S. Middle East policy. In doing so, Kissinger marginalized the aforementioned point of view, held by Rogers and much of the State Department. From then until the end of his tenure as secretary of state, Kissinger effectively ran U.S. Middle East policy. In accordance with his Cold-War mentality, Kissinger sought to frustrate the Arabs and humiliate the Soviets. In practice, this meant what Kissinger called “stalemate.” As Kissinger put it in his memoirs, “I favored . . . a prolonged stalemate that would move the Arabs toward moderation and the Soviets to the fringes of Middle East diplomacy.”⁴⁸ That is, Kissinger would ensure that there was no progress toward a comprehensive peace settlement.

Kissinger hoped that stalemate would show Arab regimes that the Soviet Union was unable to deliver peace and thereby embarrass the Soviets. He sought to teach Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Syrian President Hafez al Assad that the United States alone could deliver what they wanted. So convinced was Kissinger of the shrewdness of this stratagem that he continued it even after Sadat expelled the Soviet advisors from Egypt in 1971 and offered Israel a full peace treaty for the return of Egyptian land. “There’s no reason why the Arabs should be closer aligned to the Soviet Union,” Sadat said at the time. “My people like the West better.”⁴⁹ But the persistence of stalemate two years later encouraged the decision by Egyptian and Syrian regimes to launch the 1973 war, because it persuaded those regimes that war was the only way to demonstrate that they could not be so easily dismissed by the Israelis and Americans. That this outcome surprised Kissinger testifies to the fact that he had not grasped the full implications of his strategy. Yet, Jackson shows that, after the war, Kissinger continued his policy of frustration and

⁴⁸ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 196.

⁴⁹ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 73.

humiliation. He did this even as he understood that embarrassing the Soviets threatened the entire foundation for détente.

However, even as he undermined the possibility for a superpower-brokered comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute, Kissinger recognized that Israel's indefinite occupation of territories taken in 1967 posed a threat to Israel. As he told Rabin in 1975, "I think at some point in the next few years . . . you should consider a sweeping proposal" for peace, "especially when you still have something to give." By not doing so, Kissinger warned, Israel pursued "a diplomacy which leads to suicide." To be sure, Kissinger only hoped to persuade Rabin to agree to make progress towards a second Sinai disengagement, not to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for example. But in Kissinger's view, "Israel's hope for survival over the long term . . . is to work toward a normal relationship with its neighbors."⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Kissinger sustained his commitment to a step-by-step approach to peace that would "buy" the Israelis "time" and reduce pressure on Israel to withdraw from territory. During his step-by-step maneuvers, Kissinger crafted letters to Rabin on behalf of Ford in which Kissinger promised that the United States would not recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization unless it first accepted Israel's "right to exist."⁵¹ This stipulation exceeded what had been called for in U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and it impeded subsequent U.S. relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization. With such policies, Kissinger helped to ensure that a sustainable and comprehensive settlement that included all involved parties did not come to pass. *A Lost*

⁵⁰ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 137.

⁵¹ Yaqub. *Imperfect Strangers: Americans, Arabs, and U.S. Middle East Relations in the 1970s*, 171.

Peace is a well-documented contribution to an emergent literature on Kissinger's primary responsibility for its failure.

The Rise of “Palestinianism”

In a 1969 essay entitled “The Palestinian Experience,” Palestinian-American scholar of English literature Edward Said identified the rise of what he called “Palestinianism” after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. “The aim of Palestinianism,” wrote Said, “is the full integration of the Arab Palestinian with lands and, more important, with political processes that for twenty-one years have either systematically excluded him or made him a more and more intractable prisoner.”⁵² That is, the war's devastating results spurred Palestinians to assert their national rights more independently than ever. But the international framework for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute after the war posed challenges for Palestinian self-assertion. For instance, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 had described Palestinians as a “refugee problem” and assumed that Palestinians would have no active role to play in resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute, while U.N. Security Council Resolution 338 did nothing to revise this framework. At the same time, Israeli leaders such as Abba Eban and Golda Meir promoted these ideas and were adamant that this situation remain unchanged.

Yet, the rise of Palestinianism became more and more visible. What historian Paul Thomas Chamberlin calls the Palestine Liberation Organization's “global offensive” between 1968 and 1975 forced the Palestinian situation onto the international agenda and

⁵² Edward W. Said, “The Palestinian Experience,” Folder: The Palestinian Experience, 1969-70, Box 69, Edward W. Said Papers, Columbia University Library.

had a destabilizing effect on Middle East politics.⁵³ The widespread international acceptance of the Palestine Liberation Organization's legitimacy as a representative of the Palestinian people after 1974 altered the meaning of a comprehensive settlement implicit in the framing of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Observers in the United States recognized that a resolution that excluded Palestinian nationalism was not going to get very far, creating a split between what some U.S. officials believed about Palestinianism and the consensus among Israeli leaders, regardless of party.

After a confrontation between Palestinian commandos and the Jordanian Royal Army in June 1970, for example, Under-Secretary of State Eliot Richardson acknowledged that the United States "may have missed the boat earlier in thinking only of the Palestinians as refugees."⁵⁴ Then, after the Jordanian Royal Army's massacres of Palestinians later that year in "Black September," even Nixon could observe that a lasting peace in the Middle East could not be achieved "without addressing the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people."⁵⁵ This thinking developed through the 1970s and co-existed with Kissinger's promises to Rabin. Perhaps the most forceful statement of this recognition came from the deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs in his 1975 testimony to Congress. "In many ways," said Harold Saunders, "the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the heart of that conflict."⁵⁶

⁵³ Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 143.

⁵⁵ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 143.

⁵⁶ Harold H. Saunders, "U.S. Foreign Policy and Peace in the Middle East," Prepared statement before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, November 12, 1975.

A critical moment occurred in January 1976 when a U.N. Security Council Resolution on the Middle East favoring the establishment of an independent Palestinian mini-state came to a vote. The Palestine Liberation Organization played a part in crafting this resolution, and it had wide support, including from the Arab states, the Soviet Union, France, and Japan. Such a resolution would have helped to adapt the framework for the Arab-Israeli dispute to accommodate the realities of Palestinian nationalism and aspirations for Palestinian self-determination. Indeed, it would have been the first time that the U.N. Security Council had gone on record supporting the creation of a Palestinian state. The position of the United States was to be pivotal. In this case, the Ford administration chose to cast the sole “no” vote, thereby vetoing the resolution.⁵⁷

Even so, by 1977, Carter and his national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, could not imagine the comprehensive resolution they desired without Palestinian participation. Carter spoke of his support for a Palestinian “homeland,” though as president he never went as far as to call for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Yet, Carter’s use of the term “homeland” indicated his belief that Palestinian national rights, however limited in conception, were integral to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. To be sure, Palestinian rights represented a human rights concern for Carter, but he also believed that they represented a strategic concern for the United States. Carter’s stance on the Palestinians early in his presidency represented an important counterpoint to Kissinger’s perspective.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Teltsch, “U.S. Casts Veto on Mideast Plan in U.N.’s Council,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1976, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/01/27/archives/us-casts-veto-on-mideast-plan-in-uns-council-americans-say.html>.

