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$\mathcal{D}$o democratic societies engender democratic states? Or, do democratic states engender democratic societies? Are democratic states inherently more peaceful than other regimes?

In the 1990s, international agencies invested heavily in building up civil society organizations (CSOs) in the developing world as the leading edge of a broader campaign to promote democratic transformations of authoritarian regimes. In the case of Palestine, the intent was to establish a democratic social foundation for an emergent political entity, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Within a decade, much of the original enthusiasm for promoting democratic governance through bottom-up initiatives had waned. Optimism for engineering democratic cultures from below that would exert pressure upward for state-level reforms had given way to more pessimistic assessments of the potential for CSOs to induce political change. The dawning wisdom was that the political elites of non-democratic states had proven themselves quite capable of co-opting burgeoning CSOs into reproducing existing patterns of governance. The relationship between state and civil society seemed circular and self-reinforcing; non-democratic polities beget non-democratic civil societies while democratic polities beget democratic civil societies.

These perceived lessons of democracy promotion are nonetheless highly sensitive to the underlying time frames that serve as the bases for reflection. *In the short run*, it is reasonable to expect that the generative role of CSOs is largely *latent*. That is, CSOs can only fulfill their

potential as agents of democratization once state-level reforms have cleared a path to civic engagement from below, and presumptively, such top-down reforms would be exogenous, originating in the international arena beyond state and civil society. By the same token, political elites are likely to keep in check any democratic impulses from civil society in the near term, absent external pressures to democratize. *In the long run*, however, the transformative potential of CSOs is more likely to become *manifest*, or take on a life of its own apart from the state. Consistent with this perspective, the following analysis stems from the premise that democratization is a long-term historical process, not a sudden event. Ten years may exceed the life cycle of grants from international donor agencies, but in historical time, it does not capture the fullness of the alternating cycles of state-society dynamics. Nor is democratization a mono-causal process. Multiple, coincidental, and mutually reinforcing circumstances produce democratic movements, of which civil society is one element and not the sum and total of democratic equations.

Although students of politics often disagree about how to model the evolution of democratic governance through the interplay of state and civil society, they more frequently share an image of democracy as an instrument of peaceful resolution to rival claims to political rule, one that generates a pacific aura permeating other realms of social life. Nonetheless, historical experience has not demonstrated that civic associations, voting rights, and competitive elections are sufficient in and of themselves to guarantee social order. The increasingly popular adage "No Peace Without Justice" is indicative of evolving doctrines about the relationship between democracy and peace. Defining democratic rule narrowly in terms of formal rights of expression, association, and advocacy in the classical liberal tradition (as debates about state and civil society in the developing world sometimes do) overlooks the profound lessons that have emerged out of the postwar reconstruction of democratic governance among the advanced industrial nations. Modern liberalism has underpinned a long, unprecedented wave of domestic prosperity and tranquility. It has done so by enlarging the concept of democratic citizenship beyond the rights of individual and collective participation in political deliberation. Substantive rights to social equality and economic security have become foundations of reformed democratic rule, and correspondingly, should inform our understanding of the prospects for achieving peace through democratization.

In the short run, international aid to enlarge the scale and scope of civil society organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is both necessary and worthwhile. These initiatives, however, are not sufficient to generate democratic and peaceful engagement in the region. The development of Palestinian CSOs in the West Bank and Israel reveals the pivotal role of state institutions in defining the contours of Palestinian civil society. Democratic laws, practices, and procedures embedded in the institutions of government do appear to democratize civil society as much as patrimonial-authoritarian rule blunts democratic forms of civic engagement. Consequently, reconciliation efforts will require prolonged international support for reforming institutions at both levels—renewing investments in Palestinian CSOs as well as sustained pressure to institutionalize democratic rights in both Israel and Palestine. *In the long run*, resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict will depend on adopting a more expansive definition of democratic rule. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that Palestinian CSOs can play an enduring role in sustaining democratic governance, provided that democratization signifies more than a set of procedures for generating and articulating preferences growing out of civil society. Democratic co-existence will depend on a commitment to social equality and to shared prosperity, not as the outcome of routinized democratic processes, but as a precondition of peaceful engagement between Arabs and Jews.

