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SERGIO CIGADA  
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# THE MEDIATOR AS MEANING NEGOTIATOR

DANIELA MURARU

## 1. *Introduction*

This paper aims at identifying and discussing the various linguistic strategies employed by the American president, Jimmy Carter, in exercising his role of a “mediator” in the conflict between Egypt and Israel. He displays an argumentative behaviour characterized by the use of language strategies that function as persuasive techniques. These are resorted to with the purpose of helping the two parties to come to dispute resolution, by making them agree on signing a peace treaty. The empirical material (enclosed in the *Annex*) is made up of several fragments of texts that belong to the mediator, and in which the starting points of the two parties are formulated.

The focus on starting points was generated by the importance they have as the basis for identifying the main points of disagreement and agreement. Thus, the notion of common ground is essential in defining the issues of a conflict, so that resolution may be possible. Also, the re-formulation of the starting points is very important as it enables the parties to stay focused on the relevant aspects of the conflict. The use of (re-) definitions enables the mediator to exercise his roles of communicator, formulator and manipulator, in his attempt to minimize the disagreement space between the parties. The various roles play a part in differentiating the position of mediator from that of negotiator. In exercising his roles, the mediator resorts to a series of linguistic strategies or tactics.

It is important to, first of all, define the major concepts this paper operates with, in order to have a better picture of the context in which these particular types of strategies occur. Then the paper briefly mentions some of the typologies for classifying the various mediation strategies, proposed by different scholars (Bercovitch & Regan 1996, Bercovitch & Wells 1993, Carnevale & Pruitt 1992, Schultz 1991). Unfortunately, these models refer to the non-linguistic reality, that is, they see facts only as an account of data, and discuss and evaluate various strategies of mediation as mere observation of facts. As a difference from this, this paper is trying to approach the empirical facts from a pragma-dialectical perspective, in order to study the verbal interaction and to discover the strategies that the use of language has to offer.

The reason for this kind of approach is that the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation is not concerned with the psychological or cognitive dimension of people's states of mind, but with the people's expressed commitments, that is, with what can be externalized only. Consequently, applying this theoretical framework to the study of mediation enables the analyst to observe certain patterns of behavior at the verbal level.

## 2. *Key concepts*

“Mediation” is the process in which a third party – ideally neutral – assists two or more parties in conflict, facilitating communication and offering some guidance in order to help them solve the dispute by themselves (van Eemeren *et al.* 1993; Jacobs & Aakhus 2002).

The person who mediates is called a “Mediator”, defined (Naess 1966, Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 118) not as a person who necessarily has to solve the conflict, or who must come to a conclusion about the truth or falsity of information, but especially as one whose job is “to regulate communication, manage interpersonal relations, and facilitate decision-making” (Jacobs & Aakhus 2002: 29).

“International mediation” is a particular type of mediation used in international conflicts, which “involves interventions by credible and competent intermediaries who assist the parties in working toward a negotiated settlement on substantive issues through persuasion, the control of information, the suggestion of alternatives, and, in some case, the application of leverage” (Fischer & Keashly 1991: 30).

“Negotiation” is viewed as “a joint decision-making process in which parties, with initially opposing positions and conflicting interests arrive at a mutually beneficial and satisfactory agreement” (Albin 2001: 1). The purpose of negotiation – that of reaching a settlement – is attained by means of a dialogic dialectical process in which the two parties actively influence each other (cf. Hutiu 2007: 39). Thus, from the formal point of view, negotiation involves two parties in dialogue trying to resolve a conflict; therefore, it is a “two-way process of persuasion” (*ibid.*).

By its definition, mediation needs three parties that can reach the phase of negotiation: – the two conflicting parties have, in turn, the roles of protagonist and antagonist of a standpoint, while the third party – the mediator – addresses either each of the party, thus presenting the position of the other party, or both parties, as a common audience. First, the mediator may negotiate with each of the disputants in private, and then the parties may come to negotiation between themselves. Actually, as a facilitator of communication, the mediator has the role of helping the parties agree on reaching the negotiating phase.