The climactic moment in Jackson's narrative comes in the Carter administration's first year in office. In October 1977, the administration announced the joint U.S.-Soviet Statement, which called for reconvening the Geneva peace conference and included a reference to the "rights of the Palestinian people."⁵⁸ It was intended to be *pro forma*, but it elicited a barrage of criticism from Israeli leaders and U.S. critics that surprised Carter. Critics charged him with playing "Russian roulette" with Israeli security.⁵⁹

Initially, Carter defended his policy, saying, "I will personally be prepared to use the influence of the United States to help the negotiations succeed."⁶⁰ But the accumulating criticism eroded his resolve, so he abandoned his expectations for a comprehensive peace. Yaqub calls this Carter's "Camp David retreat."⁶¹

The administration's retreat on the joint statement hardened the positions of Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization against going to Geneva. In this context, Sadat declared his desire to visit Jerusalem, apparently seeing this unilateral move as the only way to break the impasse. Sadat's visit to Jerusalem effectively sabotaged the possibility for reconvening the Geneva Conference. Carter then decided he had no choice but to support Sadat's overture. Carter settled for playing the central role in the Camp David Accords rather than a joint role in a comprehensive peace. At Sadat's and Begin's initiative, then, the administration reverted to Kissinger's step-by-step policy approach and blocking Soviet involvement in the peace process. As Jackson puts it, "in this context,

⁵⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 176.

⁵⁹ Edward Walsh and Murrey Marder, "President Warns of 'Partisanship' on Middle East," *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1977.

⁶⁰ Walsh and Marder, "President Warns of 'Partisanship' on Middle East," *The Washington Post*.

⁶¹ Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers*, 239.

it is unsurprising that the Soviets finally turned decisively against the Americans' peacemaking efforts."⁶²

Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev wrote to Carter that the Egyptian-Israeli accord “not only ‘fail[ed] to resolve fundamental issues underlying the Arab-Israeli conflict . . . but it does not even bring us closer to their solution.’”⁶³ Carter, though, portrayed the 1978 agreement between Israel and Egypt as the “world’s . . . prayers” having “been answered.”⁶⁴ Jackson’s analysis affirms that, in this case, Brezhnev’s interpretation was more accurate. The framework of the 1978 Camp David Accords adopted Begin’s vision of “autonomy” for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which effaced any idea of Palestinian collective rights. In addition, these accords removed Egypt as a military adversary from the conflict without bringing an end to Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, allowing the Israeli government to increase Israeli settlement of the occupied territories.

The accords enabled decades of what Anziska calls “preventing Palestine.”⁶⁵ Partly because of the power imbalance between the great powers in the Middle East, the United States was able to block any progress towards the international consensus on a resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute that seriously addressed Palestinian national rights. The failure of U.S. officials to successfully adapt to the rise of Palestinianism was central to the broader failure that Jackson documents.

⁶² Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 186.

⁶³ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 187.

⁶⁴ Jimmy Carter, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Camp David Meeting on the Middle East,” The American Presidency Project, September 18, 1978, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/243134>.

⁶⁵ Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*.

Evading Responsibility

Jackson's analysis demonstrates that each administration from Lyndon Johnson to Carter could have done more for a comprehensive settlement. This conclusion is more persuasive considering the circumstances that favored a comprehensive resolution. For example, Soviet officials were prepared to go to great lengths to bring it to fruition, with two Soviet peace proposals rejected by Kissinger before the 1973 war. In addition, by the middle of the 1970s, the frontline Arab states in addition to the Palestine Liberation Organization under Yasser Arafat had indicated a willingness to accept peace along Israel's pre-1967 borders. U.S. administrations, therefore, had a greater capacity to achieve a resolution than they have admitted.

The standard narrative tends to diminish the agency of U.S. policymakers. In their recollections, policymakers have contributed to this interpretation. For example, rather than considering how his insistence on step-by-step diplomacy might have forestalled a settlement in 1974–1975, Kissinger appealed to Eban's quip that the Arab heads of state "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." Kissinger was referring to the decision of Arab states at the 1974 Rabat summit to endorse the Palestine Liberation Organization as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." This decision foreclosed Kissinger's preferred "Jordanian option" for negotiating the West Bank. By doing so, Kissinger believed, the Arab heads of state had done what they could to sabotage the "peace process." They had done this for cynical and selfish reasons, according to Kissinger, satisfying "their domestic political requirements by championing the [Palestine Liberation Organization]" while they excluded "themselves from further West Bank negotiations."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 382-84.

Likewise, when it came to the conditions for U.S. recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Carter appealed to the nation's "honor" as a reason to maintain the status quo. Carter took this stance even as he claimed to detest the policy. "It is absolutely ridiculous," Carter wrote in his diary, "that we pledged under Kissinger and Nixon that we would not negotiate with the [Palestine Liberation Organization] . . . but our country's honor is at stake."⁶⁷ Yet, it was nowhere mandated that Carter attach the country's honor to a private pledge by Kissinger with which he professed to disagree. In such ways, U.S. policymakers could create their own obstacles to a comprehensive resolution.

In explaining this behavior, Jackson is intent on showing that the "domestic factor was not decisive."⁶⁸ He means that U.S. domestic politics cannot be blamed for U.S. policymakers' inability to achieve a comprehensive Middle East peace. Jackson's interpretation challenges the thesis of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt that the "Israel lobby" determines the parameters of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.⁶⁹ To be sure, Mearsheimer and Walt focused especially on the post-Cold War period in diagnosing the role of the Israel lobby. In Jackson's view, however, the groups that formed the "Israel lobby" did not determine the failure to achieve a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli dispute in the 1970s any more than did so-called "rejectionist" Palestinian groups or the Israeli government under Begin. U.S. policymakers could have opposed the Israel lobby had they been determined to do so.

⁶⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 169.

⁶⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 6.

⁶⁹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

Yet, that is not so say that the “domestic factor” was not often consequential between 1967 and 1979. For example, at the prospect of an administration’s confrontation with Israel over policy, this factor often came into play. Jackson shows that administrations often claimed to be prepared to exert more pressure on Israel at the completion of the next election cycle, whether Nixon after 1972, or Ford or Carter after 1976. Yet, when the first year of the new administration came, they never did so. The trepidation of U.S. administrations increased after the Watergate scandal and the aftermath of the Vietnam War generated perceptions of a weakened U.S. presidency. Yet, as Jackson explains, the conditions after the Vietnam War in fact made it more urgent for U.S. officials to cooperate with the Soviet Union to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, since the costs to both superpowers of another Arab-Israeli war would be unbearable. And yet, it didn’t happen.

Disastrous Consequences

Were U.S. policymakers most responsible for the failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute through a comprehensive settlement between 1967 and 1979? Yes. No actors were better positioned to help realize this outcome. Furthermore, U.S. policymakers understood what it required and grasped why it was important. Nonetheless, they mostly undermined attempts to achieve it.

Earlier historiographical confusion about this failure can be attributed to the tendency to pay more attention to what U.S. policymakers publicly said than to what they did. As Kissinger put it in 1999, “Those of us in the Nixon and Ford Administrations who had the honor to make the first steps take some pride in having laid down some of the markers on

the road still being traveled.”⁷⁰ In Jackson’s view, “the policy that Kissinger promoted in his public declarations ultimately failed not because the philosophy it was based upon simply had no chance of succeeding, but because, in practice, the United States pursued very different goals.”⁷¹ Above all, those different goals were the pursuit of “unilateral advantage” in the Cold War and the alleviation of pressure on Israel at the expense of the Arab parties involved.