This essay develops in three parts. The first provides an empirically grounded survey of CSOs in the United States. The purpose here is two-fold. One is to sidestep much of the theoretical baggage that generates exaggerated pessimism about the prospects for democratic governance in Palestine specifically, and in the Arab world generally. Reigning theories of civil society are more prescriptive than descriptive, more aspirational than operational. The more useful benchmark for evaluating civil societies abroad is historical practice in the developed world, not hypothetical constructs; the former offers a more valid measure of the vigor and import of CSOs elsewhere, and the latter, a somewhat illusory one. The second is to identify the basic similarities between CSOs in the West and in Palestine. More specifically, the branching of civil society into service, advocacy, and political divisions observed in Palestine conforms to patterns observed in most nations. It is not an aberration.

The second part offers an historical overview of Palestinian CSOs in the West Bank and Israel. Comparing the experience of CSOs in

these differing contexts provides insight into how political institutions shape the development of CSOs. Two critical factors have informed the dynamics of Palestinian civil society: the role of transnational and international institutions and the immediate realities of democratic or colonial rule. Palestinian CSOs in the West Bank and Israel both draw extensively on international aid, directed primarily to social service and advocacy CSOs. International donors are one of two main pillars for CSOs and will likely remain so in the future; the other is government funding. In terms of political institutions, Palestinian CSOs in Israel and the West Bank both operate within a context of abridged civil and political rights. In Israel, Arabs can claim formal democratic and civil rights—if not substantive ones—and so Palestinian CSOs in Israel are versed in democratic proceduralism with a liberal-pluralist bent. In the West Bank, the compromised foundations of PNA rule did not augur well for democratization and set the stage for the rise of state clientelism and political radicalization that has fragmented Palestinian society.

The concluding section considers the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, given the bearings of Palestinian CSOs. This discussion stems from two assumptions. The first is that the status quo is unsustainable. The international community will approach the limits of its tolerance for Israeli colonialism in the foreseeable future, and the evident contradictions of military occupation will increasingly undermine Zionism as the controlling ethos of the Israeli state. The second is that the ongoing transformation of Palestine under decades of occupation is foreclosing the possibilities for a Two-State solution. Short of dismantling the extensive Israeli settlements and the military apparatus now ingrained in the territories of the West Bank, a reconstructed state unifying Israeli and Palestinian lands represents the more plausible route to a lasting peace. While the creation of a bi-national state faces steep obstacles, the historical experience and current achievements of Palestinian CSOs give grounds for cautious optimism for arriving at a *modus vivendi* for an Arab-Jewish state.

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In light of current debates about civil society in the United States, efforts to promote democracy in the developing world suggest a paradox. Western governments' patronage of civil society organizations in the Middle East and elsewhere aims to foster deliberative, representa-

tive, and politically engaged collectivities. Presumably these CSOs will curb the authoritarian tendencies of political leadership in such societies, and subsequently, engender norms of governance more conducive to the peaceful resolution of domestic and international conflicts. However, mounting scholarship on civil society has documented the erosion of the very patterns of democratic engagement in the U.S. that development agencies and philanthropists imagine cultivating abroad. Rather, the contours of civic life in the U.S. indicate points of convergence between American society and those in the developing world, notwithstanding U.S. efforts to expand the scale and scope of participatory democracy elsewhere.

    As many social scientists have observed, prevailing concepts of civil society provide an idealized, not a realistic, description of collective mobilization in the U.S. The longstanding importance of membership organizations that encompass broad and diverse constituencies has largely given way to professionalized, issue-oriented advocacy organizations divorced from popular influence or participation. Since the 1960s, upper-middle class, university-educated professionals have generally displaced lay leadership of civic organizations. Grants from well-endowed philanthropic foundations and wealthy donors, as well as contributions raised by direct-marketing fundraising techniques, have commonly replaced membership dues and membership volunteering as the material fundaments of contemporary political advocacy. Issue-oriented media campaigns, interest group lobbying, and public interest litigation are the ascendant *modus operandi* of post-civil rights era CSOs in the U.S. Broad-based social movements bent on pressing reform through traditional channels, namely, direct participation in political parties or electoral campaigns, have waned. Nevertheless, politically active membership organizations have not wholly disappeared in the United States. The most successful examples of popular, grassroots mobilization in recent times belong to conservative Christian organizations. Conservative churches constitute one of the few remaining reservoirs of broad-based membership organizations available for concerted political action, even though they carry strains of ethno-religious nationalism that presents a challenge to secular, liberal-pluralist conceptions of U.S. democracy. The image of a two-tiered civil society, one top-down and the other bottom-up, one secular and the other religious, one professionalized and the other populist, often permeates academic writings about civil society in the U.S.