As opposed to mediation, negotiation necessarily implies reaching a common point and agreement settlement. Therefore, mediation turns the dyadic relation of negotiation into a triadic interaction.

It should be added that negotiation, in this particular case submitted for analysis, is a process the third party gets involved in, at certain moments, as part of his mediating task, that is, the negotiating sessions he resorts to are employed with the specific purpose of determining the parties to reach a settlement. Also, the two conflicting parties are initially engaged in a negotiation process, but, when reaching a stalemate, the need is felt to require the presence of a third party to help them clarify the divergent issues. Nevertheless, during the entire mediation process, there are various attempts for Egypt and Israel to come to a resolution by becoming engaged in negotiations all by themselves, without the involvement of the American party. The failures make them see the mediator as the only reasonable solu-

tion of getting to an agreement. Thus, one of the roles of the mediator is “to facilitate negotiation” (Fischer 1983: 305).

### 3. *Mediation strategies*

Wall, Stark & Standifer (2001) set the premises for mediation occurrence: the interacting disputing parties must request or permit a third party to mediate; and the third party must agree to mediate. These premises enable us to treat mediation as a critical discussion, viewed within the pragma-dialectical framework.

In the context of international mediation, the notion of strategy is defined as “an overall plan, approach or method a mediator has for resolving a dispute... it is the way the mediator intends to manage the case, the parties, and the issues” (Kolb 1983: 249).

It should be added that there is no such thing as a universal strategy or a general set of strategies to act as rules that can be applied in any case of mediation, or valid for every type of dispute or conflict. Therefore, the mediator’s choice depends on the context of the dispute and the type of the parties, which exist prior to the mediation itself. Nevertheless, they influence the mediator’s perceptions and approaches to the dispute.

#### 3.1 Non-linguistic strategies or tactics for mediation

A distinction is made between strategies and tactics (Himes 1980, Kolb 1983, Schultz 1991), in the sense that the former determine the choice of the latter (Schultz, 1991: 205); strategies focus on the process of thinking or planning, while tactics involve taking action of what has been planned. In other words, tactics regard applying the theoretical points thought up in a plan to the practical level of action, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

Bercovitch & Wells (1993) talk about various classifications of strategies, that the literature on mediation and negotiation has made so far, and evaluate their effectiveness in practice. Some of the strategies mentioned by them are not necessarily linguistic, and could be viewed simply as tactics, such as gaining the trust of the parties, searching for information, acting as a communication link, engaging the negotiators in role-reversal, educating the disputants in conflict management techniques, acting as a sounding board, providing a face-saving mechanism, and arranging an environment conducive to conflict management.

Being considered a typology which does not allow clear distinctions between different types of mediation behaviour, Touval & Zartman (1985) suggest another classification, which seems particularly useful in the context of international mediation. In the Introduction to *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (1985), the two scholars make a classification of the “methods” by which the mediators contribute to conflict resolution. Thus, we may speak about three main roles attributed to the mediator: communicator, formulator and manipulator. These are closely connected with the mediator / negotiator distinction,

in the sense that we understand the mediator in a two-fold way: (1) the Mediator as a facilitator of decision-making – engaged in pure mediation, whom is attributed the roles of communicator and formulator, and who typically displays neutrality and transparency, and (2) the Mediator as a manipulator (not necessarily in a negative way) – engaged in negotiation, making use of leverage, eliciting concessions or compromise. Most of the effects of such a strategic behaviour can be skilfully pursued by means of language / discourse.