Yet, the pursuit of these goals turned out to be self-defeating. Jackson concludes that “both the United States and Israel would be better off if the superpowers had been able to settle the dispute during the 1970s.”⁷² For instance, the Camp David Accords freed Israel to pursue military campaigns in Lebanon, which in turn encouraged America’s own entrenchment in the region. Put another way, the failure of great-power diplomacy in the 1960s and 1970s gave way to the militarization of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East in the 1980s and after.

On Jan. 18, 2024, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conveyed the “truth” to Israel’s “American friends” that the Israeli prime minister is “capable of saying no to our friends.”⁷³ Netanyahu acted with the confidence that the United States would not withdraw its support for Israel no matter how he might embarrass the great power. Whatever protestations President Joe Biden’s administration uttered about Israeli conduct in the 2023–24 Gaza war, whatever fears about the damage the Israeli campaign was doing to U.S. interests, the administration ensured that critical U.S. diplomatic and military support to Israel continued. It is apparently *more* difficult in 2024 for an U.S.

⁷⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1058.

⁷¹ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 192.

⁷² Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 195.

⁷³ Lazar Berman, “Netanyahu vows no Palestinian state,” *Times of Israel*, January 18, 2024.

administration to threaten that support, whatever the risks of Israel's behavior to the great power's perceived interests, let alone to those suffering the Israeli onslaught. Shock at the brutality of Hamas' and Islamic Jihad's attacks in Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and of Israel's attack on the civilian population in Gaza since that day, has led some to wonder what could have been done to prevent these horrors. Jackson's *A Lost Peace* would be a good starting point for understanding how the missed opportunities for superpower cooperation in the Middle East between 1967 and 1979 contributed to the intractability of 21st-century carnage in Israel and Palestine.

Alex Hobson is a historian of the United States and Middle East history who specializes in culture, politics, and the history of emotions. His book, Chains of Vengeance: The United States, the Middle East, and the Wars of Terrorism, 1967-2021, connects insights from emerging work on emotions in international history to one of the most consequential examples of multi-sided, multi-generational, globalized revenge in history. The book provides analysis of U.S.-Middle East history from multiple perspectives and is the first scholarly work to ask why vengeance moved to the center of U.S.-Middle East relations. Hobson's research has appeared in Diplomatic History and International History Review, among other publications. He is currently a visiting assistant professor of history at Wake Forest University, and he has previously taught at Boston University, Northwestern University, Drake University, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He has held post-doctoral fellowships at the Chabraja Center for Historical Studies and the U.S. Naval War College.



4. The Other Side: Digging into the Soviet Archives

Sergey Radchenko

“The difference between our goal and the Soviet goal in the Middle East is very simple but fundamental,” President Richard Nixon recalled telling his secretary of state. “We want peace. *They* want the Middle East.”⁷⁴ Not so fast, argues Galen Jackson in his sweeping overview of the Middle Eastern peace process, *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1979*.

The Kremlin, he posits, wanted to achieve a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and was prepared to work with the United States to this effect in the broader interests of détente. The Soviet positions were in fact quite close to those advocated by the United States. But the American policymakers missed the bus. They — and in particular Henry Kissinger — could not overcome their deep hostility to the Soviet Union and their Cold-War mindset. The promise of scoring points at Moscow’s expense, argues Jackson, outweighed considerations of a more enlightened kind, leading to the deadlock of the peace process; hence, *A Lost Peace*.

Jackson’s thesis rests largely on a re-reading of the U.S. diplomatic record, materials from *Foreign Relations of the United States*, and the relevant presidential libraries, as well as the sprawling memoir literature. These materials dictate certain limitations. To the extent that he looks at Moscow’s decision-making, it is mainly through the lens of the U.S. record. This unwittingly creates the impression that, whereas American policy was uncertain and contradictory and ever hostage to shifting political winds at home, the

⁷⁴ Richard Nixon, *RN: the Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 477.

Soviets were consistently benign, and if they ever did anything to upset the apple cart, their behavior was “deeply puzzling.”⁷⁵

The puzzle comes from the absence of the relevant Soviet archival record. Fortunately, much of this record has now been declassified and is available across different archives in Moscow, in particular at the Russian State Archive for Contemporary History. Right up until Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which made further research impossible, I spent several years working with this material. It includes detailed exchanges and memoranda of conversations between the Soviet leaders and their allies and partners in the Middle East. I am thus in a position to test Jackson’s arguments by weighing them against the evidence in the Russian archives.

The picture that emerges is somewhat more complex than Jackson allows, even as some of his interpretations stand. This conclusion applies across the board, but for the sake of a concise analysis, I will discuss two examples that overall show the Soviets pursuing much more self-serving goals than one would learn from Jackson’s otherwise convincing narrative.

Example 1: The Soviet Union and the Arabs, 1967–68

Jackson argues, correctly, that, “USSR motives [in the Middle East] were complex, with the Kremlin leaders pulled in two directions.” On the one hand, he continues, the Soviet leaders were “not willing to abandon their pro-Arab stance, which – because it had the

⁷⁵ Galen Jackson, *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1979* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023), 112.

potential to hurt US interests in the Middle East – they seemed to think was an effective Cold War strategy.” On the other hand, they had “an obvious interest in peace.”⁷⁶

At this point, a careful reader might note that, for the Soviets, supporting the Arabs did not *seem* to be an effective Cold War strategy. However, it actually *was* an effective Cold War strategy. The distinction is more than pure semantics. Confronting the United States in the Middle East required a choice of clients. In this case, it was not even much of a choice: Either the Soviet Union aligned itself with the Arabs or it would have no ground to stand on. Anyone waging the Cold War in the Middle East would have come to the same conclusion.

Jackson, however, argues that, in reality, the Soviets were deeply frustrated with the Arabs and worried about ending up in a war with the United States. Thus, he argues, “taking on a deeper commitment to the Arabs was the last thing that the USSR leadership seemed to want,” and this was because “Moscow did not appear to have any real political interest in supporting the Arabs.” “After all,” Jackson adds, “the Soviets were irritated by the commitment of resources that backing their clients entailed.”⁷⁷

Jackson does not provide sufficient evidence to back up these arguments. He relies on contemporaneous assessments of U.S. officials and analysts, though he does also cite Guy Laron’s conclusion that Moscow viewed Egypt as a “bottomless pit.”⁷⁸ No one would question Laron’s expertise in the matter (he is a leading historian of Moscow’s involvement in the Middle East) and, indeed, it’s entirely conceivable that the Soviets

⁷⁶ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 28-29.

⁷⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 28.

⁷⁸ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 28.

were concerned about the costs of their overseas commitments (who wouldn't be?). But it is a very different proposition to argue that Moscow "did not appear to have any real political interest in supporting the Arabs."

Here's one political interest: that the Arabs were among Moscow's clientele, and supporting them helped project Soviet power and influence into the region at the expense of the United States. The declassified Russian record fully supports this conclusion. After the Arabs' defeat in the Six Day War of 1967, Moscow worked quickly to build up its clients' military capacity, including sending a substantial number of military personnel who not only trained the Arab forces but also engaged in operations against Israel.

