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The Arab–Israeli Conflict: Learning Conflict Resolution*

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The Arab–Israeli conflict, which at first had a zero-sum, protracted nature, has changed over time because of effective conflict management that has made conflict reduction and even resolution possible. Following an adaptation process in response to the outcomes of the Six Day War, and the shifts from suppression to regulation, and vice versa, both sides experienced after the Yom Kippur War some learning process by which they became ready to transform their mode of thinking in the conflict. However, without the active encouragement of the USA, the learning process could not be developed. However, the Arab–Israeli conflict is not a single conflict, especially when analyzing and evaluating movements toward new forms of behavior in a given conflict system. The differences in the rate and scope of learning in each conflict influenced differently the shifts in conflict management, and from conflict management to conflict resolution. An initial learning process proved to be necessary for shifting from regulation to institutionalization, but this was not sufficient to move from institutionalization to resolution. There was a need for a further and deeper learning process to enable conflict resolution.

1. *Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution*

The proposed study will assess and refine the relationship between conflict management and conflict resolution focusing on the example of the Arab–Israeli conflict from 1949 to 1992. The main argument of this research is that a protracted conflict lingering over time with violent hostilities, such as the Arab–Israeli conflict, cannot be resolved without a prerequisite prolonged and successful conflict management. Successful conflict management is a learning process in which the sides to a conflict not only redefine means and goals in more realistic ways, but also change their mode of thinking about the conflict itself, such that they come to prefer conflict resolution as the best strategy to accomplish some of their basic objectives.

This study, therefore, aims to examine why, how, and when effective management of a conflict can develop into conflict resolution; how do the most effective mechanisms originate and how are they sustained; and how can they influence the controlling, limiting, and resolving of a conflict?

2. *Conditions for Conflict Management*

Scholars who study conflict and peace differentiate between conflict resolution and conflict management. Conflict resolution involves the reconciliation or elimination of fundamental differences and grievances underlying a conflict. Conflict resolution occurs when the incompatibility between the preferences of the various parties to a conflict disappears or when the sources of a conflict situation are removed.

Conflict management means controlling, limiting, and containing conflict behavior in such a way as to make it less destructive or violent. Thus, conflict management does not necessarily eliminate the causes of conflict; however, its success may help toward resolving it. When the parties of a conflict, for various reasons, are unwilling or unable to resolve their conflict, conflict management is the only option to make a conflict

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less violent and more tolerable (Kuenne, 1989; Lebow, 1985; Nardin, 1971; Prei, 1985; Stein, 1987).

Conflicts, such as protracted conflicts, in which each side's interests are wholly incompatible may be not only unresolvable but also unmanageable. When the common belief in a protracted conflict is that military means are the only means of resolving the conflict, then conflict management is very difficult if not impossible. Conflict management may be perceived by the parties as a cooperation process which by itself not only brings about an undesired outcome, but may also be a process which abates their prospects of accomplishing incompatible goals unilaterally (Azar, 1986; Azar et al., 1978). Therefore, it may be necessary for certain prerequisite conditions to be fulfilled before management of the conflict is possible. These might include: (1) the parties may need to realize that existing resources are inadequate for a successful conclusion to war or its escalation; (2) there may be external constraints preventing successful war or escalation; (3) the sides may need to realize that the potential costs of escalating the conflict are greater than the benefits; (4) there may be a genuine danger of uncontrollable escalation; (5) conflict suppression mechanisms may exist; (6) tacit or explicit rules of the game for limiting a war may exist; (7) institutions for preventing war and reducing conflict may exist.

In the context of these conditions, even if the parties' goals are wholly incompatible, they may cooperate tacitly or explicitly in keeping a conflict manageable, or be forced to do so. Parties that are unwilling or unable to resolve their conflict may still be interested in preventing war or limiting it, because of their mutual, though not necessarily symmetrical, fear of its outcomes. The existence of such mutual fear can provide a basis for establishing mechanisms with which to manage the conflict. However, in situations where the parties fail to manage a conflict by themselves, the role of external powers controlling the conflict becomes more salient. While, indeed, conflict management will need some cooperation between the parties, it will not alter fundamen-

tally the character of a protracted conflict when the sides still believe that they can accomplish their incompatible goals unilaterally and by military means. Conflict management may make the conflict more bearable for a while, but any change in the balance of power or interest may tempt the sides to escalate the conflict. Conflict management in protracted conflicts is necessary to prevent undesired escalation, but it is not sufficient to prevent deliberate escalation.

3. *Techniques for Conflict Management*

The most common techniques for conflict management are *suppression*, *regulation*, and *institutionalization* (Mitchell, 1981, pp. 253–279). Suppression refers to all forms of inhibition or deterrence which aim mainly to prevent conflict behavior or to limit it. Regulation includes measures to limit conflict behavior within a set of tacit or explicit rules. Institutionalization means informal or formal agreements to prevent conflict behavior and to enable conflict reduction.

3.1 *Conflict Suppression*

Conflict suppression aims to remove or control the elements necessary for undertaking conflict behavior. Suppression may be achieved by different methods:

(1) Arms control or disarmament agreements between the parties to a conflict, or by the parties as recipients of arms and external suppliers, or between the external suppliers themselves. The effectiveness of this mechanism in a protracted conflict depends mainly on the ability of external suppliers to cooperate in controlling the arms supply to the involved parties. Indeed, the difficulty of reaching agreements on arms control or arms supply makes this kind of conflict management in protracted conventional conflicts less promising than other suppression techniques (Krause, 1987, 1990).

(2) Deterrence of disruptive behavior by threats of military retaliation by the rival party or by third parties. The effectiveness of this method depends on the parties' fears of serious retaliatory damage. Although deterrence appears to have some conflict

management potential, however, as Wehr argues: 'its inherently unstable vertical dynamics, pushing a conflict to higher levels of threatened destruction and implying increased alienation of opponents at each new level, makes it an unlikely basis for stable peace' (1979, p. 30). Moreover, restraints based on deterrence are not the result of adherence to rules; they usually emerge from calculation of self-interest rather than from common interests or co-operative interaction (Kriesberg, 1973; p. 112). Nevertheless, mutual deterrence can be a basis for cooperation in the management of conflict, especially for war prevention. Historical cases prove that deterrence usually fails to be an effective management tool in protracted conventional conflicts such as the Arab–Israeli conflict.