### 3.2 Linguistic/Discourse strategies employed by the mediator

The most important means of communication used by the mediator, in establishing a good relationship with the parties, is the spoken interaction, which ensures the progress of the mediation process. It is only at that level that effective mediation and its successful outcome can be achieved. Therefore, we may add that the various discourse strategies depend upon the mediator's "tacit pragmatic competence" (van Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 119). In the case submitted for analysis in the present paper, the mediator tries to achieve his strategic aims in an indirect way, by providing formulations and reformulations of the disputants' standpoints and starting points, with the purpose of minimizing the disagreement space<sup>1</sup> between the parties.

"Formulations" and "reformulations" are the devices which have important argumentative functions within mediation. They "offer strategies that are sensitive to the multiple and sometimes paradoxical demands placed on the conduct of the mediator" (van Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 138). The technique of formulating represents a sample of "how people can employ the resources of ordinary language to approximate an ideal model of a critical discussion under less-than-ideal conditions" (*ibid.*: 139).

The argumentative task that this technique involves is that of helping the mediator to clarify positions, to summarize the status of the issues at stake, and to identify the points of agreement and disagreement, thus laying out options for resolving their impasse. The mediator merely facilitates the discussion by which the disputants may search for their own settlement, as "a disagreement in views cannot be resolved through strategies that end a discussion without mutual consent" (*ibid.*: 28).

The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation treats the formulation of standpoints<sup>2</sup> as having particular importance, because we can speak about reaching agreement only if there is a common ground for discussion, that is, if the participants in the dispute agree on

<sup>1</sup> According to the definition given by van Eemeren *et al.* (1993: 95) "[t]he entire complex of reconstructible commitments can be considered as 'disagreement space', a structured set of opportunities for argument."

<sup>2</sup> According to pragma-dialectics, "an oral or written expression is a standpoint if it expresses a certain positive or negative position with respect to a proposition, thereby making it plain what the speaker or writer stands for" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 3).

"In the communication between language users, with a standpoint, a point of view is expressed that entails a certain position in a dispute [...] Standpoints may express opinions concerning facts, ideas, actions, attitudes, or whatever" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 14).

the acceptability of certain standpoints. As we also know from the pragma-dialectical approach, “[t]here is a clear parallel in mediation where the resolution of differences requires that disputants clearly express standpoints and not shift ground in defending those standpoints” (*ibid.*: 141). The ideal model of critical discussion assumes that no standpoint is more important than another.

According to the code of conduct, both parties wish to resolve and not merely to settle the disagreement, therefore, in order to determine the parties to come to an agreement, the mediator’s role is to clearly formulate and reformulate the standpoints advanced by the two conflicting parties. The mediator “should not argue for or against disputant standpoints or tell disputants what to argue” (*ibid.*: 120), instead, he has “to clarify what the disputants are arguing and to project alternative trajectories for the discussion” (*ibid.*). The mediator’s role is “to create conditions for rational discussion between the disputants” (*ibid.*: 180). To this aim, he combines negotiating sessions, and resorts to reasoning, persuasion and control of information so that the disputants reach an acceptable agreement.

Moreover, the various strategies and roles mentioned above are materialized at the linguistic level by means of appropriate lexical choices that satisfy the interests of the parties best. Some of the language strategies that Toulmin *et al.* (1979) mention involve the use of abstract or concrete terms, of words / expressions with proper or figurative meaning, or other characteristics such as precision and intensity of language. These elements will be discussed in the text analysis in the following section.

#### 4.1 The mediator as meaning negotiator – text analysis

Starting from the idea that language is “a precise instrument for thought” (Naess 1966: 38), one of the mediator’s roles is that of manipulator, in the sense that although he helps the parties to come to a dispute resolution on their own, he, nevertheless, tries to impose the outcome of agreement settlement, thus adopting the position of a negotiator. It is known that “word choice influences meaning” (Toulmin *et al.* 1979: 141). Thus, playing the part of a negotiator of meanings entails finding the most appropriate combination of words or sentences that best serve his persuasive aim of determining the parties to reach an acceptable agreement.