Explaining the Kremlin's thinking to Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad on April 19, 1968, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev noted that the events of 1967 helped the Arabs understand "who their true friends and enemies are." Their friends were, of course, the Soviets, who "well understand the nature of American imperialism." "Struggle against it [U.S. imperialism] is one of the foundational pillars of our policy." Brezhnev argued that Israel and the United States were "colluding," voiced his full support for Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's domestic and foreign policies and vowed to continue the struggle in the Middle East "to the victorious end," albeit relying on political methods.⁷⁹ It was during that very meeting that Brezhnev promised to send Soviet pilots to the Middle East. These would be "war-fighting pilots [*boevye letchiki*], who would be capable of carrying out any military operations ... I think this decision will gladden the President," he added, referring to Nasser.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Conversation between Leonid Brezhnev and Mahmoud Riad, April 19, 1968, RGANI: fond 80, opis 1, delo 602, listy 16, 20, Moscow, Russia.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, list 21.

None of these comments align well with the premise that the Soviets did not want to take on additional commitments in the Middle East, or that they had no political interest in supporting the Arabs. Obviously, the opposite was true. That is not to say, however, that the Soviets were keen on another war in the Middle East. As Brezhnev made clear and as, indeed, Jackson highlights, a key Soviet concern was that the Arabs would begin another war only to lose it. This would have terrible ramifications for Moscow's prestige in the region. As Brezhnev explained to the Egyptians, "If you begin [the fight], you must succeed – so that you begin so as to win. You can't allow a situation where you decide to scare Israel and then you yourselves have to retreat. I show great caution in this matter, for here one must take into account the interests of our peoples and considerations of international nature."⁸¹

Incidentally, and as one can see clearly from this and other pronouncements by Brezhnev, he was not worried about the prospect of a direct Soviet-U.S. clash in the Middle East, which was practically unthinkable as far as he was concerned. Rather, Brezhnev feared the loss of superpower prestige that would come if a U.S. client thrashed a Soviet client. Jackson never quite grasps this distinction, which is why he keeps wondering why the Soviets, for all their fear of a war in the Middle East, kept resupplying their clients, something that clearly facilitated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's decision to resort to war in October 1973.

⁸¹ Cited in Sergey Radchenko, *To Run the World: the Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 396.

Example 2: Soviet Personnel in Egypt

In his discussion of the run-up to the Yom Kippur War, Jackson seriously downplays Moscow's enthusiasm for staying put in Egypt. He argues that the Kremlin welcomed Sadat's decision to expel over 10,000 Soviet military personnel from Egypt in the summer of 1972. For evidence, Jackson relies on the diary of a Soviet Central Committee functionary, Anatoly Chernyaev, who wrote on July 22, 1972 that "it may be for the best – we will not be liable when he [Sadat] tries to wage war against Israel and gets smacked once again."⁸² There is always a slight danger in overly relying on Chernyaev (I also rely on him too much, to be sure). His views hardly represented the "mainstream" of Soviet foreign policy-making, especially in the 1970s, when he was a relatively junior functionary. It is, however, tempting to cite him, since he was a very perceptive man, and his diary — thanks to the efforts of Svetlana Savranskaya at the National Security Archive — is not just available online, but in the English translation at that.

While generally relying on Chernyaev, Jackson also notes a certain range of opinions on the question of the expulsion of the Soviet personnel, including one by the Soviet spy Vadim Kirpichenko, who recounted Sadat's move as an "unfriendly step."⁸³ And yet, from this nuance, Jackson falls right back to oversimplifications, claiming in the end that "contrary to how Kissinger perceived the situation, then, Moscow was anxious to get its

⁸² Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 69; "The Diary of Anatoly S. Chernyaev," diary entry, July 22, 1972, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book (NSAEBB) No. 379, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB379/1972%20as%20of%20May%2024,%202012%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁸³ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 69.

forces out of the Middle East.”⁸⁴ The reality was more complex. While the Kremlin did not rule out an eventual military withdrawal, this could only happen in the context of an overall settlement that would strengthen Moscow’s position in the Middle East (naturally, at America’s expense).

The Soviets were much more anxious about maintaining their influence over Sadat than about getting their forces out of the Middle East. That’s why Sadat’s slap in the face angered Brezhnev, who complained in internal councils that the Egyptian president had foolishly discarded a “trump card” that he could have used in political negotiations. On the other hand, Brezhnev remained confident that, for the time-being at least, Egypt remained dependent on the Soviet Union. He advised his colleagues that Moscow would have to continue working with the Egyptians “to counter US efforts to weaken the Soviet influence in the Middle East.”⁸⁵

What Jackson fails to fully appreciate is just how much the overall Soviet imperative of waging the Cold War guided and, indeed, defined Moscow’s approach to the Middle East.

Final Thoughts

Jackson argues that Kissinger “had prioritized the Cold War competition with Moscow over the objective of Arab-Israeli peace.”⁸⁶ He blames Kissinger’s “Cold War mentality,”

⁸⁴ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 70.

⁸⁵ Cited in Radchenko, *To Run the World*, 396.

⁸⁶ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 130.

which was “designed to prevent the Soviet Union from playing a meaningful role in the peace process, with the aim of reducing its influence.”⁸⁷

Before we accept this harsh judgment, however, we might ask ourselves: Was it all that surprising that Kissinger approached foreign policy with a Cold-War mentality? It was, after all, the Cold War. Approaching the Cold War with anything other than a Cold-War mentality was a sure road to defeat.

This logic worked for both the United States and the Soviet Union, not just in the Middle East but globally, and this is what made détente so unstable. Consider Soviet efforts to develop relations with Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini after the Iranian revolution (despite the hostage crisis, in which Moscow was decidedly unhelpful!). Consider Soviet adventures in Africa, where the Kremlin hardly missed an opportunity to undercut the Americans even at the height of détente. Vietnam, of course, was the ultimate test of Soviet reliability as an American partner: The Soviets never did show much interest in helping Washington withdraw with dignity, and pocketed every gain in Southeast Asia they could lay their hands on. Why, then, should the Arab-Israeli conflict have been any different?

The Soviet-U.S. relationship remained fundamentally competitive, and just as the United States sought to undercut its rival when it had opportunities to do so, the Soviets, too, would stab the Americans in the back at every opportunity. It is not that Brezhnev was not interested in peace in the Middle East. But what he sought was peace that would elevate the Soviet Union’s role as the key player in the region. Just as Kissinger sought to squeeze the Soviets out (something he did successfully in the end), so the Soviets sought

⁸⁷ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 132.

the kind of a settlement that would reinforce Moscow's standing as the superpower patron and protector of the Arabs.

It is difficult to see how such a settlement could come except at America's and Israel's expense. A Soviet-sponsored peace in the Middle East would thus look something like a Soviet-sponsored peace in Southeast Asia, or in Angola. Kissinger fully grasped this and worked tirelessly to undermine the Soviets. What we can see today — thanks to the declassified Soviet records — is that he was not wrong to think about the Soviet-U.S. competition in the Middle East as precisely that, *a competition*. Even more — a bitter rivalry.

Of course, I cannot possibly blame Jackson for partially misreading the Soviet side of the story. The extensive records, of which I only scratched the surface in this brief review, and which show Moscow consistently pursuing self-serving policies in the Middle East, were not available to him. Indeed, though declassified, they remain off-limits today to all but the most daring. I certainly would not advise anyone to travel to Moscow to explore the Soviet side of the Cold War in the still-open archives for fear of being taken hostage.

