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## War, Peace and Mediation in the Middle East

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**BRICS Policy Center** Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas - BRICS



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# War, Peace and Mediation in the Middle East

Eduardo Uziel<sup>1 2</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In April 2014, another attempt to negotiate a peace deal between Israel and Palestine (the “Kerry Initiative”) reached an impasse. A few months later, leaders from both countries made public statements which evidenced the dilemmas of the Middle East conflict’s mediation attempts. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that peace in the region could only be achieved through bilateral negotiations between the parties and that the recourse to the United Nations would harm peace efforts. Palestinian President Abbas, on the other hand, emphasized that the Palestinian position was based on United Nations decisions and, if a return to direct talks was impossible, Palestine would request to be placed under the protection of international organizations<sup>3</sup>.

These divergent positions of Israelis and Palestinians reflect, on one hand, their interests, positions and strategies in the international sphere and, on the other hand, the existence of a myriad of negotiating processes which, since the 1940s, have been organized to solve one of the most notorious and protracted contemporary conflicts. The present text aims at discussing some of the negotiating processes which have emerged in the last seven decades. The analysis will be

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(1) The ideas expressed by the author are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of External Relations.

(2) The author would like to thank the support of Lucas Frota, Leandro Pignatari, Marina Ponte and Pedro de Carvalho Franco.

(3) <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Events/Pages/eventkimon131014.aspx>, accessed on 26/11/2014; and <http://www.un.org/en/ga/69/meetings/gadebate/26sep/palestine.shtml>, accessed on 26/11/2014.

based on the processes' format, i.e., the parties involved and their roles. Although a diachronic narrative will be adopted, the text will provide neither an exhaustive history of the conflict nor a comprehensive compilation of all peace efforts. Only some of the most relevant peace processes will be mentioned.

The text is divided in four sessions, followed by a conclusion: the first, from the Partition decision in 1947 until the Six-Day War in 1967; the second, until the beginning of the Oslo process; the third, from the Oslo Accords until the present day; and, finally, the fourth will provide a brief discussion on how the negotiating methods employed in the Israeli-Arab conflict might have influenced the treatment of other conflicts in the region.

## 2. From Partition to the Six-Day War

In the first phase of the conflict, negotiating efforts were characterized by attempts to simultaneously reconcile different goals (truce supervision, armistice and peace negotiations) and the involvement of a multiplicity of different actors, usually bound by United Nations' decisions and initiatives, although several States acted on their own account.

At the beginning of 1947, the United Kingdom decided to place the issue of Palestine, a territory it administered as the League of Nation's mandatory power since 1924, under the consideration of the United Nations. While the Security Council initiated studies on the security aspects of the matter, the General Assembly, convened for its first special session, decided to task a commission of eleven States with the writing of a report proposing a "solution to the problem of Palestine"<sup>4</sup>. The Commission (UNSCOP) made two suggestions, and the idea of partitioning Palestine for the creation of two States, one for the Arab population and another for the Jewish, was adopted by the General Assembly on the 29th of November 1947, as resolution 181 (II), in a meeting presided by the Brazilian Oswaldo Aranha.

The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine is well known: it proposed the division of mandatory Palestine's territory for the creation of a "Jewish State" and an "Arab State" and a corpus separatum, including Jerusalem and its vicinities. UNSCOP assumed that Palestine was not an autonomous territory and that it fitted the United Nations to decide its destiny. The Commission did not engage in any attempt to mediate between the parties, but listened to the preferences of Jewish and Palestinian entities and of Arab States and great powers with a stake in the region. The result of this strategy of solving the problem was the tactical acceptance of partition by Zionists and the search for other options by Arab countries and Palestinian groups. In May 1948, when the British withdrew, war openly broke out in the region<sup>5</sup>.

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(4) Ver *Resolution 106 (S-1) Special Committee on Palestine*, adotada em 15/5/1947. Os onze países membros da UNSCOP eram: Austrália, Canadá, Guatemala, Índia, Irã, Iugoslávia, Países Baixos, Peru, Suécia, Tchecoslováquia e Uruguai.

(5) GRESH, Alain and VIDAL, Dominique. *Palestine 47 – Un partage avorté*. Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1994, pp. 10-31; KHALIDI, Walid. "Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution". In. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 27, n. 1, 1997, pp. 5-21.