In order to be convincing, he exercises his role of a manipulator by resorting to a range of vocabulary items mainly characterized by elements that belong to the semantic field of peace. The mediator’s aim is to strategically<sup>3</sup> diminish the zone of disagreement by the repeated use of words such as “mutual(ly)”, “common”, “together”, “unanimous”, reinforced by the modals “must” and volitive “will”. By resorting to such linguistic elements, Carter

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<sup>3</sup> The term “strategically” is used in this paper in the pragma-dialectical sense of “strategic maneuvering” (see Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002), a concept which means that in an argumentative discourse, in order to come to dispute resolution, the arguers have to maintain “a delicate balance” between the rhetorical and the dialectical aims.



also forces an outcome of the situation, thus exercising his manipulative function of negotiator.

In his first two speeches on the conflict between Israel and Egypt (March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1977 and January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978), Carter clearly formulates the standpoints and the arguments of the disputants and the possible options for moving along with the discussion so that the outcome should be a successful one.

First of all, as a point of departure, he himself defines the process of negotiation:

(1) We know that confrontation magnifies differences. But the process of negotiation circumscribes differences, defines the differences, isolates them from the larger regions of common interests and so makes the gaps which do exist more bridgeable.

(speech on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1979)

by summarizing the mission of the mediation process, as well, and, thus, restricting the disagreement space. The emphasis is laid on the idea of differences, which, he believes, could be overcome.

Later on, the mediator identifies, first, the points of agreement - the common ground that both parties share is their desire for peace. Then, Carter characterizes the disagreement space as represented by the three main issues stated on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1977 and re-stated on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978.

In his public address on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1977, Carter discusses the three major requirements for peace, which are the starting points for the peace agreement, thus summarizing and clarifying the positions of the two parties.

Therefore, the prerequisites for peace are the following:

- 1) Israel should open borders for its neighbours "over a period of months or years", which Carter calls "a sense of a common purpose to avoid the repetitious wars and death";
- 2) "the establishment of permanent borders for Israel";
- 3) "to deal with the Palestinian problem".

In his address from January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978, President Carter re-states the "principles" which "must be observed before a just and comprehensive peace can be achieved", using different structures, though conveying similar meanings:

- 1) "true peace must be based on normal relations among the parties to the peace";
- 2) "withdrawal by Israel" and "recognized borders for all parties";
- 3) "a resolution to the Palestinian problem in all its aspects".

What he does is to clearly formulate the common starting point of both parties: "unanimous desire for peace". This search for peace proves that "broad areas of agreement do exist", an expression that combines the adjective "broad" with the emphatic auxiliary "do", used with the same exact intention of minimizing the disagreement space.

His words summarize the very definition of the mediator's role as a communicator and formulator, and the participants' position in the dispute, as well: "let them seek out among themselves some permanent solution". In this sense, the role of the mediator as a mere facilitator of decision-making, engaged in pure mediation, implies the idea of providing guidance only, while the resolution of the dispute should remain with the parties.

The conclusion is that both parties share the same desire for peace, and freedom, which stand for universal values, though differently understood by them: "Meeting in this hall of liberty reminds us that we are bound more than in any other way by distinctive common ideals and common commitments and beliefs." Therefore, the mediator states that there is common ground, so that the parties should work in the same direction to solve these inconsistencies.

In order for the parties to reach agreement, there has to be "general equality between the disputants" (van Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 118), which Carter tries to attain by addressing both parties equally. It is a technique meant to isolate the differences and to do away with the idea of power, by permanently reformulating and stressing the common standpoints of the parties, and the greatness and uniqueness of the moment: "mutual dedication to these ideals", "unanimous desire for peace", "Prime Minister Begin and the Government of Israel are no less fervently committed to the same noble objective.", "unique relationship" and "indestructible".