Lacking these materials, and prone — as he seems to have been — to take a critical attitude towards U.S. actions, Jackson portrayed the Soviets in rosier colors than they deserve. Revisionist historians who once wrote about the Cold War on the basis of strictly American sources faced a similar problem. Their historiography sadly did not fare particularly well after the Soviet records opened up and we discovered that the Soviet Union was out to get us after all. This should not, of course, deter good historians from dissecting their own country's flaws and, indeed, discovering all the squandered opportunities to win lasting peace.

Sergey Radchenko is the Wilson E. Schmidt Distinguished Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, based in Bologna, Italy. He is the author of the forthcoming To Run the World: the Kremlin's Cold War Bid for Global Power (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024).



5. Making Peace from the Outside-In or the Inside-Out

Janice Gross Stein

As the most violent war yet in the long history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rages, a war especially horrific in its consequences for civilian populations, thinking inevitably jumps to “the day after” the fighting stops. Front and center is the opportunity, this time, to make peace between two states, the state of Israel and the state of Palestine, living side by side. This, sadly, is not a new idea. It has a long and frustrating lineage.

Despite this long history of failure, people are uncommonly willing to step forward with ideas on how to make peace. Beyond the obvious professional diplomats and international lawyers, peace cartographers are almost a cottage industry. Historians, political scientists, journalists, scientists, and foundations, not to mention politicians, regularly draw virtual maps of how peace can be forged. They do so even when the conflicts are regional, intractable, violent, and enduring. These peace maps are well-drawn, logical, comprehensive, and compelling. Why then do they succeed so rarely? Why do so few leaders of governments and oppositions follow the directions to get to peace?

One word best simplifies the complex forces at work: context. Context that is shaped by historical memory and deep grievance. Louise Arbour, the chief prosecutor of war crimes for the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia, famously remarked that the Middle East suffers from too much history and too little geography.⁸⁸ In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, both peoples make historical claims to the same small piece of territory, they both reach back into history for validation but start the

⁸⁸ Personal conversation, June 2010.

historical clock at different times, and their historical narratives each exclude the other except as an aggressor. Each sees itself as a victim of self-interested imperial powers who were remarkably ignorant when they came to the region. And each has a deeply ingrained confidence — a confidence that is invisible to outsiders who do not speak the local languages — that they will be there long after the outsiders lose interest and go home. Finally, each community includes religious voices that regard their right to all of the land as divinely inspired. It should be no surprise that peace has eluded Israel and Palestine for well over a hundred years.

Galen Jackson approaches the Arab-Israeli dispute with little attention to the historical memories that have etched the politics of the region. That is perhaps a function of the limited historical period that is the focus of his book.⁸⁹ He looks only at 13 years, a small and very particular period in the long-enduring conflict when Arab states were deeply involved in the wake of the war in 1967 and replaced Palestinians as the principal focus of attention. Even then, Amman and Damascus are largely ignored in this story. Cairo does better, but this is largely a history of the Arab-Israeli dispute told from the perspective of Washington that was primarily focused on Moscow rather than on the Middle East. Not for the first time and not for the last, an outside great power saw the Middle East as an arena of competition with another great power.

A Cold War Story

The central argument of this meticulously researched book is that the United States “lost” the opportunity to make peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors largely

⁸⁹ *A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-79*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023.

because of Washington's determination to oust the Soviet Union, once and for all, from the Middle East. Henry Kissinger, first the national security adviser and then secretary of state for eight of these 13 years, was focused on disrupting the alliance between the Soviet Union and Egypt and Syria and expelling Moscow from the region. That grand strategy framed everything he did during those critical years. The secretary of state, Jackson shows, ignored clearly expressed signals from Soviet leaders, especially from 1973 on, that they were willing to agree to terms to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute that were acceptable to the United States.

Jackson mines newly released historical documents, particularly from the United States, and provides compelling evidence that challenges the conventional wisdom that the Soviet Union was determined to prevent a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moscow was allegedly motivated by ideological reasons and by the opportunities that an ongoing conflict provided to strengthen its alliances and deepen its presence in the region. Jackson asks the counterfactual question: Would it have not made more sense for the superpowers to have collaborated to find a solution to a conflict that conceivably could escalate to a major war between them? Moscow and Washington had an obvious interest in not being dragged into war by their partners in the region. And, if they did share an interest in avoiding war, why didn't they — as the Nixon administration suggested they would — subordinate special interests in order to resolve the conflict and strengthen détente that was so important to both governments? That is the defining puzzle that Jackson tries to solve in this carefully researched book.

The story leaps off the page in this lively and well-written story. It should be no surprise to regular readers of American history that both President Richard Nixon and Kissinger use extraordinarily vivid language in their private memos and conversations. Nor is their frustration with Israel and the colorful language they use to describe its leaders

surprising. What does become clear in Jackson's careful reconstruction of these years is that Nixon was far more interested in a comprehensive settlement than was Kissinger. It is surprising to read how deeply committed the president was, in theory, to a settlement but how little he was willing to do in practice. It is almost as if these conversations were a private outlet for Nixon that then absolved him of the need to do very much about pushing a settlement forward in practice.

Jackson establishes clearly that, from 1971 on, Moscow wanted to work with Washington on a comprehensive agreement. That interest in stabilizing the conflict deepened after Egypt and Syria launched a war in 1973 in a deliberate and politically sophisticated attempt to destabilize the *status quo* and force open a pathway to a political settlement. It would have been helpful if Jackson's account had made more space for the deep frustration in Cairo that was ignited by Moscow's repeated refusals to supply the advanced weaponry that President Anwar Sadat requested. That refusal is consistent with the broader argument that Jackson makes about Soviet restraint, a lesson learned the hard way after the disastrous role they played in igniting the war in 1967 when Soviet intelligence shared false information with Cairo.

The book also clearly establishes its central argument that Kissinger gave priority to the expulsion of Soviet forces from the Middle East over a comprehensive settlement that would be orchestrated by the two superpowers. Frustration in Cairo made that a possible option. It was not only the refusal to supply advanced weapons but also the condescension that Soviet officers displayed toward their Egyptian counterparts, their belittling of the skills of the Egyptian army, and Soviet officers' frequent stereotyping of their Egyptian counterparts that bordered on racism that damaged the relationship. Sadat's expulsion of Soviet advisers — designed to satisfy one of Kissinger's core demands in order to draw the United States in — was met with widespread relief and

considerable *Schadenfreude* among the officer class in Egypt. Kissinger's objective of expelling the Soviets was far easier to achieve than he had imagined because of the toxic relations between the Soviet and Egyptian officer corps. And Sadat understood well that only the United States had leverage with Israel.

The Limits of Seeing “Outside-In”

Where Jackson goes beyond the evidence that he so meticulously gathers is in his claim that the United States “lost” the opportunity to make peace. Washington sacrificed peace, Jackson claims, because Kissinger gave priority to the geopolitical objective of expelling the Soviets rather than reducing the risk of war between the two superpowers by imposing a peace on Israel and on its Arab neighbors, including Palestine. The flaws in the logic are not hard to spot.