Even though there was a Special Truce Commission<sup>6</sup> on the ground, the General Assembly created, on the 14th of May 1948, the post of United Nations Mediator on Palestine and, on the 20th of May 1948, the Council also described the post's roles and functions. The chosen mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, had as his mission both the negotiation of truces and of an armistice and peace mediation between the new State of Israel and the Arab States, parties which refused to meet and sit at the same table. Before his assassination, in September 1948, Bernadotte managed to negotiate an important truce in the conflict. The Count ceaselessly travelled between capitals and consulted primarily with the United States and the United Kingdom in order to produce two peace plans which, had they been accepted, would have reverted parts of resolution 181 (II)'s decisions. Unable to kick start negotiations between the parties, the mediator took upon himself the task of proposing plans and devising solutions<sup>7</sup>.

With a cease-fire in place at the beginning of 1949, two new parallel mediation efforts were initiated. Bernadotte's successor, Ralph Bunche, conducted negotiations between Israel and Egypt, Transjordan, Lebanon and Syria, separately, from February to September 1949, in Rhodes, aiming at obtaining armistices between the parties. The Arab delegations were not at ease with sitting at the table with their Israeli counterparts, whose State they were not willing to recognize. Exhaustive pre-negotiations allowed for a multiplicity of modalities of contacts, both formal and informal, with varied combinations of parties and United Nations representatives. Bunche deliberately avoided more ambitious proposals and dedicated himself to undo misunderstandings and to propose ideas which could bring the parties closer together with regards to specific issues. The result, considered a triumph of mediation, was the signing of four armistices that established a *modus vivendi* effective enough to avoid constant military clashes between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria<sup>8</sup>.

While armistices were still being discussed, the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP), composed of the United States, France and Turkey, tried to formulate a peace deal between the parties at the Conference of Lausanne. Contrary to what was happening in Rhodes, the Arab countries decided to adopt a unified position and no deal was reached on convening formal meetings. Thus, the Conference proceeded through formal separate meetings between the UNCCP and Israeli and Arab parties and some direct informal contacts. At the end of months of proposals and counterproposals, the only resulting document, the Lausanne protocol, dealt with procedural matters only and was blighted by the parties' opposing interpretations. During negotiations, the Commission opted for the strategy of offering, above all, its good offices, avoiding the production of even limited formulations. Efforts to resume UNCCP efforts in later years were equally frustrating, reflecting the interlocutors' difficulty of mutually recognizing each other and the distance between their substantive interests<sup>9</sup>.

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(6) Established by UN Security Council resolution 48 (1948), from the 23rd of April 1948, the Commission was composed of personnel from the US, France and Belgium consulates. Subsequently, with the adoption of resolution 50 (1948), on the 29th of May 1948, the Special Commission was incorporated into the entity responsible for truce supervision. This entity later became the still existent United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). See: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/untso/background.shtml>, access on 12/12/2014.

(7) PAPPÉ, Ilan. *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*. Londres: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 136-146.

(8) CAPLAN, Neil. "A Tale of Two Cities: The Rhodes and Lausanne Conferences, 1949". In. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 21, n. 3, 1992, pp. 6-12; PAPPÉ, I. *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*. Londres: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 176-194; URQUHART, Brian. *Ralph Bunche. An American Life*. Nova York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993, pp. 199-220.

(9) CAPLAN, N. "A Tale of Two Cities: The Rhodes and Lausanne Conferences, 1949". In. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 21, n. 3, 1992, pp. 12-29; PAPPÉ, I. *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*. Londres: I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 266-270; ISRAEL. *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel. Volume 4, May-December 1949*. Jérusalem: Government Printer, 1986, pp. 20-21.

It is worth noting that, in these three negotiating processes, the mediators (Bernadotte, Bunche and the UNCCP) availed themselves not only of their diplomatic skills, but also frequently resorted to two other expedients. First, there was the veiled threat to redirect the issue to the United Nations political organs, which could “impose” a solution – this strategy was less frequently employed in the case of armistices. Second, the great powers, in particular the US, the UK and the USSR, were called in to exert pressure on several capitals, so the parties would be more receptive to proposals either from other capitals or from the mediators. Both expedients were, in most cases, counterproductive.

The Suez crisis of 1956 did not lead to a peace negotiation between Israelis and Egyptians, only to considerations about Israeli expectations after withdrawal. On one hand, United States pressure – and, to a lesser degree, USSR pressure – led Israel to retreat from the Sinai Peninsula to the armistice lines of 1949, without negotiating peace with Egypt. On the other hand, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), established as a result of efforts from the UN Secretary General and approved by the General Assembly, was deliberately limited in its scope, not dealing with the wider issue of peace. The peacekeepers’ mandate was restricted to preventing a resumption of hostilities. As a result, from the beginning of the 1950s until after the Six-Day War, no significant mediation attempt took place<sup>10</sup>.