Another device used by Carter to promote the idea of equality of positions and to reduce differences is the use of parallel constructions introduced by "like you", stressing upon the common purpose in this conflict as a zone of agreement:

- (2) ... like you, they worry about the uncertainties of that first crucial stage...  
Like you, they hope to banish forever the enmity that has existed between the neighbours, the permanent neighbours of Egypt and of Israel. Like you, they want this peace, and like you, they want it to be real and not just a sham peace.

Welton *et al.* (1988: 182) include among the components of successful mediation "a trusting and emphatic relationship between the mediator and each disputant". This position is defined by the mediator himself, bringing forward as arguments the high degree of involvement and commitment on the American part, and on his part, personally, and the distinction between America and the other countries:

- (3) *we offer our good offices*  
(4) of all the nations in the world, *we are the one that's most trusted*, not completely, but most trusted by the Arab countries and also Israel. I guess both sides have some doubt about us. But we'll have to act kind of as a catalyst to bring about their ability to negotiate successfully with one another.  
(5) we have an excellent chance to achieve peace  
(6) *I will be devoting a major part of my time* on foreign policy between now and next fall trying to provide for a forum.

Thus, he strategically defines America's position and role in the mediating process, stressing its uniqueness, and actually pleading the case of America as the only nation capable of performing a genuine role of mediation. In (4), Carter uses as arguments to convince the parties an opposition of terms – “most trusted” / “not completely” / “but...”, stressing exactly the mediator's roles and the idea of a successful outcome America is to mediate.

All these quotes belong to Carter's starting point in the mediation process, that is, to his first speech on this matter – on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1977. His address on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1979, is a conclusion to the mediating process, in which the American president summarizes the points defined in the beginning and America's position, and the achievements in the peace process: “We went there to use our influence and good offices to help the leaders of those two great nations more decisively toward that peace...”

He expresses his confidence in the parties, and in the fact that they can change history, which is supported at the linguistic level by the use of assertives: “I know that Israel is committed and determined”, “I am convinced”. This is meant to induce them a positive state of mind with the purpose of gaining their trust as a mediator. America's solidarity with the parties, and the fact they all three share a common ideal are linguistically hinted at, by the recurrent use of a generic “we”, which suggests the inclusion of the third party in this search for world peace.

Therefore, the strategic use of the linguistic material represents the means by which Carter tries to manipulate the parties in the sense of influencing the outcome of the conflict in a favourable way.

#### 4.2 The mediator's patterns of argumentation

In exercising two of his roles, mentioned in this paper, the mediator / negotiator resorts, in formulating his ideas, to several language strategies, among which the use of abstract rather than concrete words. Concepts such as “just and comprehensive peace” or “true peace based on normal relations”, “successful search for peace” are but few of the expressions that have no fixed boundaries of meaning. They involve abstraction, defined as “the distance separating the sense of a word or phrase from any specific empirical object or situation” (Toulmin *et al.* 1979: 141).

By strategically making use of language, Carter, indirectly, argues that the parties should try to overcome their differences and reach a conflict settlement. Language becomes, thus, a way of manipulation and persuasion, especially when used figuratively. Such is the metaphor the president resorts to when defining the role of America: “We'll have to act kind of as a catalyst...”

Certain wordings and expressions are characteristic for Carter's behaviour at the linguistic level, which proves his equal treatment of the parties, his neutrality and transparency. Nevertheless, we may speak of language intensity when he stresses America's qualities by opposition with other countries.

(7) Many countries depend completely on oil from the Middle East for their life. We don't. If all oil was cut off to us from the Middle East, we could survive; but Japan imports more than 98 percent of all its energy, and other countries, like in

Europe - Germany, Italy, France - are also heavily dependent on oil from the Middle East.

The assumption that any settlement will be based on a “mutual decision” is essential to the mediation process. Consequently, there is a permanent stress on the words “mutual” “common”, “both” used by the mediator, several times, in each of his interventions, with the particular aim of reducing the disagreement space between the conflicting parties.