First, although Kissinger cannot claim credit for the expulsion of the Soviet Union from the region — that was almost exclusively Sadat's doing — the result was to drastically reduce the risk of war between the two nuclear superpowers. Removing Soviet forces resolves part of the puzzle that Jackson poses in the book — that U.S. decision-makers seemingly sacrificed the opportunity to reduce the risk of nuclear war when they privileged the expulsion of Soviet forces at the expense of joint peacemaking. The two objectives — reducing the risk of superpower war and expelling Soviet forces — are mutually reinforcing objectives. If Soviet forces were no longer in Egypt, the probability of an encounter between the forces of the Soviet Union and Israel, which could drag the United States in on behalf of its ally, was now close to zero. There was, in other words, more than one route to reducing the risk of war.

The core claim, then, is that Kissinger forfeited the opportunity to work together with Soviet leaders to impose a peace and that Arabs, Israelis, and Palestinians have paid the price ever since. That claim can only be tested against the consuming efforts of subsequent U.S. administrations to broker peace agreements. President Jimmy Carter came to office wholly committed to a comprehensive peace and found himself dealing with Sadat, who refused to allow his Arab allies to get in his way of a bilateral peace agreement with Israel that would return the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt. Although the agreement crafted at Camp David between Egypt and Israel was difficult to achieve, it was the easiest to accomplish because of the relatively favorable geography of a large desert that separated the two former combatants. President Bill Clinton devoted enormous time, attention, and effort to reaching an agreement between Israel and Palestine but was ultimately unable to overcome the challenges that have bedeviled those who have tried to impose or mediate comprehensive agreements for more than a hundred years. It is hard to argue, then, that a U.S.-Soviet effort would have succeeded from 1973 to 1974, had it been tried, when everything else, before and after, has failed.

Perhaps the problem comes in the framing of the book. Jackson suggests that using the Middle East as a window is an effective way to comprehend why Washington and Moscow were unable to cooperate on Arab-Israeli peace and consequently jeopardized détente. To treat the Middle East as a window into the superpower relationship, however, is to ignore a great deal of what is important to the leaders and peoples of the region. It is ultimately to deprive them of agency in the making of agreements that are far more important to them than they are to powers outside the region. The analytic challenge of understanding why peace has not been made has to start in Jerusalem, in Ramallah, in Amman, in Damascus, and in Cairo. Washington and Moscow can hinder, as they have at times, they can help, as they have tried to do at times, but they cannot “lose” a peace that the peoples of the region have not yet found.

That conclusion is again top of mind as Israel and Hamas engage in the most violent episode yet in the enduring Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And once again, peacemaking is being led from the outside — by the United States and by Arab governments who historically have privately shown no great concern either for the suffering of Palestinians or the independence of Palestine. This time, it has fallen to outsiders because both parties to this war — the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the military leadership of Hamas — have no interest in a peace agreement or a two-state solution. That it is the only option does not, however, make it an option that is likely to succeed. Peace cannot be imposed from the outside. It can only be made from the inside.

Janice Gross Stein is the Belzberg Professor of Conflict Management and Founding Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto. She is also a senior fellow at the Kissinger Center at the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University. Her recent scholarship is on great-power competition and technology policy.



6. Author Response: Was There No Room for U.S.-Soviet Cooperation in the Middle East?

Galen Jackson

I would like to thank Maia Carter Hallward, Alex Hobson, Sergey Radchenko, Janice Gross Stein, and Salim Yaqub for agreeing to review my book, *A Lost Peace*, and for participating in this exchange.⁹⁰ I am also indebted to the editors at the *Texas National Security Review* — a journal that I hold in very high regard — for the time and effort they put into organizing this roundtable. As a major admirer of this journal, I am delighted that my book is featured in one of its roundtables.

Hallward, Hobson, and Yaqub are all very positive in their reviews of the book.⁹¹ Hallward and Hobson, for example, both endorse its core arguments, with the latter adding that it “persuasively challenge[s] triumphalist accounts of U.S. diplomacy in the Middle East” and provides an “essential” revision to the existing literature in this area. In addition, all three believe that the book helps explain the tragic events that are unfolding in the Middle East today and offers helpful historical context and guidance to policymakers. It means a great deal to me to know that scholars as knowledgeable as Hallward, Hobson, and Yaqub find my work convincing, and I am extremely appreciative to them for what they have to say in their respective reviews.

⁹⁰ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*.

⁹¹ Yaqub not only blurbed the book, but, as he notes in his essay for this roundtable, also wrote a separate review of it in June 2023. See Salim Yaqub, “Book Review: American and Israeli Intransigence Prevented Peace in the Middle East,” *Catalyst Review*, June 29, 2023, <https://catalyst-journal.com/2023/06/galen-jackson-a-lost-peace-review>.

For her part, Stein is also generally quite positive in her review of my book. She finds the story I tell in *A Lost Peace* engaging and believes that it makes some important contributions to the literature in this area. The book, in her view, is “meticulously researched” and “provides compelling evidence that challenges the conventional wisdom that the Soviet Union was determined to prevent a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.” She adds, “The story leaps off the page in this lively and well-written story.” I also found her speculative analysis of President Richard Nixon’s views on the Arab-Israeli issue very interesting and potentially important. Although Nixon, she writes, “was far more interested in a comprehensive settlement than was [National Security Adviser and Secretary of State Henry] Kissinger,” she observes: “It is surprising to read how deeply committed the president was, in theory, to a settlement but how little he was willing to do in practice. It is almost as if these conversations were a private outlet for Nixon that then absolved him of the need to do very much about pushing a settlement forward in practice.”

Stein and I, however, do not see eye-to-eye with respect to every part of this story. Although she raises several areas of disagreement between us, the most important one has to do with the question of whether outside powers — in this case, the United States and Soviet Union — are capable of facilitating Arab-Israeli peace. In Stein’s view, my book, in claiming that the superpowers could and should have tried to help engineer such a settlement during this period, fundamentally misunderstands the obstacles to Middle East peace. Put simply, Stein believes that outside powers, though they can perhaps help on the margins, simply cannot play such a role in the region. She concludes her review with, “Peace cannot be imposed from the outside. It can only be made from the inside.” To support that claim, Stein emphasizes that many U.S. presidents, such as Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, have failed to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement since the October 1973 conflict, and that the issues surrounding such a settlement are more

complicated than the ones that negotiators overcame with the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty.

My own view is different. For starters, the fact that the Carter administration — which I argue was quite ineffective when it came to Arab-Israeli diplomacy — failed to help engineer a comprehensive peace agreement does not prove that nothing more could have been done during the earlier period that immediately followed the 1973 conflict, or that a more politically savvy administration might have made more progress.⁹² This was a lost opportunity because, as Yaqub notes in his introduction to the roundtable, the situation has only become more difficult to deal with in subsequent years — with the continued expansion of Israeli settlements, the rightward shift in Israeli politics, the rise of groups such as Hamas, the isolation of the Palestinians, and the narrowing of the domestic political space for U.S. officials to pursue serious Arab-Israeli peacemaking efforts.

Stein argues that the particular complexity of addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — in contrast to the difficult but more feasible peace between Israel and Egypt — is another reason why outside powers may not be able to effectively usher in peace. However, from the standpoint of 2024, with the Middle East once again engulfed in violence — and with very large numbers of civilians directly suffering from that violence — and with many experts having long ago given up on the possibility of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I make precisely the opposite argument: that a U.S.-Soviet joint effort for peace in the 1970s would have left everyone, both inside and outside the region, far better off than they are today. Indeed, it should be abundantly clear to everyone by now

⁹² For my views on the Carter period, see Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 162-187; Galen Jackson, “Strategy and Two-Level Games: U.S. Domestic Politics and the Road to a Separate Peace,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 160-195.

that the parties to the dispute will not be able to reach a peace agreement on their own. Given that the conflict affects the rest of the world, I also argue that outside powers not only have a right to assert themselves in the diplomacy, but also a responsibility.