(3) External powers' constraints on the parties to a conflict against initiating war or expanding it. The effectiveness of this tool of management involves the degree of dependence of the respective parties on the external powers, and the interdependence relationship between the external powers (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1987).

3.2 Regulation

Since arms agreements, deterrence, or external powers' constraints often fail, there is a need to subject conflict behavior to rules that control the means used in pursuing incompatible goals and the kinds and degrees of coercion that can be exercised in a conflict. Rules are needed in order to determine: (1) what conflict behavior is permitted and what is prohibited; (2) when and where the permitted behavior may be used; (3) when and against whom the conflict behavior may be legitimized; and (4) under what circumstances conflict behavior may be justified (Mitchell, 1981, pp. 266–267).

To understand the role of the rules in managing a conflict, one must first understand: (1) how rules originate, (2) how they are maintained, (3) what kinds of rules are effective, and (4) how such rules can modify the conflict.

Regulating conflicts by rules requires some cooperation between the parties to a

conflict, not only in establishing rules but also in maintaining them. In conflict of interest situations, including protracted conflicts, it is the common interests the parties share that make possible the development of rules facilitating coordination, and it is, furthermore, the existence of such rules that reduces the occasions for violence or limits its magnitude. Rules emerge when there is a jointly perceived interest in preventing all or some forms of violence, or when there is a mutual fear of escalation of the conflict beyond what is desired by the parties. The rules are worked through some sort of bargaining between the parties that is based mainly on reciprocity and *quid pro quo*. These rules of prevention or limitation may take the form of an explicit agreement or of tacit understandings.

The rules are guaranteed to be maintained only if it is in the interests of the parties. When both sides see that mutually beneficial interests can be achieved only through coordinated choices, and that departures from the rules will lead to an escalatory response by the other side, both sides abiding by the rules will continue. These rules may also be respected, as Schelling suggests, 'because if they are once broken, there is no assurance that any new ones can be found and jointly recognized in time to check the widening of the conflict' (Schelling, 1960, p. 77). An estimate that the political costs (e.g. condemnation at home and/or abroad) might exceed the benefits to be derived from breaking the rules will also work toward maintaining them (George, 1958, pp. 39–40).

Fundamentally, the parties maintain the rules depending on 'equalization of advantages' derived from the keeping of the rules by both parties. Equalization of advantages implies, for instance, that the non-use or control of some military means would not favor one side over the other in terms of improving the probability of achieving its objectives in a less costly way. 'The primary worth of limitation understanding for both sides may be the assurance it grants that their struggle for conflicting objectives will be kept within acceptable cost ceilings' (George, 1958, pp. 34–35). In other words,

the degree to which the rules are maintained depends mainly on their success in equalizing the cost/benefit trade-off of breaking versus respecting the rules for both parties.

The issue of success in establishing and maintaining the rules of war prevention or limitation leads us to the most important question regarding management of conflict: How can such management modify a protracted conflict? The common assumption is that the result of successful regulation of a conflict is the transformation of the means by which incompatible goals are pursued, rather than the prevention of actions intended to accomplish them (Mitchell, 1981, p. 268). The modification of a conflict, then, involves means rather than substance; the fundamental grievances and differences between the parties may remain unaltered. It may also be possible, however, to affect the substance of a conflict by gradually modifying conflict discourse and by abandoning some of the goals underlying the original situation. A modification of this sort may sometimes be achieved through shifting from conflict regulation to institutionalized conflict management.

3.3 *Institutionalization*

Regulation of a conflict reaches the level of institutionalization in so far as the rules (1) have been internalized by the participants, (2) are expressed in traditional, formal writing, or some other embodiment external to the participants, and (3) are enforced by potential sanctions (Blau, 1964, pp. 273–276; Kriesberg, 1973, p. 7).

Institutionalization of conflict behavior refers to informal or formal attempts to put conflict relations between the parties on 'a more stable basis and predictable footing in order to reduce the magnitude, scope, and possibility of armed confrontation' (Hampson & Mandell, 1990, p. 194). The functions of institutionalization are: (1) preventing crises; (2) blocking or reducing incentives for escalation; (3) promoting and facilitating de-escalatory measures; (4) establishing new patterns of behavior leading to the development of more durable norms of conflict management; and (5) encouraging expectations toward resolution

of the conflict (Hampson & Mandell, 1990, p. 196). Therefore, institutionalization has the potential not only to foster a better stabilization of the conflict, but also to facilitate the conditions for conflict resolution. Institutionalization of conflict management will usually lead to confidence-building measures or to a security regime in which 'participants focus on developing norms, rules and procedures which specifically seek to reduce uncertainty and constrain the opportunities for using military force' (Mandell, 1990, p. 202).

The most important factors that can influence the degree of institutionalization are: the balance of power between parties, the degree of autonomy of the parties, the issues in conflict, and third-party intervention (Kriesberg, 1973, p. 113). The balance of power of the parties may influence institutionalization in different ways. If the parties are relatively equal, they will be more interested in institutionalization because the prospects for unilateral attempts to attain their objectives are more risky. In case of power inequalities, the dominant party may try to impose its preferred technique of institutionalization, and the weaker side may bargain to avoid it, or to manipulate its alliance or patron–client relationship in order to reach a more favorable mode of institutionalization.

In terms of autonomy, parties that belong to a coalition or depend on external powers for their arms supply or for economic assistance will prefer less autonomous forms of institutionalization than parties that are more independent. Nevertheless, external patronage may encourage a more stable institutionalization.

The types of issues involved in the conflict also affect institutionalization because, where parties are dealing with issues that they believe could require speedy and definite resolution, and, therefore, pose an acute security dilemma, institutionalization is more likely to occur (Hampson & Mandell, 1990; Kriesberg, 1973, p. 113).

Third-party intervention can be an important factor in determining whether institutionalization will occur, its scope and the factors that will help to maintain it. The role

of a third party in facilitating institutionalization depends on many factors, such as the nature of the relationship between the parties to the conflict and the third party, its capabilities, and its role in the international system (Mandell & Tomlin, 1991).

4. *From Adaptation to Learning*

The shifts between stages or techniques within conflict management are of process transformation rather than substantive transformation. The readiness of the parties to move from one technique or stage of conflict management to another depends on the success or failure of management at each preceding stage, and on adaptation and learning.