### 3. From the Six-Day War to Oslo

The Six-Day War, in June 1967, modified the Middle East landscape not only for representing an unequivocal defeat of Jordan, Egypt and Syria but also due to the occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza strip, the Sinai peninsula and the Golan Heights by Israel. Among its many consequences, the conflict strengthened Palestinian demands for self-determination. It also gave rise to a new profile of mediation efforts, given the risk of direct superpowers’ involvement in the conflict.

The conflict and resulting tensions threatened to drag the United States and the Soviet Union to a confrontation which neither desired. Part of the arrangements to calm down both the superpowers and the parties to the conflict was built during United Nations’ negotiations that resulted in resolution 242 (1967), from the 22nd of November, still cited as the basis of the peace process. The UN Security Council decision established parameters for a “just and lasting peace in the Middle East”, based on the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war, withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from occupied territories and the termination of states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States in the area. The Palestinian people are referred to only as refugees<sup>11</sup>.

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(10) <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v17/d173>, accessed on 13/1/2015; <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v17/d181>, accessed on 13/1/2015; FERRO, Marc. 1956 – Suez. Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1995; STEIN, Kenneth and LEWIS, Samuel. *Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis. Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience*. Washington: United Nations Institute of Peace, 1992, pp. 6-8; <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unef1backgr2.html>, accessed on 23/12/2014.

(11) <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>, accessed on 25/12/2014.

The negotiation of resolution 242 (1967) was extremely arduous from the political point of view and was based on discussions between the superpowers and other countries, as well as with the conflicting parties, but it was not in itself a mediation attempt. However, it was drafted to serve as a reference for future negotiations, with criteria accepted by the parties (although with divergent interpretations) and by the great powers. Its operational component requested the appointment of a special representative, who would establish contacts with States involved, promote a deal and help in the efforts to reach a peaceful and acceptable solution. This thankless task was given to the Swedish diplomat Gunnar Jarring<sup>12</sup>.

Jarring's mission from the start suffered from the United Nations' lack of means to exert pressure on the parties; great powers' incapacity to reach an agreement on how to support the mediator; and from the growing involvement of the United States in the region. Between 1967 and 1969, Jarring avoided the formulation of any proposal and was restricted to transmitting messages in a confidential manner – not even Washington or Moscow had full access to the negotiations. In 1970 and 1971, under pressure from the superpowers and due to the parties' unwillingness to talk to each other, Jarring attempted to be more assertive by proposing a peace plan generally considered unfeasible<sup>13</sup>.

The October War, in 1973, brought two new relevant aspects to mediating efforts. First, the Security Council adopted resolution 338 (1973), which determined the cessation of hostilities, reaffirmed resolution 242 (1967) and exhorted the parties to begin negotiations for a peace deal. Thus, a new parameter, beyond informal contacts, limited goals or the external imposition of a solution, was added to the negotiating process: the parties should negotiate a peace deal among themselves.

Another notable aspect was the growing prominence of the United States – already playing an important part since 1945 – as mediator between Israel and Arab States, particularly Egypt. Even though a peace conference was gathered under the auspices of the United States and the USSR in Geneva in the winter of 1973/1974, its purpose was mainly ceremonial, for two main reasons. First, at that stage, the parties were not willing to negotiate a peace deal. Second, the diplomatic event was organized in order to legitimate Secretary of State Kissinger's efforts to mediate agreements about military disengagements between Israel, Egypt and Syria. In fact, the following two years witnessed Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy. The Secretary travelled dozens of times to the parties' capitals in order to obtain his desired agreements. During these negotiations, Kissinger was an active negotiator, exerting pressure and offering material and political rewards for the parties to accept military disengagement. His most specific proposals (based on his profound knowledge of the situation on the ground) were left to the final stages of the process and were presented as a result of the parties' positions, not of the mediator's innovation<sup>14</sup>.

Negotiations between Israel and Egypt at the end of the 1970s represented the first occasion,

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(12) HAZAN, Pierre. *1967, La Guerre Des Six Jours: La Victoire Empoisonnée*. Bruxelles: Éditions Complexe, 1996; LALL, Arthur. *The UN and the Middle East Crisis, 1967*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1968; BAILEY, Sydney. *The Making of Resolution 242*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985.