This disagreement — and a few others — notwithstanding, I truly appreciate how much Stein, who is among the most knowledgeable scholars who have worked on these issues, engaged with the book and the many complimentary points that she makes about it in her review.

Soviet Motives

Radchenko, however, is more critical of the book. His most fundamental objection to my argument has to do with his belief that the Cold War was, in essence, a simple fact of life — a sort of “given” that both superpowers more or less had to accept almost as a matter of course. Washington and Moscow, he suggests, really had no choice but to operate within a competitive and hostile framework and to accept the basic logic of that framework: that the Cold War, as an unalterable conflict, meant that the United States and the Soviet Union were forced to reach relentlessly for unilateral advantage at one another’s expense and to try to weaken one another. Radchenko, in other words, believes that serious and sustained U.S.-Soviet cooperation was more or less an impossibility, because neither side would ever have been willing to give up the competition, even in situations where they had overlapping strategic interests.

Indeed, Radchenko asserts that the two sides were essentially trapped in this situation and that no other course was available to them. “Was it all that surprising,” Radchenko asks, “that Kissinger approached foreign policy with a Cold-War mentality? It was, after all, the Cold War. Approaching the Cold War with anything other than a Cold-War

mentality was a sure road to defeat.” Thus, U.S. officials such as Kissinger were “not wrong to think about the Soviet-U.S. competition in the Middle East as precisely that, *a competition*. Even more — a bitter rivalry.”

Radchenko’s specific arguments about Soviet and U.S. policy, respectively, are in line with that basic perspective. Because the superpower relationship “remained fundamentally competitive,” he writes, *détente* was always “unstable,” “and just as the United States sought to undercut its rival when it had opportunities to do so, the Soviets, too, would stab the Americans in the back at every opportunity.” With that in mind, Radchenko dissents from my interpretation of Soviet policy in the Middle East during the period in question, writing that I “portrayed the Soviets in rosier colors than they deserve.” While the Kremlin might have been interested in peace, it only wanted an agreement “that would reinforce Moscow’s standing as the superpower patron and protector of the Arabs. It is difficult to see how such a settlement could come except at America’s and Israel’s expense.” Both sides, in short, were, according to Radchenko, committed to waging the Cold War — both in the Middle East and at the global level — and it should come as no surprise, then, that they were incapable of cooperating for an Arab-Israeli settlement.

My view is very different. As I emphasize throughout *A Lost Peace*, I do not believe that either the Americans or the Soviets took the Cold War as a given, nor do I think it would have made sense in strategic terms for them to do so. After all, being forced to deal with a hostile great power is a source of great weakness in international politics. And we know that the superpowers were fully capable of cooperating closely on issues where they

believed they shared key interests, such as when they collaborated to craft a stable security system in Europe and to try to limit the spread of nuclear weapons.⁹³

But as powerful as geopolitical interest is in shaping statecraft, it is obviously not the only consideration that determines state behavior. Other factors — such as ideology, domestic politics, and concerns about status — also come into play. My goal in *A Lost Peace*, then, was to try to understand how different leaders struck the balance between these various factors and how their approaches changed over time, with the ultimate aim of explaining why Washington and Moscow could not work together in the Middle East, despite their mutual interest in a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I approached Soviet policy in this area with that framework in mind. According to Radchenko, my book gives the impression that the Kremlin was “consistently benign” in the Middle East. Whereas he believes that my argument makes U.S. policy appear “uncertain and contradictory,” Radchenko asserts that I portray the Soviets in an entirely different light.

⁹³ On U.S.-Soviet diplomacy in Europe, especially as it related to the resolution of the so-called “German problem,” see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). On the German problem, see also James McAllister, *No Exit: America and the German Problem, 1943-1954* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002) and Brendan Rittenhouse Green, “Two Concepts of Liberty: U.S. Cold War Strategies and the Liberal Tradition,” *International Security* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 9-43. On U.S.-Soviet collaboration on nuclear nonproliferation, see, for example, Hal Brands, “Non-Proliferation and the Dynamics of the Middle Cold War: The Superpowers, the MLE, and the NPT,” *Cold War History* 7, no. 3 (2007): 389-423 and Andrew J. Coe and Jane Vaynman, “Collusion and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime,” *Journal of Politics* 77, no. 4 (October 2015): 983-997.

And yet, on the very same page, Radchenko notes that I “correctly” argue that “USSR motives [in the Middle East during the period that immediately followed the June 1967 war] were complex, with the Kremlin leaders pulled in two directions.” In other words, Radchenko quotes me as arguing that the Soviets, on the one hand, had “an obvious interest in peace,” and that on the other they were “not willing to abandon their pro-Arab stance — which, because it had the potential to hurt U.S. interests in the Middle East — they seemed to think was an effective Cold War strategy.” This, it is worth emphasizing, was in a section of Radchenko’s review in which he purported to show how I had misinterpreted Soviet policy in the region in 1967–1968. But while it is clear that we differ on some secondary issues, I found it hard to understand what he actually thought was wrong about my basic interpretation of that period. After all, he himself admits in that section that my characterization of how the Soviets were behaving in the Middle East at that time was “correct.”

In other words, it can scarcely be said that I tried to portray the Soviets as “consistently benign,” and I very much do not believe that is the picture of Soviet policy that emerges from the text.⁹⁴ I did, however, try to lay out how the Soviet approach in the Middle East changed over time, and I was struck by the shift that took place by September 1971, which was reflected in an important proposal that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko made to Nixon during a one-on-one meeting.⁹⁵ That offer, which included a provision for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the Middle East, showed clearly how dramatically Soviet policy had shifted — something that the key U.S. leaders, Nixon and Kissinger, recognized at the time. Many other documents pointed in that same direction — after 1971, it was obvious, including to Washington, that the Soviets wanted to cooperate with

⁹⁴ Yaqub, in his introduction, seems to agree with me on this point.

⁹⁵ Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 70-71.

the Americans to help reach an Arab-Israeli peace settlement, a conclusion that is fundamentally at odds with Radchenko's view that Moscow was determined throughout the whole of this period to "stab the Americans in the back at every opportunity."

Radchenko, of course, has worked extensively in Russian archives and had the opportunity to study "detailed exchanges and memoranda of conversations between the Soviet leaders and their allies and partners in the Middle East." That material, some of which will likely appear in his forthcoming book, might indeed shed some new light on this whole story when it comes out in May.⁹⁶ But it is hard for me to believe that what the Soviets were telling the Arabs was more likely to reflect the real thinking of the Kremlin leaders than what they were saying to the Americans and their allies in Eastern Europe, or that it will dramatically alter the basic picture that has emerged from those sources — which I relied on while writing *A Lost Peace* — and from accounts given by former Soviet officials.