The most typical initial technique or stage in management of protracted conventional conflicts is deterrence, which can be unilateral or mutual. Deterrence aims to prevent undesired war, and is based on calculations of power and on cost/benefit of undertaking military action. Where it is not mutual, deterrence is a technique of restraint based on self-interest rather than on cooperative interaction. The success of deterrence will prevent violent conflict behavior and, therefore, also regulation of war. The effectiveness of deterrence may encourage the sides to a protracted conflict to maintain that technique as the best one for managing their conflict and of avoiding the shift to institutionalization of the management of the conflict, especially when they are not interested in that kind of management of their conflict. However, the difficulty of using deterrence as an effective tool of management, and especially its frequent failure in a protracted conflict, may push the parties to move to another technique or stage which may well be regulation.

Even if regulation is limited to containing or restricting conflict behavior rather than preventing it, it is an important technique of management, mainly because it is based on some interest, understanding and cooperation. Regulation can succeed not only in keeping violence limited, but also in making the parties realize the low effectiveness of military option for resolving the incompati-

bility of interests between them. The limited outcomes of limited war, due to mutual concern about escalation or about constraints imposed by third parties, encourage the parties to look for a better conflict management technique.

The most important factors that influence the shift from regulation to institutionalization are: (1) a successful experience of both sides with conflict regulation, and (2) their expectation that they will continue to be in conflict for a long time, such that they need to develop more formal understandings about how they should each pursue their goals if they are to avoid deviations from the stable pattern of relations that was established under conflict regulation (Kriesberg, 1973, pp. 112–113). Sometimes, both parties assume that it is only institutionalization that can secure whatever stability conflict management has achieved (Stein, 1985a, 1987). Success of regulation is therefore a precondition for the emergence of institutionalization of conflict management, which is the most desirable technique or stage in the conflict management process.

Institutionalization may bring about not only war prevention, but also conflict reduction. Establishment of confidence-building measures or more formal arrangements for conflict management, such as a security regime, may bring the parties closer to the stage where they will be ready for conflict resolution (Haass, 1990; Zartman, 1985).

The shifts in the management process may occur sequentially, out of sequence, and dependently. The parties are not assumed to pass necessarily through all the stages and they can skip stages. Although the linear moving from suppression to institutionalization is necessary for the effective conflict management, there is also a high potential in a protracted conflict for ‘backsliding’ in the process of conflict management. The progress toward new forms of behavior in a given protracted conflict is not by itself a guarantee for preventing potential regression in the process.

Changes in the balance of power – or in the perception of the interests in the conflict, and destabilizing domestic forces – may

shift the management of the conflict to a less advanced state or technique. Any regression in the process of management, especially from institutionalization to regulation, may result in the failure of preventing war, and the preference of war to conflict reduction. This probably will aggravate the conflict. There is no assurance that the sides will succeed in checking the widening of the conflict. In fact, this is not just one stage backward in the process of conflict management, but two stages backward, because the sides will fail to shift to institutionalization and will find themselves again in the suppression stage of the process.

Conflict management as a transformation process, when it is limited to its first two stages only (suppression and regulation), may be defined as an adaptation rather than a learning process. Only institutionalization of conflict management may create some initial learning process (Tetlock, 1991; Haass, 1990). Adaptation may explain the shifts from suppression to regulation and vice versa, in which the sides redefine, due to internal or external constraints, some of their tactical political and military objectives and, more importantly perhaps, the way in which they employ their military forces. However, there is no substantive transformation in the basic goals of the conflict parties. The parties still believe that the only way to accomplish their incompatible goals is unilaterally and militarily, and they wait for the opportunity to act militarily in order to accomplish these goals.

Some initial learning in the conflict process may explain the shift from regulation to institutionalization. Parties in a conflict begin to learn when the prospects for unilateral advantages in a conflict dramatically diminish that only by cooperation in conflict reduction is there any chance not only of avoiding mutual damage but of accomplishing some of the incompatible goals. The presence of security regimes and confidence-building measures is necessarily evidence of partial internalized learning, because these are patterns of limited, coordinated behavior.

Learning is also involved in institutionalization, because it encourages the sides to

begin transforming their mode of thinking toward the conflict. Although the parties may not yet have redefined their fundamental beliefs and their values in the conflict, and their patterns of coordinated behavior are limited mainly to military issues, there is a substantive transformation of their attitude to the basic rules of management of the conflict. The parties not only realize that military means cease to be effective for accomplishing even some of their incompatible goals, but they tacitly understand that the only way of accomplishing more of them is by conflict resolution.

Moreover, the sides not only realize the need to make some concessions in order to advance some of their goals in the conflict, but they also learn the rules of concession. Institutionalization can also be seen as an initial learning process because it helps to change the conflict from a protracted to a more tractable kind of conflict. However, much more learning is necessary in order to shift from the most effective stage in the conflict management into conflict resolution.

5. From Management to Resolution

Notable success in conflict reduction may create a process of further learning to the point where the substance and nature of a conflict may be affected and possibly even transformed. Effective conflict management may convince parties that have incompatible goals that they have to find some peaceful solution to their conflict. If conflict behavior can be limited and controlled, and confidence-building measures and security regimes created, the parties may be more ready to seek to resolve their conflict by political rather than by military means. Nevertheless, sometimes by reducing the costs of conflict a serious obstacle is created on the road to conflict resolution. The incentives to attempt conflict resolution may disappear because the need for alternative political outcomes is not urgent enough and because the costs of resolution of the conflict may appear higher than those of continuation of it under controlled conditions (Ben-Dor & Dewitt, 1987, pp. 298–299). In

this case, the situation that emerges is what Galtung calls ‘negative peace’, i.e. the relations between the parties will be limited to conditions of maintaining the security rather than seeking conflict resolution (Galtung, 1967, pp. 2–3).

Conflict resolution is a development process which includes not only the absence of violence but also the removal of the sources of the conflict situation, the changing of attitude, and the emergence of readiness to give up some of the goals in the conflict in order to accomplish others. For negotiations to succeed in resolving a conflict, the parties must reach a stage where conflict resolution offers a potentially better alternative than continuation of conflict management.

The specific conditions of ‘ripeness’ for conflict resolution are: (1) when the parties believe that conflict management, even if it stabilizes the security relationship between them and minimizes the danger of war, lacks the potential to accomplish even some of the goals in the conflict – and that the only chance to achieve these is by conflict resolution; (2) when the parties realize, because of the success of conflict management, that there are no immediate or even long-run opportunities for unilateral gain by war or more limited violence; (3) when the parties are aware that because of the success of conflict management it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to gain domestic and/or external legitimacy for use of military coercion to accomplish goals; (4) when there is concern that in the absence of progress toward resolution, the conflict may revert to its violent stage; (5) when an energetic and powerful third party induces the parties to settle the conflict; (6) when a favorable change in the international system occurs that encourages conflict reduction to shift to cooperation and peace (e.g. the passing of the Cold War era).