A third major branch of civil society in the United States is decidedly more apolitical in its leanings. It is comprised of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) commonly deemed *charitable*. These are charities that deliver education, research, health and other welfare services, among other activities held to benefit broad cross-sections of society. For charitable NPOs, political partisanship and advocacy are secondary to their service mission both in practice and in law. Not only do U.S. laws place firm restrictions on their partisan activities, these charities have become highly dependent on federal, state, and local government financing in the postwar era. Extensive government regulation has arrived in tandem with extensive government funding, so much so that the autonomy of these organizations—that is, their capacity to respond to the communities that they serve as opposed to giving priority to aligning their activities with government mandates—has been commonly exchanged for routinized public financing. It is now possible to speak of the *étatisation* of this branch of the nonprofit sector as service-oriented charities operate more as extensions of public administration than as representatives of the citizenry. Some of these charities have secular origins. Many have distinctive ethnic, racial, gender, or religious affiliations. A great many are affiliated with what are called mainline churches, that is, the liberal and moderate wings of American Christianity. Even though charitable NPOs act at the behest of the state, government funding sustains highly pluralistic patterns of social service provision.

For students and promoters of CSOs in the Arab world, an idealized vision of civil society, rather than the mundane realities of the relationship between state and civil society in the West, often becomes the benchmark for evaluating progress toward liberalization and democratization. That service-oriented NPOs are deeply indebted to government funding in the Arab world and have not served as rallying points for debating government policies and practices is commonly interpreted as ingrained patterns of patrimonial rule rather than as striking parallels to government-NPO relationships in the U.S. When Western governments invest in highly professionalized CSOs in the Arab world that espouse secular, liberal, and pluralist values, they often seemed puzzled that these organizations do not snowball into broad-based social movements for democratic reform, rather than acknowledge the identical limits of political advocacy in the West situated upon a similarly narrow popular base. That ethnic and religious identities often provide the foundation for broad-based political movements is

unreflectively dismissed as pathology as such, rather than a similarity between U.S. and Arab polities that begs further analysis. The pivotal role of ethno-nationalist and religious-based political parties in state building in the West seems to have disappeared from the historical memory of the political modernizers of the developing world.

Rather than take existing patterns of civil society in the Arab world as the incomplete, flawed underpinnings of a democratic order, one can identify them as recurring patterns across political regimes. The three-fold division of CSOs detailed above encompasses the service, advocacy, and political branches of civil society, and it widely obtains across time and place. First, service-oriented CSOs are preoccupied with the immediate charge of humanizing the social order: relieving suffering and want, spreading literacy, propagating cultures of shared norms, values, and beliefs, etc. They most commonly do so as beneficiaries of state patronage, but are not generally implicated in risk-laden contests for political power in any direct sense. They are often marbled with diverse class, ethnic, linguistic, and religious solidarities and affiliations.

Second, advocacy organizations seek to influence state policy, but not to govern. They typically do so as representatives of interested minorities that do not command broad-based popular support. Liberal-pluralism is an ideology consistent with their vision of a social order of many small fragments. They work to expand the sphere of public dialogue and recognition to include a broader representation of diverse interests and perspectives.

Third, the political branches of civil society are more directly engaged in the struggle for rule. CSOs of this kind generate or channel social solidarities broad enough to lay claim to the proximate status of governing bloc, partnership in governing coalitions, or legitimate opposition to ruling coalitions.