(13) MØRK, Hulda K. *The Jarring Mission. A Study of the UN Peace Effort in the Middle East, 1967-1971*. Master's Degree dissertation, University of Oslo, 2007, pp. 33-114; TOUVAL, Saadia. *The Peace Brokers. Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 134-164.

(14) STEIN, Kenneth e LEWIS, Samuel. *Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis. Lessons from Fifty Years of Negotiating Experience*. Washington: United Nations Institute of Peace, 1992, pp. 9-10; SHLAIM, Avi. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. Nova York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 322-351; GAZIT, Mordechai. "Mediation and Mediators". In. *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1981, pág. 102.

since the ill-fated Lausanne Conference of 1949, in which a peace deal was effectively sought, instead of just alleviating military tensions. The initiative to negotiate sprung from both parties – as symbolized in Sadat's historical visit to Jerusalem in 1977 – but it was up to the United States to mediate the crucial stages. In a way, it can be said that the process which led to the agreement between Israel and Egypt followed the main parameters set by resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973): termination of occupation of a territory (in this case, the Sinai peninsula); mutual recognition; and negotiations between the parties under the auspices of a third party.

During the period of the Camp David Summit, in 1978, the role of the US mediator – frequently President Carter himself – was essential. Both leaders, Begin and Sadat, and their immediate advisers, remained secluded for almost two weeks exclusively working on the matter. Although direct meetings between Israeli and Egyptians did take place, it behooved the United States to actively propose draft agreements and, after separate discussions with the parties, review the proposals so that its terms could get closer to the positions of both parties. The United States also actively took over the position of guarantor of commitments made with respect to controversial matters, such as settlement freeze and, as Kissinger had done a few years earlier, offered rewards and exerted pressure for a deal to be effectively obtained<sup>15</sup>.

In 1982, the United States decided to launch a new initiative to settle the question between Israeli and Palestinians, essentially aiming at regulating the aspects of the Egyptian-Israeli agreement on the matter. The so-called Reagan Plan ended up not having the desired impact and, for reasons beyond the conflict, Washington decided not to insist. A similar initiative by Secretary of State George Shultz, a few years later, had the same conclusion. The example of the Reagan plan allows us to briefly reflect upon the proliferation of peace plans for the Israeli-Arab issue and the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Once the matter became a coveted reward for diplomacies all over the world, particularly in the United States, it gave rise to an ever increasing number of plans and initiatives – some presenting only guidelines on how the conflict could be solved and others as concrete efforts to promote a dialogue between the parties with specific timeframes. In the 2000s, with the collapse of negotiations, the Second Intifada and the existence of a framework created in Oslo, the plans proliferated even more profusely – Fishman e Lavie have identified seventeen in ten years. The same authors highlight that the plans did not necessarily attempt to solve the conflict: some dealt with a peace deal in general; others were geographically and temporally limited; others tried to mitigate violence and manage the conflict<sup>16</sup>. Several of these plans have brought forward concepts which, in later stages of mediation, would be taken upon again.

With the prominence of the United States in the international stage after the Gulf War of 1990-1991, Washington, in a nominal partnership with the dying Soviet Union, organized the Madrid Conference. Between October and November 1991, the event brought together Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and a Palestinian delegation integrated to the Jordanian one. The event's terms of reference, spelled out in the invitation letter sent by Bush and Gorbachev, included the idea

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(15) QUANDT, William. *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington: Brookings, 2005, pp. 198-204.

(16) FISHMAN, Henry e LAVIE, Ephraim. *The Peace Process: Seventeen Plans in Ten Years*. Tel Aviv: The Peres Center for Peace/Palestine Center for strategic Studies, 2010, pp. 19-28; QUANDT, William. *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington: Brookings, 2005, pp. 254-256. Even Minister of External Relations Mario Gibson Barboza, in a visit to Egypt and Israel in 1973, decided to propose elements of a peace plan. VIZENTINI, Paulo F. *A Política Externa do Regime Militar Brasileiro (1964-1985)*. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade/UFRGS, 1998, pp. 183-184.

of a true peace, guaranteed the parties that a solution would not be imposed and that a deal reached between the parties would not be vetoed. It also mentioned the Palestinian question by reconsidering the idea of an interim agreement leading to negotiations on a definitive status and the end of occupation<sup>17</sup>.