6. *The Arab–Israeli Conflict*

The Arab–Israeli conflict has been termed a protracted conflict in which the stakes are very high, extending over a long period of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare, fluctuating in frequency and intensity,

and fundamentally unchanged and unresolvable (Azar et al., 1978). However, the Arab–Israeli conflict has changed tremendously, although gradually in its nature throughout the years since the 1948–49 War, from an unmanageable conflict into a more tractable kind. Not only has its focal conflict, the Israeli–Egyptian conflict, been resolved, but other important dyadic conflicts are probably moving toward conflict resolution: Israeli–Syrian, Israeli–Jordanian, Israeli–Lebanese, Israeli–Palestinian. The resolution of the Egyptian–Israeli conflict and the movement toward possible resolution of other dyadic conflicts are the results of gradual but successful conflict management which created a learning process in the conflict. However, the rate and scope of learning has been markedly different in each dyadic conflict, especially in the Egyptian–Israeli, Syrian–Israeli, and Palestinian–Israeli cases.

In the Arab–Israeli conflict, three stages can be distinguished: (1) military and political decision – the unmanageable stage, (2) conflict management, with three stages or techniques – suppression, regulation, and institutionalization or conflict reduction, and (3) conflict resolution.

Moves by the parties from one stage to another, or from one technique to another, were a direct result of adaptation and learning. Adaptation explains the shift from military and political decision to suppression and regulation, in which the sides only redefined some of their political and military objectives and mainly their means due to political constraints and shortage of capabilities. Learning explains the shift from regulation to institutionalization and resolution; in these examples the sides changed their mode of thinking about the conflict itself, preferring, first, conflict reduction and then resolution as the best strategies for accomplishing some of their basic objectives.

6.1 *Military and Political Decision*

Military and political decision refers to the first stage in the conflict, in which the Arab side tried to resolve the conflict by the liquidation of Israel as a polity, i.e. ‘politicide’

(Harkabi, 1972; Shlaim, 1988, pp. 196–230). This policy was carried out in the 1948–49 War but failed. The Arab refusal to accept the UN Partition Plan of November 1947 as the basis for conflict resolution made this stage in the Arab–Israeli conflict unmanageable. The Arab attempt to resolve the conflict by total war made regulation impossible. Nevertheless, some tacit and even explicit agreement was reached between Israel and TransJordan as to the limitation of the war (Shlaim, 1988; Bar-Joseph, 1987).

The Arab failure in the 1948–49 War led to some adaptation in the Arab behavior. Although the objective of the destruction of Israel had not changed, there was no immediate operative program; this was due to the lack of military capability for carrying out a total war, the lack of consensus in the Arab world as to the desired military program, and the adequate timing for the war. In addition, the preoccupation with inter-Arab politics and rivalries left not much energy for the Arab–Israeli conflict (Harkabi, 1977; Kerr, 1971). These factors explain why the Arabs did not initiate a serious crisis or war until 1967.

6.2 *The Failure of Conflict Management*

The Arab failure in the 1948–49 War brought the sides to the second stage in the conflict, which I define as one of suppression. Suppression refers to all forms of inhibition or deterrence that were aimed primarily at preventing a new Arab–Israeli war. It was mainly the period from 1949 to 1973 that was characterized by suppression. The techniques of conflict suppression during that period, all of which failed, can be distinguished: arms control, deterrence, and external constraints.

Arms control was never an effective means in the Arab–Israeli conflict. The reason lay in the difficulty of reaching an agreement on arms supply between the superpowers or the powers that supplied the arms to the area. The only real attempt in this direction was the 1950 Tripartite Declaration by the three Western powers, in which they agreed to limit arms supplies to the various parties of the Arab–Israeli con-

flict and to insist on a political rather than a military solution to the problem. This early effort to contain a potential arms race soon broke down. The Czech–Egyptian arms deal of September 1955 marked the first massive arms supply by a superpower (the Soviet Union) to a local ally in the conflict, and it signaled the failure of cooperation between the powers on arms control in the area (Jabber, 1981). The Soviet arms supply to Egypt and Syria, and the French and later US arms supplies to Israel, developed into a regional arms race in which both sides were supplied by the superpowers as well as by other powers, and this led to a situation where pre-emptive strike and preventive war became the alternative to arms control. Israel's participation in the 1956 War against Egypt was motivated mainly by calculations of preventive war and reciprocity to France for its arms supply (Bar-On, 1992; Dayan, 1976, pp. 185–262).

Soviet arms supplies after the Six Day War enabled the Egyptians to initiate the War of Attrition (1969–70) and later the Yom Kippur War (1973) (Glassman, 1975, pp. 65–124; Riad, 1981, pp. 84–86, 206–242; Sadat, 1978, pp. 219–240). The delivery of US Phantom jets to Israel in September 1969 enabled Israel to carry out punishing air-raids deep inside Egypt, and this escalated the War of Attrition and even brought about Soviet military intervention (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980, pp. 130–132). In the Yom Kippur War, Soviet airlifts and sealifts to Syria and Egypt and US airlifts to Israel motivated the Arab states and Israel to prefer the continuation of war to its termination.

The second suppression technique was deterrence. The Arab–Israeli wars indicate that deterrence failed to be an effective management tool in situations where the weaker side in the conflict regarded the war as the only effective option with which to change the status quo in its favor; and thus, in these situations, the weaker side is ready to pay the cost of war, as the Arabs did in the War of Attrition and the Yom Kippur War. Another possibility is when one of the sides miscalculates the real balance of power and the real costs of the war, as the Arabs

did in the crisis that preceded the Six Day War (Riad, 1981, pp. 76–102; Sadat, 1978, pp. 232–252; Stein, 1985b, 1991). Deterrence normally failed when one side in the conflict believed that it could, by using war, achieve highly positive results. This was the case for the Arabs in the 1948–49 War and for the Israelis in the 1956 and 1982 wars.