The vocabulary he uses is mainly characterized by noun phrases, which underline the idea of peace and freedom, and of a successful outcome – “peace initiative”, “ability to negotiate successfully”, “the cause of brotherhood and of peace”, “deep longing for peace”, “work together successfully to make this peace”, “sacred dedication to peace born and fostered in Jerusalem and in Cairo”. At the same time, these wordings are rich in adjectives that contain the idea of superlative: “enormous”, “greatest”, “highest”, “excellent”, “one of the finest acts of the world”, elements which are meant to suggest a positive state of mind. Their use emphasizes the importance attributed by Carter to reaching a settlement.

The use of “*must*” as a strong performative suggests Carter’s sense of obligation, and his commitment and determination that the parties have to come to an agreement, and establish peace, by signing the treaty: “We must not lose this moment. We must pray, ...and we must act as everything depends on ourselves.”, “we must make this beginning”, “We must seize this precious opportunity”; “We must persevere”; “We must proceed”.

Carter’s commitment and determination are suggested by the use of another modal - “*will*”, which emphasises the mediator’s solidarity with the cause sustained by the parties: “we will stay involved”, “We will stand by our friends”, “We will work not only to attain peace, but to maintain peace”, “we will rededicate ourselves”, “we will always recognize, appreciate and honor...”

The recurrent topic is that of the worthy and the advantageous, in the sense that he permanently stresses the great efforts (“you have made enormous sacrifices and you have taken great risks for peace”) made by both sides, efforts which led to a noble cause – peace in the world. Again “enormous” and “great” emphasize the role of the parties in coming to an acceptable agreement, by trying to imply that otherwise their efforts would be useless.

Another common feature of his discourses is represented by the form of appraisal Carter makes use of, in metaphorically speaking about the leaders of the two parties, even reproducing their words (March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1979) precisely with the aim of minimizing distance and power (“breaking down the barriers between peoples”): “the visionary example of president Sadat”, “strong and courageous man” (about Sadat), “As Prime Minister Begin said [...] the agreements reached there proved that any problem can be solved, if there is some - and he repeated, just some wisdom”, “President Sadat told me in Cairo that he will let nothing stand in the way of our shared goal of finishing the treaty of peace between Israel and Egypt, and of making it a living testament of friendship between the two neighboring peoples.” The language used in this case is highly figurative, characterized by metaphors, and depicting the two leaders of the two parties in a hyperbolic way.

## 5. *Conclusions*

The present paper has tried to prove the way in which the mediator can be treated as a negotiator of meanings, in the sense of his paying great attention to the linguistic elements, used by each of the conflicting parties, and reformulating these elements with the purpose of forcing an outcome upon the conflict. The theoretical points served as a background for the practical analysis of Carter's mediation process.

First of all, the need was felt for defining the major concepts involved in the context of international conflict in order to situate this sample of mediation. Then, a clear distinction between mediation and negotiation as third party interventions was drawn, with the purpose of outlining the different procedures and goals that each of these two concepts involves. Also, this discussion was integrated in the pragma-dialectical framework of the argumentation theory, so as to specifically delineate the theoretical concepts this paper uses, later on, for analysis.

A classification of non-linguistic strategies was mentioned, adopting the three-fold distribution of roles attributed to the mediator by Touval and Zartman (1985). Special attention has been given to the language strategy of (re)formulation, which is lexically materialized, in the mediator's linguistic behaviour, under the form of discourse elements that help him play his parts.

The formulation of standpoints is of particular importance in the pragma-dialectical context, as it enables the mediator to exercise his function as a facilitator of decision-making, by preventing the parties from deviating from the main issues under discussion.

In the analysis section, the mediator's roles have been identified as they function in practice. Thus, the role of the mediator as communicator and formulator engaged in pure mediation, and that of the mediator as negotiator, resorting to manipulation (in the sense of facilitating conflict resolution) intermingle with Carter.