The format of the Conference in some ways mirrored those of Lausanne in 1949 and of Geneva in 1973: works were initiated with a multilateral session in which the participants (including the parties to the conflict, organizers and other actors) read statements, followed by bilateral meetings between Arab States and Israel and the Palestinian delegation and Israel. In parallel, working groups composed of the parties and other countries and international organizations discussed central themes in the process, such as disarmament, regional security, water resources, refugees, the environment and economic development. The United States acted as propellants to the process, making use of its strengthened international standing in order to keep the parties in contact.

Even though a final document was not produced, the Madrid Conference represented a turning point in mediation attempts in the Middle East for two main reasons: for the first time, in formal and public meetings, Arab States agreed to meet Israel to negotiate a peace deal resulting in mutual recognition; and a Palestinian delegation was admitted in the negotiations, even though, from a formal point of view, it was attached to the Jordanian delegation. The framework created in Madrid has had a lasting impact on how to structure negotiations and, above all, during the 1990s, it was essential to allow for the improvement of dialogue between Israel, on one hand, and Palestine, Jordan and Syria, on the other<sup>18</sup>.

## 4. From Oslo to the present

The process of international changes that allowed for a separate Palestinian delegation in Madrid began to gain strength soon after the Six Day War. In 1969, the PLO gained autonomy from the League of Arab States and, in 1974, it was recognized as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. As a result, in the international sphere, the “Question of Palestine” became the “Palestinian Question” – no longer about the future of a former British mandate territory, but about a people’s right to self-determination. In the period between 1988 and 1992, such changes gained pace and, in 1988, Jordan renounced its claims over the West Bank and the Palestinian National Council proclaimed Palestinian independence in Algiers. In addition, the PLO accepted resolution 242 (1967) and the establishment of contacts with the United States<sup>19</sup>. In the beginning of the 1990s, mediation attempts in the Middle East changed considerably.

In 1992-1993, there were two negotiating processes between Israelis and Palestinians: one in Washington, based on the Madrid Conference, where Israel and the Palestinian delegation from

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(17) <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/9a798adbf322aff38525617b006d88d7/3b9e96debc4d4c0b852576b7007a3e30?OpenDocument>, accessed on 3/1/2015; <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/madrid-conference>, accessed on 3/1/2015.

(18) EISENBERG, Laura e CAPLAN, Neil. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace. Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 95-115; “The Madrid Peace Conference”. In. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 21, n. 2, 1992, pp. 117-149.

(19) SHLAIM, A. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 450-501.

Gaza and the West Bank, supposedly not linked to the PLO, gathered under the auspices of the United States and the gazing eyes of the world; and another in Oslo, where members of the PLO and Israelis, authorized but not directly linked to the government, met in secret. The second process represented an innovative mediation attempt by Norway, in which the country's academics and diplomats acted as facilitators in an informal dialogue. At the beginning, Prime-Minister Rabin placed little trust in this process but, as negotiations progressed, he turned the informal exercise into a forum of diplomatic negotiations, resulting in the historical handshake with Arafat in the White House in 1993. After the mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, an avalanche of negotiations followed, resulting in what became known as the Oslo accords – a set of three agreements signed between 1993 and 1995 about how the Palestinians final status would be negotiated and how the interim period would be administered<sup>20</sup>.

As had happened in the case of Egypt in 1977, the United States was caught by surprise by the parties' political elan and only took over the role of mediator when the Oslo accords were made public. During its secret phase, Norway acted as a facilitator, providing a place for meetings and encouraging Palestinians and Israelis. During the first years of the Oslo accords, ensuing negotiations were conducted, above all, by the parties, whereas Washington acted as a supervisor, distributing political and material incentives when required<sup>21</sup>.

From 1996 onwards, when the process was exhibiting signs of exhaustion and the traditional mistrust between Palestinians and Israelis was growing again, the United States increasingly took on the role of active mediator. First, the United States brought the parties to the table, so negotiations could be initiated. During the process, the country also proposed possible solutions and stances that could bring the two sides closer, as were the cases in the Wye River (1998) and the Hebron protocol (1997). As the obstacles grew, so did the pressure exerted by the United States on the parties and an obligation on the US itself to present terms for the consideration of Palestinians and Israelis. This dynamics led to the Camp David II Summit (2000) and to negotiations in the following six months, which were finally abandoned after a meeting in Taba (2001). At that juncture, as Carter before him, President Clinton had to personally deepen his understanding of the themes and use his personal friendship with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to keep the negotiations going – although, at the end of his term in office, he did not achieve his desired peace deal<sup>22</sup>.