The third suppression technique that failed was third party intervention. In the six Arab–Israeli wars, the superpowers and the UN were unable to prevent the parties to the conflict from initiating war. Although in all six cases the superpowers tried to prevent war by putting pressure on their clients or on their clients' rivals, these pressures proved ineffective, because of the superpowers' failure to cooperate effectively between themselves, which stemmed from their fear of damaging their patron–client relations, but also from their clients' motivation to achieve their objectives by military means when they realized that political means did not exist or that their effectiveness was very limited (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980, 1987, 1991).

6.3 Regulation

The failure of suppression techniques to prevent war in the Arab–Israeli conflict meant that regulation was the most important means for limiting war. With the exception of the 1948–49 War, all Arab–Israeli wars remained relatively limited. Three major factors explain this: the shortage of capabilities for expanding the wars, constraints imposed by the superpowers in time of war, and tacit bargaining to limit war between Israel and the Arabs states.

The superpower constraints became the most important source for limitation and termination of the Arab–Israeli wars, especially in situations where there was no parity of power between the sides to the conflict, and/or where there was no equalization of advantages from the limitations and termination of war. If there were no superpower constraints, both sides of the Arab–Israeli conflict would probably prefer not to adopt certain limitations or to accept war termination, and they would try to gain as much as they could in the war. Indeed,

while the superpower constraints prevented the Arabs from accomplishing their military and political objectives at the beginning of the 1948–49 War, those constraints prevented Israel from gaining more in the last stage of the 1948–49 War and in the other Arab–Israeli wars as well.

The complexity of the patron–client relations in the Arab–Israeli conflict had led to some adaptation process for the parties to the Arab–Israeli conflict. It has been realized that the limitations of violence and of the ability to achieve military or political gains are determined by the superpowers. It has been understood that the patron will not allow the client to be totally defeated or destroyed. When there is the danger of a superpower confrontation because of their contradictory commitments to their clients, especially in a situation in which the client faces a devastating situation, the pressures exerted by the patrons will be so great that the client must consider what level of military advantages it will be possible to attain.

Regulation in the Arab–Israeli conflict was also a direct outcome of an adaptation process on the Arab side. Following the Six Day War, because of the shortage of capabilities, Israel's military superiority, and the urgent need to regain the territories captured by Israel in that war, the Arabs and especially Egypt and Syria had changed their political objective and their strategy. The wars were not aimed at destroying Israel but at regaining the territories it had captured. The Arabs adopted a strategy of limited war as a way of managing the conflict with Israel. War was perceived to be an instrumental political means for pressuring Israel and the superpowers to accept diplomatic solutions for changing the territorial status quo that arose from the 1967 War, solutions by which the Arabs could regain the lost territories without concluding peace agreements with Israel. Of course, if a war of this kind was successful, its objectives might be expanded beyond the original intentions. However, the Arabs acknowledged the fact that, due to Israel's military superiority, they could expect only limited military and political success. Their new conception relied on the assumption that

Israel would escalate the war; however, the Soviet Union would intervene to prevent devastating defeat for the Arabs. Limited war, which before 1967 was rejected because of its limited effectiveness, became the favored political and military means of pressuring Israel to withdraw (*Heikal, Al-Ahram*, 7 March and 3 October 1969; Badri et al., 1974; Khalidi, 1973, pp. 60–87; Riad, 1981, pp. 100–106, 243–265; Sadat, 1978, pp. 232–270; Shazly, 1980).

The War of Attrition, as a very unique kind of limited war, failed to satisfy Egypt's objectives. This forced Egypt, now together with Syria, to initiate the Yom Kippur War, which was a more sophisticated employment of limited war. However, it had only limited success for the Arabs. Since Jordan refused to take part in the Arab military initiatives, the Palestinian role in the conflict had grown tremendously. By adopting less than conventional war against Israel, the Palestinian organizations hoped to pressure Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The shift from total war to limited war destabilized the conflict. The shifts from suppression to regulation and vice versa caused three wars from 1967 to 1973. Not only did suppression techniques fail to prevent conflict behavior, but limited war and less-than-limited war became the most common tools for managing the conflict. The realization that regulation of war could prevent devastating outcomes, due to potential superpower intervention, showed that limited war was the most effective and least risky means of managing the conflict.

Regulation, indeed, succeeded in keeping the violence limited, but it also made the Arabs realize the low effectiveness of limited war and less-than-limited war. The initial significant tactical military success in the Yom Kippur War restored the Egyptian and Syrian military prestige, but it was not sufficient to accomplish their main objectives in the conflict – forcing Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and the Golan Heights. Actually, if Israel had not been stopped by the superpowers, the military and the political outcomes for the Arabs would have been even more devastating. The sequence of

three wars for Egypt and two wars for Syria in six years made the military options both costly and painful.

Israel, too, was exhausted by the three wars. Although it succeeded in maintaining the territorial status quo (excluding a very narrow strip along the Suez Canal which was compensated by territory on the western side of the Canal), the costs became very high and intolerable. The effective regulation of conflict management compelled both sides to reconsider the costs and benefits of military options as the best means of managing the conflict.

6.4 *Institutionalization or Conflict Reduction*

Following the Yom Kippur War, for the first time an initial learning process began in which Israel and Egypt decided to accept modification of the conflict. Both sides accepted transforming the means for accomplishing incompatible objectives, although the fundamental grievances and differences between the parties remained unaltered. Both parties realized that war was no longer an effective means for achieving political and military objectives, not only because of the cost of new war, but because they concluded that the opportunity for unilateral gain was blocked.

Both sides were ripe for selecting alternative techniques of conflict management for preventing war. This needed some tacit or even explicit cooperation. However, 'the mere incentive to co-operate was not sufficient to bring such bitter and suspicious belligerents to see the value of a joint discussion of their security interests. A credible and energetic third party was required to transform the apparent will to collaborate into concrete initiatives' (Mandell, 1990, p. 204).

Egypt and Israel preferred the USA to help them in restructuring their security relations and in shifting the conflict from regulation to institutionalization. Aware of the importance of solely managing and stabilizing the Arab–Israeli conflict, the United States intervened immediately to assist Egypt and Israel to stabilize the ceasefire and to reduce the conflict. In a very

short time two formal agreements were concluded: the Six-Point Agreement (November 1973), which both stabilized the ceasefire and the Disengagement Agreement (January 1974) and institutionalized the management of the conflict (Kissinger, 1982, pp. 632–646, 799–853).