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Democracy is an elastic concept, so much so that students of political science often attach prefixes and suffixes to the term to give it some degree of precision. Every democracy removes basic issues of governance from democratic deliberation by way of constitution or convention. Furthermore, these pre-democratic foundations shape the nature and scope of civil society. The antecedents of political rule in Israel and the Occupied Territories have engendered differing kinds of civil

society for Palestinians. Israel has highly developed democratic institutions (although prejudicial in their workings) that have afforded Palestinians the status of a recognized minority. Consequently, Palestinian CSOs in Israel have evolved more clearly within a liberal-pluralist mold. In the West Bank, military rule and the advent of limited self-government have frustrated the nationalist ambitions of Palestinians. These circumstances have favored the ascendancy of sharply edged, ethno-religious CSOs in the Occupied Territories, more devoted to resisting Israeli colonialism than to democratic governance.

Israeli democracy is grounded in two competing models of democratic governance. Israel is first and foremost an ethno-religious nation-state. Secondly, its fundamental laws affirm a commitment to liberal-pluralist democracy. The Declaration of the Establishment of Israel affirms the creation of a Jewish state, asserting "the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State," but also "it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture." The *a priori* commitment to upholding Jewish sovereignty is accorded priority in civic and political affairs. Nonetheless, the subsidiary commitment to minority rights allows Arab-Israelis, who are 20–25% of Israel's population, to construct an extensive array of CSOs. Palestinian civil society in Israel is also bounded by perceived security needs. Israel is a colonizing nation, established and consolidated in the face of resistance from Palestine and other Arab nations. The state and the Israeli military view indigenous Palestinians as a potential fifth column. Therefore, Arab-Israeli CSOs are suspended in a state of internal exile, largely insulated from associations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and other Arab nations.

Within the limited parameters granted to Arab-Israeli associations, Palestinians have forged a civil society that resembles those of minority populations in the West in many respects. Service-oriented CSOs have proliferated in Israel with the onset of neo-liberal reforms in the 1980s bent on privatizing public services. Those reforms have successfully delegated to NPOs primarily the responsibility for health and human services. Palestinian charities are thus integral to the expanding mosaic of ethno-religious and secular welfare agencies underwritten by abundant government subsidies. Also consistent with the civic practices of ethnic and religious minorities in the developed world, Palestinian advocacy organizations pressing for civil rights have grown in

importance. Through conventional channels of interest group politics (publicity, lobbying, and litigation), Palestinian CSOs have endeavored to rein in official discrimination against Arab-Israeli individuals and communities. This includes the attempt to stem the abuse of policing powers directed against Palestinians arising out of the military's broad jurisdiction over civil matters. Arab representation in the Knesset, likewise, has promoted civil rights agendas, but also pressed for Israeli recognition of Palestinian sovereignty in the Occupied Territories.

While Palestinian CSOs in Israel have primarily resorted to the peaceful avenues of engagement afforded by quasi-democratic institutions, another salient characteristic of the civic order is the role of international alliances. Arab-Israeli NPOs engaged in social service provision and advocacy are deeply indebted to international agencies in the West that are devoted to humanitarian aid and supporting human rights. Civic associations that bridge Arab and Jewish constituencies are rare or weak. The Zionist leanings of Jewish civic organizations have more commonly steered Arab-Israeli CSOs into partnerships with international agencies to advance minority rights.

Appeals to liberal-pluralistic doctrines of democracy among Palestinian CSOs in Israel differ somewhat from the nationalist aspirations of civil society in the West Bank, as does the historical context of rule. During the military occupation of 1967–1993, freedom of political expression and association were minimal in the Occupied Territories. Political activity was driven underground, operating under the guise of cultural and social organizations tolerated by the military authorities because of their seemingly apolitical status. Thus, the charitable, advocacy, and political branches of civil society were fused together under the rubric of nominally charitable associations. Further, Palestinian CSOs were united in their determination to resist the occupation and hasten the arrival of national self-government. The creation of the Palestinian National Authority profoundly reconfigured civil society in the West Bank. Charitable, advocacy, and political CSOs split apart from each other, and they assumed roles of civic engagement more typical of their counterparts in Israel and in other democratic states. However, the foundations and subsequent evolution of limited home rule fragmented Palestinian civic society in ways that did not bode as well for democratic governance.