After all, the evidence that Radchenko offers in his review does not really challenge my argument in any fundamental way, and it certainly does not demonstrate that the Soviets were constantly seeking to "stab the Americans in the back." Quite aside from the fact that Radchenko's review is concerned entirely with the period leading up to 1972, during which, to reiterate, I do not argue that Soviet policy was "consistently benign," the specific documents that he cites in his review do not undermine the basic story I tell in the book. The first example that he provides has to do with an April 1968 exchange between Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad, in which the former pledged to send Soviet pilots to the Middle East to support Egyptian military operations. Radchenko implies that Moscow was hoping to

⁹⁶ Radchenko, *To Run the World*.

escalate matters in the region, even if doing so risked a confrontation with Israel and, indeed, with the United States.

Leaving aside the fact that I discuss the post-1967 Soviet resupply effort in the book — as well as the fact that, as Radchenko notes, Brezhnev clarified during this meeting that he wanted to deal with the Arab-Israeli issue via “political methods” — Radchenko appears to attach more credibility to what the Soviets were saying to the Egyptians than what they were saying privately and to their Eastern European allies.⁹⁷ In the immediate aftermath of the war, Brezhnev made it abundantly clear to Moscow’s closest partners that the Kremlin was determined to avoid another blowup in the Middle East and that it would never countenance Israel’s destruction. “Why,” the general secretary asked, “should we stand up to Israel with war? After all, we do not say that we do not recognize Israel as a state.” “We acknowledged the nation of Israel and we are not going against it,” he added. “One must say that the tendency of the Arabs to eliminate Israel was not correct.”⁹⁸

Radchenko’s second example has to do with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s July 1972 decision to expel the large number of Soviet military personnel that had been stationed in Egypt since early 1970. In his view, I underestimate the degree to which Sadat’s action angered the Kremlin, as well as overstate the extent to which the Soviets wanted to get their forces out of the Middle East.

But even a cursory reading of the section of my book where I discuss this part of the story makes clear that Radchenko’s review does not meaningfully challenge my analysis.

⁹⁷ For my discussion of the Soviet military resupply of the Arabs after June 1967, see Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 30.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 29.

Aside from the fact that he fails to mention that the main reason that Sadat chose to expel the Soviets in the first place was because they were, to the Egyptian leader's mind, being overly restrained when it came to the military equipment that they were willing to offer the Arabs — a point which Stein believes deserves even greater attention — my account is entirely consistent with how Radchenko describes these events. As he notes, I am careful to point out that Sadat's decision was viewed by many officials in Moscow as “an unfriendly step.”⁹⁹

More importantly, the key point that emerges from an analysis of this episode is that Moscow had been very concerned that the presence of its forces in Egypt could land it in a war in the Middle East, one that might lead to a direct clash with the Americans. The Soviet leadership certainly believed that its military forces in Egypt gave it leverage — as Radchenko notes, Brezhnev considered them a “‘trump card’ that he could have used in political negotiations” — but the Kremlin also was not hoping to keep its troops in the area any longer than necessary once an Arab-Israeli agreement had been reached. Far from the Soviet military presence in Egypt being an indication of “the overall Soviet imperative of waging the Cold War,” then, it was, instead, a Clausewitzian instrument that Brezhnev and his colleagues wanted to use to put pressure on the Americans to contribute to a peace settlement in the Middle East. Thus, as the KGB resident in Cairo, Vadim Kirpichenko, recalled, some officials in Moscow “breathed a sigh of relief” after the expulsion, because “it relieved us of any responsibility for Egypt's further military actions.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 69.

This part of the story raises another key issue with Radchenko's review. In his view, "one can see clearly [that] Brezhnev was not worried about the prospect of a direct Soviet-U.S. clash in the Middle East, which was practically unthinkable as far as he was concerned." The Soviet leader's real concern, he argues, was "the loss of superpower prestige that would come if a U.S. client thrashed a Soviet client."

To put it bluntly, this, in my view, is an untenable claim. As I emphasize throughout the book, the evidence shows overwhelmingly that the Soviet leadership was very concerned with the possibility that another Arab-Israeli war could result in a direct confrontation between the superpowers. As one high-ranking Soviet official said after the June 1967 war, "the present moment [was] the most serious since the end of World War II," and the Middle East was "the point of maximum danger." The situation in the region, in fact, was considered by some in Moscow to be "more dangerous than [the] Cuban missile crisis because we could both be drawn into [a] situation by people over whose activities we did not have full control."¹⁰¹ "Considering the experience of Vietnam and the Middle East," Gromyko had written even before the 1967 conflict, "we should take timely measures to relax tension in the ganglions in the three continents where sharp conflicts are possible which, in turn, can combine to lead to an 'acute situation.'"¹⁰² For his part, Brezhnev repeatedly stressed the dangers that the Middle East posed to U.S.-Soviet relations, fearing that another round of Arab-Israeli fighting could escalate and ultimately lead to direct superpower involvement. Indeed, it was for precisely that reason that after the October 1973 war — which itself demonstrated quite dramatically the potential that the Middle East could drag Washington and Moscow into a confrontation — Brezhnev declared that the Arabs could "go to hell!" "We are not going to fight for them," the

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 28.

¹⁰² Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 25.

general secretary emphasized. “And especially we will not start a world war because of them.”¹⁰³

Conclusion

Some of the most compelling evidence indicating that the superpowers were by no means locked into the Cold War — and that Soviet policy was not as aggressive in the Middle East as Radchenko claims — comes from the U.S. side. If, as Radchenko asserts, the Americans were indeed trapped in a Cold War framework, they would have, of course, been inclined to believe the worst about Soviet intentions in the region. But what is striking when one reviews the evidence is that top U.S. policymakers acknowledged that Moscow was being quite reasonable. For instance, Kissinger felt that the whole idea that the Kremlin had urged the Arabs to go to war in 1973 was “absolutely preposterous.”¹⁰⁴ “What have [the Soviets] done that’s so bad?” he asked. Moscow, he believed, had been “fairly reasonable all across the board.... Even in the Middle East where our political strategy put them in an awful bind, they haven’t really tried to screw us.”¹⁰⁵ Whereas the Soviets took *détente* “seriously,” he said, “we’re using it tactically.”¹⁰⁶ As a result, Kissinger

¹⁰³ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 118. See also Gordon S. Barrass, *The Great Cold War: A Journey Through the Hall of Mirrors* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 185. On the tension that developed between the United States and the Soviet Union toward the end of the October 1973 conflict and the lasting damage that it did to U.S.-Soviet *détente*, see Galen Jackson and Marc Trachtenberg, “A Self-Inflicted Wound? Henry Kissinger and the Ending of the October 1973 Middle East War,” in Galen Jackson, ed., *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023), 57-92.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 161.

boasted that he was able to take advantage of Brezhnev, whom he considered “a political idiot,” to make “all sorts of gains.”¹⁰⁷

Let me conclude by once again thanking Hallward, Hobson, Radchenko, Stein, and Yaqub for their engagement with my book and for their participation in this roundtable, as well as the editors at the *Texas National Security Review* for organizing such a productive scholarly exchange on this important set of issues.

Galen Jackson is an associate professor of political science at Williams College. His work and teaching focus on U.S. foreign policy, the international relations of the Middle East, nuclear security studies, the Cold War, and information security. He is the author of A Lost Peace: Great Power Politics and the Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967-1979 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023) and the editor of The 1973 Arab-Israeli War (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023).



¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Jackson, *A Lost Peace*, 129.