The disengagement agreement was the first formal agreement between Israel and an Arab state that aimed to prevent a new war. Both sides accepted some confidence-building measures in order to accomplish this aim: (1) a demilitarized buffer zone controlled by a UN force, (2) arms limitation zones in which armed forces and weapons were restricted so that neither side could deploy weapons that would reach the other side, (3) the deployment of forces monitored regularly by US reconnaissance aircraft (Kissinger, 1982, pp. 1250–1251; Mandell, 1990, p. 207).

These confidence-building measures created a partial security regime which, indeed, stabilized the conflict and reduced tremendously the danger of miscalculated war and surprise attack. For the first time, formal agreement was reached on some mutual cooperation and reciprocity, mainly limited to military and security issues. Nevertheless, Egypt and Israel realized that they had to redefine their modes of thinking about the conflict; in particular, they had to reassess their options for accomplishing their objectives. The most important lesson of this initial learning process was the mutual awareness that war could not be an effective means in managing the conflict and that peaceful means should be tried instead (Israeli, 1979, pp. 443–469; Kissinger, 1982, pp. 836–841).

Indeed, both sides agreed that disengagement should not be regarded as ‘a final peace agreement’, but that it should constitute ‘a first step toward final, just and durable peace’ (Kissinger, 1982, p. 1251). This understanding that disengagement was only the first agreement in a process of conflict reduction and, probably, resolution brought about high expectations for the further development of the process.

The successful development in the Egyptian–Israeli conflict had limited spill-

over effect for the other dyadic conflicts. It created some positive effect toward achieving the Israeli–Syrian disengagement agreement in May 1974, but it failed positively to influence the Israeli–Jordanian and Israeli–Palestinian conflicts.

Experiencing the hurting stalemate that was created after the Yom Kippur War against the background of intensified war of attrition in the front, both Israel and Syria were interested in stabilizing the ceasefire in the Golan Heights, seeking to minimize the friction between the two armies. While Syria was eager to reduce the Israeli bulge toward Damascus and not be left out of the process of conflict reduction, Israel was interested in releasing its prisoners of war, to reach an effective ceasefire, and to moderate Syrian enmity in order not to endanger the process of conflict reduction with Egypt. The learning process here was more limited than in the Egyptian–Israeli case, but it was sufficient for the institutionalization of the conflict to begin. The long history of violent interaction, the mutual mistrust, and the objective situation on the ground itself (small territory which was much closer to the security interests of each side, and the presence of Israeli settlements there), made the negotiation of disengagement agreement more difficult. The need for active mediation of the USA was very necessary. Both sides realized that without the USA they would get nothing.

The Egyptian–Israeli disengagement agreement became a model for the Syrian–Israeli disengagement agreement. The same principles of confidence-building measures were employed in the Israeli–Syrian accord: such as buffer zones, and limited-forces zones, controlled and supervised by the UN. These measures, coupled with US commitments to both sides that reduced the military and political risks entailed, laid the ground for the Israeli–Syrian agreement. Both sides realized the need for conflict reduction, declaring that disengagement was only the first step toward durable peace (Dayan, 1976, pp. 571–580; Kissinger, 1982, pp. 846–851, 935–978, 1032–1110; Seale, 1988, pp. 226–249).

The significance of this agreement was not limited to the security aspect alone, it also

had broad psychological and political implications. It marked a major breakthrough in the Israeli–Syrian relationship. Syria, which was known as the most radical Arab state in the conflict, not only drafted a formal agreement with Israel but implicitly recognized Israel and accepted to cooperate with it. There were no ideological or political obstacles for further negotiation between Israel and other Arab states, including Egypt. Egypt, indeed, felt that without any positive development in the Israeli–Syrian relationship, it would be difficult for it to move toward reducing its conflict with Israel. Israel’s recognition of this fact motivated it to sign the treaty with Syria.

It was clear that further advances in reducing the conflict reduction between Israel and Egypt were dependent on the achievement of a disengagement agreement between Israel and Syria; this was probably a direct outcome of the Yom Kippur War. That understanding did not include, however, the Israeli–Jordanian and Israeli–Palestinian conflicts. Neither Egypt nor Syria had made their disengagement agreements conditional on any positive development in the other dyadic conflicts. Actually, Egypt and Syria were not eager for, even opposed to, any Jordanian–Israeli agreement that would exclude the Palestinians from the negotiations (Kissinger, 1982, p. 1140).

Jordan itself was interested in reaching a disengagement agreement with Israel along the same lines of the Egyptian–Israeli and Syrian–Israeli agreements, i.e. they wanted an agreement that would include a partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. However, Israel opposed any idea of territorial withdrawal from the Jordan River, preferring to assume some administrative Jordanian responsibility in the West Bank. Military disengagement, actually, was less relevant on the Israeli–Jordanian front, since there had been no military engagement in the Yom Kippur War. The tacit cooperation between Jordan and Israel that developed after the Jordanian civil war in 1970 (in which Israel succeeded in halting Syria’s military intervention and in imposing its withdrawal from Jordan), informally in-

stitutionalized the conflict management between both states. Israel did not see any military or political advantage to formalizing the institutionalization of the relationship, especially when it was asked to pay for it in territorial terms (Kissinger, 1982, pp. 847–848, 976–978, 1137–1142; Quandt, 1977, pp. 229–230, 255–257).

The lack of Israeli interest in a disengagement with Jordan, and a limited US interest in that disengagement, prevented the formalization of institutionalization of the conflict management between Israel and Jordan. Nevertheless, the Arab world itself later rejected the so-called ‘Jordanian option’, when in its summit in Rabat in October 1974 it endorsed the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and excluded Jordan from negotiating the future of the West Bank and Gaza with Israel.

The achievement of the Syrian–Israeli disengagement helped to advance another agreement between Egypt and Israel. Both sides were interested in the further reduction of conflict. We can, indeed, identify an incremental learning process between the disengagement agreement (January 1974), the failure to reach a second agreement (March 1975), and its successful conclusion (September 1975).

In the twenty months between the two agreements, both parties had the opportunity not only to test each other’s intentions but also to realize the benefits of the disengagement agreement. They also learned the rules of less than peaceful concession. The failure of Kissinger in March 1975 to reach a new disengagement agreement indicated that the sides failed to realize the limitations of conflict reduction agreement for accomplishing far-reaching objectives.