Three other attempts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict deserve to be mentioned. The first is the formation of the Quartet in 2002. At the height of the Second Intifada, the idea of establishing a Diplomatic Quartet, composed of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the UN Secretary General, taking the initiative of searching for a peace deal and supporting the parties' attempts to implement agreements, was formalized in a letter sent by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Security Council. The idea, which was actually first articulated by President Bush, in practice proposed a new mediation forum, the closest precedent of which was the UNCCP in the 1940s. The Quartet should lead discussions on the Middle East and bring the parties to the negotiating table. Its communiqués throughout the years tried to establish general guidelines to bring closer together the Israeli and Palestinian stances. Critics saw political maneuvering from the

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(20) CLEVELAND, William e BUNTON, Martin. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2009, pp. 502-515; SHLAIM, A. *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 502-545; RUBIN, Barry and LAQUEUR, Walter. *The Israel-Arab Reader. A documentary history of the Middle East conflict*. Londres: Penguin Books, 2008, 7th edition, pp. 413-422, 442-455 e 502-521.

(21) EISENBERG, L. e CAPLAN, N. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace. Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 170-178.

(22) QUANDT, W. *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington: Brookings, 2005, pp. 342-381; EISENBERG, L. and CAPLAN, N. *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace. Patterns, Problems, Possibilities*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, pp. 199-208 e 229-235.

United States, which could exert pressure on the Palestinians without making demands on Israel. The most immediate and remarkable result of the establishment of the Quartet was the Road Map of April 2003, essentially a new peace plan, galvanizing, with the support of the United States, the idea of a Palestinian State and proposing three stages for its consecution. Although dependent on the parties' performance, these stages should have led to the end of the conflict by 2005. Its terms were endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 1515 (2003)<sup>23</sup>.

The second was the Arab Peace Initiative, also from 2002. This was not exactly a mediating instance, but a peace plan. Based on a Saudi proposal, the Arab League endorsed, in 2002, a peace plan defining criteria and phases for the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and offering Israel recognition and diplomatic relations with all the 22 Arab states if the criteria were met<sup>24</sup>. It was considered historical, since it reversed the decision taken in Khartoum in 1967 of not negotiating with Israel, thus easing the difficulty of getting the parties to consider themselves legitimate before entering into negotiations. Since 2002, the Arab League has been requested to endorse, based on its initiative, the strategies and negotiating options of the Palestinian government.

The third was the Annapolis conference, in 2007. In the penultimate year of his term, President Bush organized this conference in order to push for the implementation of the Road Map and to support the timid attempts by Prime-Minister Olmert and President Abbas to establish direct negotiations. Annapolis offered a mix of bilateral and multilateral meetings, mirroring the experience of the Madrid Conference, which had been organized by Bush Senior. All the preparation was left to the parties and the United States, and Washington exerted great pressure on both sides to come up with a compromise that could be announced. The opening session brought together more than 40 countries (including Brazil) and international organizations. Unlike in Madrid, a wide range of countries was invited, not only great powers and the parties to the conflict. These states made supportive speeches to the initiative and their main role consisted, on one hand, in signaling their disposition to cooperate in specific themes if necessary and, on the other, to emphasize to the parties the negative consequences of retreating from their negotiated commitments. The event served as a launching pad for negotiations between the parties, who then met directly. With regards to the Road Map, the United States took on the role of arbiter; when it came to substantive negotiations, the country's role was not defined<sup>25</sup>.

The most recent attempt to mediate the conflict has been led by Secretary of State John Kerry, who, making use of Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, obtained from the parties in July 2013 the commitment to resume direct negotiations in order to achieve a peace deal in 9 months. Even though it was believed that the United States would, beyond acting as a facilitator, also propose plans in cases of impasse, it is still not clear whether Kerry has done so. The failure of Kerry's

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(23) <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/fdc5376a7a0587a4852570d000708f4b/bfb3858c623f4a8085256b98004da30d?OpenDocument>, accessed on 10/1/2015; QUANDT, W. *Peace Process. American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. Washington: Brookings, 2005, pp. 399-406; [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=s/2003/529](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=s/2003/529), accessed on 10/1/2015; *A Middle East Roadmap to Where?* Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2003; SAID, Edward. "Archeology of the Road Map". In. *From Oslo to Iraq and the Road Map*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004, pp. 279-287.

(24) UBIN, B. and LAQUEUR, W. *The Israel-Arab Reader. A documentary history of the Middle East conflict*. Londres: Penguin Books, 2008, 7th edition, pg. 583; TEITELBAUM, Joshua. *The Arab Peace Initiative: A Primer and Future Prospects*. Jerusalem: Jerusalem Center for Public affairs, 2009.