The PNA had conflicting mandates. For the Israeli government, the PNA was a client state, fashioned in the interests of Israeli security,

and charged with containing radical movements in the Occupied Territories. For Europe and the United States, the PNA was to lay the groundwork for a democratic state that would evolve toward national self-governance and peaceful coexistence with Israel. For Palestinians, the PNA was to deliver the Palestinians from Israeli colonial rule. Added to the competing logics of security, democracy, and national resistance was the incipient task of assembling the administrative infrastructure of political governance. The quixotic blueprints of Palestinian self-government were bound to disappoint the expectations of the various stakeholders in the PNA.

Faced with the liabilities of launching a new state with uncertain and conflicting sources of legitimacy, the PNA resorted to patronage to consolidate a popular base of support. The charitable branches of Palestinian civil society became increasingly dependent on PNA funding. Much of the international aid previously channeled to service-oriented CSOs were now routed to, or vetted by, the PNA for redistribution. The PNA offered badly needed financial assistance to Palestinian charities in exchange for political allegiance to the reigning Fatah party. PNA patronage was also systematically denied to rival factions in order to appease U.S. and Israeli demands for marginalizing Palestinian organizations deemed threatening to Israeli security. The institutionalization of patron-client relationships between the Fatah-controlled PNA and charitable NPOs fueled tensions between the PNA and the second branch of civil society, advocacy CSOs. Commonly supported by Western donors, staffed with cadres of university-educated professionals, and committed to liberal-secular democratic principles of government, advocacy CSOs criticized the PNA for temporizing on democratic reforms and for entrenching patrimonial forms of governance. They feared that the PNA was institutionalizing corrupt political practices that would eventually foreclose the possibility of democratic government. Thus, PNA governance drove a wedge between the charitable and advocacy branches of Palestinian civil society.

Neither the favor of state-supported CSOs nor the discontent of advocacy CSOs with the PNA would arbitrate the fortunes of Palestinian home rule. Popular dissatisfaction with the Oslo Accords and its aftermath would ignite a second *intifada* and fuel support for the political branches of Palestinian civil society associated with radicalized ethno-religious identities, culminating in the victory of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the January 2006 elections. Patience

and goodwill toward the PNA have yielded to resentment of a political system that has failed to stem Israeli military occupation and settlements in the West Bank. The PNA has not alleviated a deteriorating economy nor cleared a genuine path to national sovereignty. The ensuing conflicts between Hamas and Fatah have left the Gaza Strip under Hamas control and the West Bank under the internationally supported emergency rule of Fatah. Palestinian society remains deeply divided. Its political leadership is torn, as the saying goes, "between resistance and governance." The prospects for peace in the region seem as remote as ever.

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In the short run, international assistance for civil society initiatives in Palestine has made no clear impact on resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is a major source of political instability in the Middle East and the fault line of most East-West tensions in the world. International aid for economic, social, and political development in Palestine has provided an outlet for Western powers bent on evading the difficult issues at stake in the conflict. Yet every incremental gain in peace and prosperity attributable to international assistance for Palestinians has been annulled by Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories. As many observers have argued, international assistance subsidizes the occupation by minimizing the costs to Israel of providing assistance for the majority of Palestinians relegated to abject poverty in the Occupied Territories. In this view, aid is now the *problem*, not the solution, insofar as it abets Israeli policies.

There is a growing realization that investments in civic society have reached the point of diminishing, vanishing, or even negative returns in terms of generating partners for peace on either side of the Arab-Israeli divide. Yet this opens a window of opportunity to revisit basic issues of governance in the region as a way forward. It may be that political reform will move to the top of the agenda for international stakeholders seeking avenues for a breakthrough to a peaceful settlement. Nonetheless, the options for a lasting and just peace are narrowing. A sovereign, viable Palestinian state may no longer be a credible objective.

A bi-national state suggests another way out of the current impasse. It is a plausible alternative to the crumbling appeal of Palestinian nationalism. Specifically, a bi-national state could liberate an embar-

goed economy that offers little hope of even modest affluence for the mass of pauperized Palestinians, let alone self-sufficiency. It offers the prospects of restoring freedom of movement and association for a population currently imprisoned in dozens of small, disconnected enclaves, and of participating in a state that possesses genuine sovereignty. For Israelis, a bi-national state promises relief from longstanding international isolation and condemnation without having to suffer the dislocation of uprooting hundreds of thousands of settlers in the West Bank or to surrender military control over the Occupied Territories. It presents an opportunity to end rule over a subject population that recreates the very persecution that Jews have suffered elsewhere and from which the State of Israel was to provide a safe haven. It would lessen vulnerability to hostilities from surrounding states that view Israel as an illegitimate entity because of its troubled history of not accommodating Palestinian aspirations for political sovereignty.