The new agreement of September 1975 was modeled in part on the previous agreement. In addition to the confidence-building measures included in the first agreement, new measures were accepted by Israel and Egypt to reduce the danger of defection and to improve the prospects of accurate detection. Both states operated electronic early-warning stations on different sides of the

Gidi Passes. The United States became even more involved in monitoring and verifying the implementation of the agreement by manning and supervision of the early-warning systems in the buffer zones, in addition to undertaking aerial reconnaissance flights over the areas included in the agreement. The United States also signed four secret agreements, three with Israel and one with Egypt, which reduced the military and political risks entailed in the agreement.

The new agreement created a new strategic stability that gave both sides a greater sense of security. In addition, the agreement fostered greater political accommodation between the sides, which reflected the deepening of the learning process. Both sides committed themselves to resolving the conflict between them by peaceful means, and agreed not to use threats or force. While Israel returned the oil fields at Abu Rudeis, to Egypt, Egypt agreed to allow non-military cargoes destined for or coming from Israel to pass through the Suez Canal. The agreement gave further impetus to new developments. While Egypt could expect to regain sovereignty over Sinai, Israel could expect a political solution to the conflict with Egypt (Israeli, 1979, pp. 986–1089; Quandt, 1977, pp. 274–275; Rabin, 1979, pp. 253–275; Riad, 1981, pp. 266–298).

6.5 *The Failure of Institutionalization: Israeli–Palestinian Conflict*

The formal institutionalization of the Egyptian–Israeli and Syrian–Israeli conflict and the informal institutionalization of the Jordanian–Israeli conflict left the Palestinian–Israeli conflict the only non-institutionalized one. Both sides believed that conflict behavior was a necessary means toward determining the outcomes of the conflict. Until 1987, the Palestinian–Israeli conflict had been characterized as a state–non-state actor, i.e. an Israeli–Palestinian organizations conflict. While the Palestinian organizations believed that they could accomplish their objective – a Palestinian state instead of the state of Israel established by military means – Israel for its part acted to destroy the Palestinian organizations. That kind of zero-sum game conflict reached its peak in the

war of Lebanon in 1982, in which Israel tried totally to destroy the PLO and its infrastructure in Lebanon (Khalidi, 1986; Schiff & Yaari, 1984).

The expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon, the last Arab country bordering Israel from which a direct attack was possible, suppressed the PLO's military activity against Israel, but it triggered the opening of a second front in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict – the intifada. The intifada that erupted in December 1987 in Gaza and expanded also to the West Bank transformed the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from a state–non-state conflict to an interethnic conflict. The intifada also shifted the focus of the conflict away from disputes between Israel and the Arab states to Israel's relations with Arabs who live under its occupation.

The intifada represented a massive and popular uprising against the continuing Israeli occupation; it also expressed frustration at the failure of the Arab states and the PLO to reach any accommodation with Israel in the years since Camp David (Hunter, 1991; Nassar & Heacock, 1990; Schiff & Yaari 1990; Shalev, 1991). The inability of Israel to suppress the intifada or even to contain it made the intifada the Palestinian's most powerful political means of managing the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The failure of suppression made regulation the only possible technique with which to manage the conflict. Regulation here differs from that of other dyadic conflicts in the Arab–Israeli conflict. The differences in manpower (army versus civilians and even children), the violent means used, as well as the significance of the issue at stake for both sides, made regulation even more complicated. The rules of the game in management of this conflict are based on self-restraint and external constraints rather than on tacit bargaining.

The potential to shift this conflict from regulation to institutionalization depends on definitive, accepted and recognized links between institutionalization and resolution. The Palestinians are not interested in institutionalization that will freeze their conflict behavior without promising them a resolution that will end the Israeli occupation.

The Israelis, for their part, are interested in institutionalization as a means towards ending the intifada, but they refuse to make their withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza depend on it.

The failure of suppression and the costs of regulation of the intifada leave the sides without any choice but institutionalization as the necessary condition for shifting towards resolution. But there is a need for some initial learning if this stage is to start. The PLO's position changed late in 1988, when it accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338; with these it recognized the state of Israel. It also renounced terrorism, and limited Palestinian aspirations to the establishment of a Palestinian state only in the West Bank and Gaza. However, these changes were not accepted by Israel as the beginning of a learning process, but instead were considered an adaptation to the post Lebanon war and the emerging of the intifada. Israel still believes that there is no real change in the PLO's position and that the continuation of the intifada and military attacks from Lebanon are their evidence of this. Israel still objects to any negotiation with the PLO and makes conditional its participation in negotiations on excluding the PLO from them. The massive settlement of the West Bank which was perceived by the Likud government as the most effective answer to the intifada, and as an obstacle to any territorial compromise in the West Bank, maintains the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a most difficult stage of regulation and less ripe for institutionalization and resolution.

6.6 From Conflict Reduction to Conflict Resolution

The notable success in conflict reduction in the Egyptian-Israeli case created a process of further learning in that conflict. Both sides realized that although institutionalization of the conflict could stabilize the security relationship between them and reduce the danger of new war, it lacked the potential to accomplish even some of the respective goals in the conflict; and that the only way to achieve these was by conflict resolu-

tion. Both sides learned that this meant de-escalating the conflict to the point where its substance and nature would be transformed. They realized that this entailed the removal of the sources of the conflict situation as well as a total transformation of attitudes, even if this involved heavy military and political risks and costs.

This forced Egypt and Israel to redefine their priorities. Egypt realized that the most it could achieve was restoration of the Sinai alone, and that this could only be achieved in return for a separate peace treaty with Israel. Israel realized that the most it could accomplish was a separate peace treaty in return for the entire Sinai and deferment of any annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip for at least five years. Both sides realized that they had, indeed, achieved only some of their goals; however, the benefits achieved were perceived to exceed the costs of the conflict resolution. Nevertheless, this development was made possible by active US intervention, without which the two sides alone may have failed to reach an agreement (Dayan, 1981; Kamel, 1986; Kelman, 1985; Weizman, 1981).

The achievement of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, separately and independently from other dyadic conflicts in the Arab-Israeli conflict system, proved again, as in the transition from regulation to institutionalization, that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a single conflict. The differences in the rate and scope of learning in every dyadic conflict have proved to be even more crucial in the shift from institutionalization to resolution.

Egypt's attempt to link its conflict resolution with Israel's resolution of other dyadic conflicts failed not just because Israel refused to accept that linkage, but also because the Arab states refused to shift from institutionalization to resolution. Even the formalization of a linkage between the Egyptian-Israeli agreement and the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, as Egypt reached in the Camp David accords, failed to reach positive outcomes. The Palestinians refused to be part of a treaty which was actually imposed on them without their consent or

prior agreement. Without direct participation of the Palestinians in the autonomy talks, there was no real prospect of reaching any agreement on the autonomy.