By the choice of appropriate lexical items, the mediator tries to find ways to bring the two peoples – Arab and Israeli - together, to bridge the gap between them, stressing the area of agreement represented by the common pursuit for peace.

All the linguistic elements are strategically used by the mediator, with the purpose of persuading the parties to become dedicated to this search for peace, in order to determine them to reach the negotiating phase. By summarizing the starting points of the parties, and by stressing their shared goal for peace, the mediator exercises the roles of communicator, formulator, and, at the same time, of manipulator, by means of language. The combination of linguistic strategies such as abstraction, intensity, words used figuratively, is meant to contribute to conflict resolution, by defining and minimizing the disagreement space between the parties\*.

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## 6. Annexes

### 1. President Carter Discusses the Resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (March 16th, 1977).

[...] I think one of the finest acts of the world nations that's ever occurred was to establish the State of Israel.

So, the first prerequisite of a lasting peace is the recognition of Israel by her neighbors, Israel's right to exist, Israel's right to exist permanently, Israel's right to exist in peace. That means that over a period of months or years that the borders between Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Jordan, Israel and Egypt must be opened up to travel, to tourism, to cultural, exchange, to trade, so that no matter who the leaders might be in those countries, the people themselves will have formed a mutual understanding and comprehension and a sense of a common purpose to avoid the repetitious wars and death that have afflicted that region so long. That's the first prerequisite of peace.

The second one is very important and very, very difficult, and that is the establishment of permanent borders for Israel. The Arab countries say that Israel must withdraw to the pre-1967 borderlines; Israel says that they must adjust those lines to some degree to insure their security. That is a matter to be negotiated between the Arab countries on the one side and Israel on the other.

But borders are still a matter of great trouble and a matter of great difficulty, and there are strong differences of opinion now.

And the third ultimate requirement for peace is to deal with the Palestinian problem. The Palestinians claim up 'til this moment that Israel has no right to be there, that the land belongs to the Palestinians, and they've never yet given up their publicly professed commitment to destroy Israel. That has to be overcome. [...]

Those three major elements have got to be solved before a Middle Eastern solution can be prescribed.

I want to emphasize one more time, we offer our good offices. I think it's accurate to say that of all the nations in the world, we are the one that's most trusted, not completely, but most trusted by the Arab countries and also Israel. I guess both sides have some doubt about us. But we'll have to act kind of as a catalyst to bring about their ability to negotiate successfully with one another.

We hope that later on this year, in the latter part of this year, that we might get all of these parties to agree to come together at Geneva, to start talking to one another. They haven't done that yet. And I believe if we can get them to sit down and start talking and negotiating that we have an excellent chance to achieve peace. I can't guarantee that. It's a hope. [...]

So, this is such a crucial area of the world that I will be devoting a major part of my time on foreign policy between now and next fall trying to provide for a forum within which they can discuss their problems and, hopefully, let them seek out among themselves some permanent solution.

Just maybe as briefly as I could, that's the best answer I can give you to that question.

## 2. President Jimmy Carter Addresses Palestinian Rights (January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1978).

[...] We believe that there are certain principles, fundamentally, which must be observed before a just and a comprehensive peace can be achieved.

First, true peace must be based on normal relations among the parties to the peace. Peace means more than just an end to belligerency.

Second, there must be withdrawal by Israel from territories occupied in 1967 and agreement on secure and recognized borders for all parties in the context of normal and peaceful relations in accordance with U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338. Third, there must be a resolution of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. The problem must recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and enable the Palestinians to participate in the determination of their own future.

Some flexibility is always needed to insure successful negotiations and the resolution of conflicting views. We know that the mark of greatness among leaders is to consider carefully the views of others and the greater benefits that can result among the people of all nations which can come from a successful search for peace.

Mr. President, our consultations this morning have reconfirmed our common commitment to the fundamentals which will, with God's help, make 1978 the year for permanent peace in the Middle East.

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