(25) *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Annapolis and After* (Middle east Policy Briefing n. 22). Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2007; MIGDALOVITZ, Carol. *Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process: The Annapolis Conference*. Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2007; <https://web.archive.org/web/20071122125447/http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/nov/95458.htm>, accessed on 11/1/2015; <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/586E84217636CF87852573A00065F149>, accessed on 10/1/2015.

peace efforts has led to a new paralysis in negotiations, a return of mistrust between the parties – worsened by the conflict in Gaza in August 2014 – and to antagonistic measures from both sides. At the end of 2014, Israel insisted that only direct negotiations would be acceptable and branded any measures taken by the Palestinians as unilateral. Palestine, for its turn, decided to appeal to international organizations, such as the Security Council and the parties of the Geneva Convention to work around what it perceives as the Israeli indisposition to negotiate<sup>26</sup>.

## 5. The mediation of the arab-israeli conflict and ther conflicts in the middle east

In almost seven decades, the Israeli-Arab conflict and attempts to mediate it have had a considerable impact on world politics, particularly in the Middle East. The region, convulsed by a series of problems, has been subjected to a series of mediation attempts as well. In many cases, the parties or interested third parties ended up falling back upon negotiation and mediation mechanisms inspired by those used in the Israeli-Arab conflict. As an example, it is worth mentioning the Syrian Civil War and attempts to solve it.

The Syrian conflict began in 2011, with a series of protests demanding economic opportunities, jobs, freedom of speech, among other demands. During the course of 2011, the government's crackdown on protesters led to an escalation of the conflict and, by 2012, the situation began to be defined as a civil war, with regional and international ramifications.

Still at the end of 2011, the Arab League negotiated with Damascus two peace plans which included ceasefires monitored by the League's observation missions. Even though there were similar proposals from around the world, one cannot forget the ceasefires obtained by Bernadotte or the work of UNEF in guaranteeing the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel in the period between 1957 and 1967<sup>27</sup>.

Just like the Israeli-Arab conflict, the civil war in Syria has been the subject of a variety of peace plans suggested by countries or organizations interested in solving yet another thorny issue in the Middle East. These plans, as a general rule, have proposed a series of stages for the country's pacification, including the disengagement of belligerents, political reforms, national dialogues and elections. The most relevant peace plans have been: the six-point plan proposed by the then UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative Kofi Annan, of March 2012; China's four-point plan, of

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(26) FUGLESTAD, Daniel e HEYN, Hans M. *The Middle East Peace Process - the history in the context of the 2013 John Kerry peace efforts*. Jerusalem: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2013; [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2015-01/israelpalestine\\_8.php](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2015-01/israelpalestine_8.php), accessed on 23/12/2014; <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11722.doc.htm>, acessado em 31/12/2014; <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/InternatlOrgs/Speeches/Pages/Palestinian-draft-resolution-defeated-at-UN-Security-Council-30-Dec-2014.aspx>, accessed on 12/1/2015.

(27) <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/201111381935847935.html>, accessed on 12/1/2015; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/19/syria-to-admit-arab-league-observers>, accessed on 12/1/2015.

March 2014; and Iran's four-point plan, of March 2014. Although the parties took note of these initiatives, they achieved little<sup>28</sup>.

Annan's proposal – possibly due to his position as Joint Special Representative – had more impact. In June 2012, Annan organized the Geneva “action group”, whose composition brings to mind the Madrid Conference of 1991: other than the United Nations and the Arab League, it included the five permanent members of the Security Council the European Union and some regional actors, such as Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar. The meeting produced a framework for international action, the Geneva final communiqué, which, based on the Annan Plan, established stages for the end of the conflict. The document was then taken as basis for negotiations between the Syrian government and the opposition in the following meetings in Montreux and Geneva, in January and in February 2014. This conference, co-chaired by the United States and Russia, was clearly inspired by the Annapolis Conference. As had happened in 2007, the opening session presented speeches from a variety of countries, including Brazil. These countries not only provided support to the negotiating process, but also tried to make clear the costs of a prolonged conflict. After the initial stage, direct negotiations between the parties were conducted by the UN and Arab League Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, in the presence of the United States and Russia, who pressured the parties to remain at the table<sup>29</sup>.