Do the contours of Palestinian civil society suggest a constructive role for CSOs in reaching a prospective settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict through bi-national statehood? There are reasonable grounds for concluding that the latent potential of Palestinian civil society could become a manifest force for democratic coexistence within the parameters of a bi-national state. As detailed above, the service and advocacy branches of Palestinian CSOs present few obstacles to—or might even facilitate—a reconstructed state. The prevailing tendency to delegate direct responsibilities for social provisions to charitable NPOs (with extensive government subsidies) could be easily reproduced without far-reaching changes under a new dispensation. It would require few revisions to sustain current practices. As importantly, it would provide a solid institutional basis for ethno-religious pluralism within a bi-national framework of rule. Many of the divisive issues involved in constructing a state-run, assimilationist system of education, health, and social welfare services that have rent other nations could be sidestepped altogether by sustaining emergent practices. The liberal-pluralist ethos of advocacy CSOs in Palestine and Israel, once joined, could lend aid and support to democratic engagement and provide a reservoir of leadership to reconstituted Arab representation within a new political order. As for the political branches of Palestinian civil society, the popular basis for bi-nationalism is a largely unexplored issue. A broad-based re-examination of the nationalist ambitions is difficult within the reigning orthodoxy of the two-state solution, but reconstructing hard-line versions of both Arab and Jewish national con-

sciousness remains the most difficult challenge to resolving the current impasse. For Arabs, recognizing the permanence of a Jewish presence involves surrendering hopes of restoring historical *Falastin*, including, but not limited to, setting aside expectations of reuniting the dispersed Palestinian populations now residing in other states throughout the region. For Jews, acknowledging the resolute determination of occupied Palestinians to reside in their homeland implies renouncing the victory for a state under singular Jewish control, including, but not limited to, abandoning the idea of *Eretz Yisrael* as a potential refuge for Jewish communities throughout the world. Each would have to compromise its image of ethnocracy for that of peaceful coexistence. Both would have to recognize the inescapable reality of their common future together, but as equal partners in a shared space.

Ideological barriers to democratic coexistence are not essentially intrinsic to the peoples of Israel or Palestine. Ethnically exclusionary, all-or-nothing versions of national liberation in the region are not necessarily self-sustaining, especially given that the social costs of maintaining them apparently far exceed any real benefits, as long as both are fully internalized. However, the calculus of compromise or intransigence is not balanced within the limits of domestic resources nor uniquely calibrated to the needs or wants of the peoples living within Israel-Palestine. It is the externalities of the Arab-Israeli conflict that enable, sustain, and exaggerate triumphalist nationalism, with the balance weighted heavily in Israel's favor. The missing partner for peace—the one that tilts the costs and benefits of Arab-Israeli encounters in favor of continued aggression and against compromise—resides elsewhere.

On the Arab-Israeli question, "The United States holds all the cards," as the saying goes. International deference to American interventions in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the wider Middle East means that the opportunity for peaceful reconstruction of the region depends on the currents of U.S. politics and the evolution of American foreign policy. Israeli national ambitions expanded during the Cold War only with the aid and support of the U.S. government. The generously rewarded ally against Soviet influence in the region has now become the richly endowed ally in the global war against terrorism. Absent a dramatic reconsideration of American strategic aims—from one of forcible pacification of the region to that of bridging and reconciling Western and Middle Eastern civilizations—Israeli nationalism will follow a similar course. U.S.-Israeli ambitions are self-evidently expensive and onerous

and ultimately self-defeating *in the long run*. If the U.S. realizes this sooner rather than later, and reprises an awareness of the origins of its own success in sustaining domestic peace and order, it could unilaterally reframe the terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict and hand the moderates on both sides a long awaited victory. ◉

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