The Israeli–Egyptian agreement remained a separate peace treaty without spill-over effects to the other dyadic conflicts. However, the resolution of the Egyptian–Israeli conflict, which removed Egypt from the conflict, minimized the prospects of a new Arab–Israeli war initiated by the Arab side, which without Egypt became tremendously costly for the other Arab states. This enabled Israel to attack the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981 and to initiate war in Lebanon in 1982.

Until recently (1991), the success of the formal institutionalization of the Syrian–Israeli conflict by the 1974 disengagement agreement and of the informal institutionalization of the Jordanian–Israeli conflict proved to be serious obstacles to conflict resolution. In both cases the incentives to attempt conflict resolution disappeared because there was no immediate danger of new war and because the costs of resolving the conflicts were perceived to be much higher than those of continuing them under controlled conditions. Indeed, in both cases the sides preferred the benefits of conflict institutionalization and reduction to the costs of peace. Whereas Syria had ideological difficulty with the notion of negotiating a peace treaty with Israel, Jordan was prepared for such a peace treaty but only if it entailed Israel's total return of the territories including East Jerusalem. Israel, at any rate, was not prepared to relinquish all of the territories (or even some of them under the Likud administration) in return for a peace treaty with the two states. Thus, the situation that emerged in both cases was characterized as 'negative peace'. Between Jordan and Israel this developed into economic cooperation and secret meetings between the countries' leaders; between Israel and Syria the negative peace was limited only to partial military regime. Nevertheless, the existence of this regime enabled both sides to limit their clash in Lebanon in 1982 to Lebanese territory alone, and to

prevent it from expanding to the Golan Heights.

The readiness of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinians and Israel to take part in the pre-negotiation stage in Madrid (1991) and in Washington (1992) probably indicates the first signs of shifting from institutionalization to resolution in the Syrian–Israeli and Jordanian–Israeli conflicts, and from regulation to institutionalization in the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. The current pre-negotiations probably indicate the emergence of some initial learning in these conflicts. However, it is not clear yet whether the rate and scope of this initial learning are sufficient for conflict resolution or only for pre-negotiation.

Three factors are responsible for the pre-negotiations: the Gulf War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and US pressures. Both sides learned two things from the Gulf War: first, owing to new technology and possession of unconventional weapons, any new war would be most destructive and devastating for both sides, and there would be no guarantee that limitation could be established. Second, the international community, and especially the USA, delegitimized war as a means of managing the conflict; and therefore concluded that the political costs of new war could exceed its political benefits.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union also minimized the prospects of successful war initiated by the Arab side. Without the Soviet patronage, war becomes tremendously costly. Therefore, the only way left to accomplish some of the political objectives is conflict resolution.

The US pressures employed on both sides of the conflict pushed the parties to reconsider their options in the conflict. Both sides realized that their refusal to take part in the attempt to resolve the conflict would make them have to face international criticism, if not punishment, and would weaken their case in the conflict.

Without the internalization of these factors, it is doubtful if they are sufficient to make the sides change their positions and move toward conflict resolution.

7. *Conclusions*

The Arab–Israeli conflict, which at first had a zero-sum, protracted nature, has changed over time through effective conflict management that has made conflict reduction and even resolution possible. Following an adaptation process in response to the outcomes of the Six Day War, and the subsequent shifts from suppression to regulation, and vice versa, both sides experienced after the Yom Kippur War some learning by which they became ready to transform their mode of thinking in the conflict. However, without the active encouragement of the USA, which not only subsidized the economic costs of the process but also provided political and military guarantees that reduced the costs and risks involved, the learning process could not be developed.

However, the Arab–Israeli conflict is not a single conflict, especially when analyzing and evaluating movements toward new forms of behavior in a given conflict system. The differences in the rate and scope of learning in each conflict influence differently the shifts in conflict management, and from conflict management to conflict resolution.

An initial learning process proved to be necessary if a shift was to take place from regulation to institutionalization, but this was not sufficient to cause a move from institutionalization to resolution. There was a need for a further and deeper learning process in order to enable conflict resolution. This happened only once, i.e. in the Egyptian–Israeli case.

Institutionalization became possible in the Egyptian–Israeli and Syrian–Israeli cases only after the Yom Kippur War, when the sides realized that war ceased to be an effective means toward accomplishing unilateral objectives. Formalization was not a necessary condition for reaching and maintaining institutionalization. The informal institutionalization of the Jordanian–Israeli conflict proved to be effective. Even without formal confidence-building measures, such as buffer zones controlled by external forces, both sides succeeded in maintaining institutionalization. Institutionalization stabilized each dyadic conflict, and no war

has erupted since. The only exception was the Israeli–Syrian war in Lebanon, but it was limited only to Lebanon, while the Golan Heights remained quiet.

Institutionalization proved to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for shifting to conflict resolution. Actually, its achievement prevented further advancement toward resolution in the Syrian–Israeli and Jordanian–Israeli cases, when both sides preferred the benefits of institutionalization to the costs of resolution. Nevertheless, both sides in these conflicts acknowledged that institutionalization was not the last stage in the process, and the expectations that they could reach more of their objectives in future agreement encouraged the shift to institutionalization.

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict remains the only conflict that fails to shift from regulation, mainly because the two sides differ with regard to the possible relationship between institutionalization and resolution.

The recent Israeli–Palestinian agreement on self-rule in Gaza and Jericho as a first step toward granting autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza is a real breakthrough and a significant change in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

This development is, indeed, a result of an intensified learning process, in which both sides realized that only direct negotiation between the Israeli government and the PLO leadership could facilitate an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and that an interim agreement is a necessary condition for reaching a permanent settlement. Both sides recognized that institutionalization should be a precondition for resolution.

Successful implementation of the autonomy will therefore be the real test for this conflict shifting from regulation to institutionalization and will pave the way for its resolution.

The fact that learning developed in each dyadic conflict, separately, independently, and differently from other dyadic conflicts, enabled separate agreements, but prevented comprehensive ones. Probably the complexities of the Arab–Israeli conflict – many actors and different issues – hindered the de-

velopment of the same rate and scope of learning in each dyadic conflict. This conclusion calls for further research of the factors that influence the rate and scope of learning in different dyadic conflicts of the same conflict system.

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