The Syrian civil war was also subjected to the works of a Quartet, as had been the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 2002. In August 2012, at the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the then Egyptian President, Mohammed Morsi, proposed the foundation of an “Islamic Quartet”, integrated by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran. The group, combining countries close to the Assad regime and to the opposition, aimed to provide a political solution to the crisis. Even though the group met for a few months, no concrete proposal was made<sup>30</sup>.

Without a doubt, the Syrian civil war and the Israeli-Arab conflict occupy different places in international politics and have significantly different origins, dynamics and parties involved. However, it is noteworthy that several attempts to solve the Syrian crisis were inspired by the Israeli-Arab conflict's mediation attempts. In some cases, the similarities were formal; in others, there was a conscious effort to create a similar framework. In any case, it is clear that the Israeli-Arab conflict has left a mark on the very idea of mediation.

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(28) <http://www.un.org/press/en/2012/sc10583.doc.htm>, accessed on 13/1/2015; <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/02/world/middleeast/syria.html>, accessed on 13/1/2015; <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/iran-four-part-plan-political-solution-syria.html#>, accessed on 13/1/2015.

(29) <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf>, accessed on 13/1/2015; [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46575#.VLPgYtLF\\_94](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=46575#.VLPgYtLF_94), accessed on 12/1/2015; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/explaining-geneva-ii-peace-talks-syria-2014118142853937726.html>, accessed on 13/1/2015; <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/24/geneva-ii-talks-syria-key-participants>, accessed on 12/1/2015; <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx?CountryIDs={1341CC4D-F195-4B82-A9B9-0411818FDB03}>, accessed on 13/1/2015; e <http://carnegieendowment.org/syriaincrisis/?fa=54253>, accessed on 13/1/2015.

(30) <http://journal-neo.org/2012/09/15/the-islamic-quartet-and-syria/>, accessed on 13/1/2015; [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/11/syria-crisis-egypt-iran\\_n\\_1875580.html##](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/11/syria-crisis-egypt-iran_n_1875580.html##), accessed on 13/1/2015; and <http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/seeking-syria-peace-islamic-quartet-meets-in-egypt-for-first-time-since-launch-1.465414#>, accessed on 13/1/2015.

## 6. Conclusion

The Israeli-Arab conflict, due to the issues involved, its place in international politics and its duration, is of a frightful complexity. The history of mediation and negotiation of the conflict is equally difficult to understand. The plurality of plans, negotiating forums, facilitation and mediation initiatives, attempts to promote direct talks and decisions by international organizations gives an idea of the issue's dimension. This text has tried to provide a concise introduction presenting the most conspicuous cases.

It is worth drawing two conclusions, in order to emphasize the relevance of this conflict for the very idea of mediation. First, as seen in the history of interpenetration between the various forums and between the concepts produced in them, it is highly unlikely that one single method will be able to solve the conflict. This is due to three main reasons: A) the history of negotiations shows that an initial difficulty is to bring the parties to the table, since for a long time they did not recognize each other. Thus, different potential mediators have the possibility to shape the international scene and influence the parties in diverse ways; B) Each mediation method and each type of mediator can bring benefits to specific aspects and moments of the conflict. Hence, the complexity of the situation suggests that only a combination of efforts would be able to deal with the issue as a whole; C) The implementation of a deal is as complex as reaching one. It is known that even agreements of high technical quality and negotiated in good faith and with mutual trust can unravel because of misunderstandings in the implementation phase. Different mediators could mitigate this risk by allowing for a careful and creative execution of each aspect of a deal<sup>31</sup>.

Second, any State, organization or individual presenting him or herself as mediator must be prepared to bear the costs. Historically, the parties have fiercely disputed not only the choice of mediators but also the forums in which negotiations would occur and the modalities and parameters of negotiations. As mentioned at the beginning, Israel recently has manifested a strong preference for direct negotiations, whereas Palestine prefers parameters defined in international proceedings. Between these two positions, there are several possibilities of mediation. In any case, the mediator, once chosen, will hardly be perceived as neutral (as is the case of the United States in the last 40 years) and will try to achieve a balance in order not to alienate the parties. Only if these inherent obstacles are surpassed, mediation will succeed<sup>32</sup>.

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(31) KRIESBERG, Louis. "Mediation and Transformation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict". In. *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, n. 3, 2001, pp. 385-388; GAZIT, M. "Mediation and Mediators". In. *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 5, n. 4, 1981, pp. 91-92.

(32) TOUVAL, S. *The Peace Brokers. Mediators in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1979*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 321-325.

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