

Flagship Dialogue

**Master of the Game: Henry Kissinger and the
Art of Middle East Diplomacy**

Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

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PROCEEDINGS

Constantino Xavier: We are joined virtually by many of you from India and around the world on our zoom and you tube platforms where we are live streaming. My name is Constantino Xavier. I am a fellow at CSEP in the foreign policy program. Today on behalf of Dr Rakesh Mohan the president of CSEP we are all delighted at CSEP to welcome you to our third flagship dialogue on what is really an excellent book, a superb piece of research on diplomatic statecraft called 'Master of the Game- Henry Kissinger and the art of Middle East Diplomacy'. The book by Ambassador Martin Indyk is available in India especially on kindle. Hopefully we will have a wide readership in India and beyond, because there is always much interest on Mr Kissinger's persona in India. I am here to give just two quick introductory remarks. First we are really thrilled to have Mr Indyk here with us calling in from New York. Ambassador Indyk is a distinguished fellow at the council on foreign relations in New York. He served as President Barrack Obama's special envoy for the Israel – Palestinian negotiations in 2013-14. He has a long and distinguished career deeply connected to the Middle East on which he is one of the best expert worldwide. Served twice as US Ambassador to Israel, shaped US policy in many leading capacities at the National Security Council and the department of state. Most importantly maybe for us here at CSEP, he was also the Executive Vice President of the Brookings Institution. Where he also directed the foreign policy program where I first met Mr Indyk while working there. That is important for us because he played an instrumental role in setting up Brookings India almost ten years ago together with the then President of Brookings Strobe Talbott and our Chairman Vikram Singh Mehta. Brookings India gave way to CSEP in 2020 and Martin maybe the best way to put it or to put our gratitude for your role in setting up this institution today is to say that we wouldn't be here today and we wouldn't have come this far without your work. So welcome back and thank you for joining us Martin.

Martin Indyk: Thank you Tino. It is a pleasure to be with you and I am absolutely delighted to see CSEP is thriving under the leadership of Rakesh Mohan and of course Vikram Mehta and with your involvement and Shankar's involvement. I think it has great prospects and I am very pleased to see how it has developed. I am very glad to have the opportunity to speak to an Indian audience about my book. India doesn't really get a mention in this book because it is entirely focused on the Middle East. But Henry Kissinger's approach to the Middle East region and his approach to issues of war and peace, they I think do have broad applications, something which we can explore in our conversation today. I decided to write this book after my third effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when I worked with John Kerry, the Secretary of State for President Barrack Obama as his special envoy for Israeli - Palestinian negotiations in 2013 and 2014. At the end of that effort which is I said ended in failure I decided to rather than write another book about failure, I would go back and look at where the American led effort to make peace in the Middle East all began. Back in the 1970s when Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State in the Nixon and then the Ford administrations when he on the back of the outbreak of war in 1973, the Yom Kippur war, he engaged first in crisis diplomacy to bring the war to an end. And then in a very activist engagement over the four years that he was Secretary of state to lay the foundations for the American led Arab- Israeli

peace process. Unlike our efforts Kissinger's efforts were quite successful in moving the region from war towards peace through a peace process that produced two Israeli - Egyptian agreements and one Israeli - Syrian agreement. The Israeli - Egyptian interim agreements laid the foundations for the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt which Jimmy Carter negotiated two years after Kissinger left office. The Israel - Syria disengagement agreement of 1974 has essentially kept the peace between Israel and Syria ever since notwithstanding the descent of Syria into civil war, that border between Israel and Syria, interim border has nevertheless remained essentially peaceful for almost 40 years. So I thought that it made sense to go back and look at what we could learn from Kissinger's diplomacy for how to and how not to make peace in the Middle East. I was facilitated in this effort by the fact that Kissinger as a man of history and as a student of history had documented every conversation, every negotiation that he had as Secretary of State. Those documents are all available online in the US Government archives or the presidential libraries. About 95% of them have been declassified. I was also able to gain access to the Israeli archives which have been opened for that period. I could therefore compare and triangulate with the account in the American archives. The Arab archives either don't exist or aren't open. But there are many biographies of the Arab leaders involved that proved very useful. And I was able to interview Henry Kissinger himself. Essentially I conducted 12 interviews one for each chapter. Even though he is today 99 years old he has just published another book on leadership which includes a chapter on Anwar Sadat his partner in peace in the Middle East context. He remembers a great deal about what happened so long ago in many cases correcting my memory of the events. So as a result I was able to put together and recap story of Kissinger's Middle East peace diplomacy. The surprise for me in this historic excursion, excavation I should say, was that Kissinger actually was not trying to make peace. He was rather trying to establish a new order in the region using the peace process as his mechanism for doing so. For Kissinger as it emerged from the documents when Sadat or Yitzhak Rabin or even Hafez al-Assad out of Syria would say to him "we are ready for the big step, We are ready to make peace, our people are ready to make peace", Kissinger would consistently say – "no, no, that is too ambitious. You don't want to do that, it is too dangerous. It is too risky. The region isn't ready for it. We can't achieve that". What we should aim for he would always argue to them was something less. An objective of ameliorating conflict rather than trying to end the conflict. That was because of Kissinger's view of history which led him to believe that the natural state of affair between states in the international system was one of conflict. And therefore the best that you could do was ameliorate. He did believe that over time peace would eventually be achieved. That after the exhaustion of their powers states would finally decide to end their conflicts. But he did not expect in the Arab – Israeli context that would happen in his lifetime. Certainly not in his four year tenure as Secretary of state. So he aimed for something much less ambitious interim agreements what he called his 'step by step diplomacy', an incremental approach to resolving the conflict in which he excludes the idea that leaders should try to jump to the end game instead arguing that it was much more reliable and more effective over the long term to take steps towards the resolution of the conflict. And so he argued not for territory, for peace which is the traditional formula based on UN resolution 242 for resolving the Arab – Israeli conflict where Israel gave up territory it occupied in 1967 in exchange for commitments to end the conflict and security arrangements in normalisation. He argued instead for territory for time.

Time for Israel to grow stronger, reduce its isolation and time for the Arabs to exhaust their passion for conflict. Their desire to destroy Israel. And instead come to terms with it. So that eventually when the Arabs had enough and were ready to accept Israel and normalise with it, Israel would be strong enough to make the territorial concessions sufficient to finally end the conflict. That was his notion of how to make peace in the Middle East. For me it was as I said a discovery because he doesn't actually have to lay that out in his 4000 pages of memoirs which include detailed accounts of his negotiations in the Middle East. Some of them accurate and others quite inaccurate. But he never actually lays things out the way that I just explained. And the reason for that was because Kissinger is a complicated character who would often obfuscate his objectives operating in an anti-semantic white house, in an anti-Israel state department. He had to make it out as if he was constantly seeking comprehensive peace when in fact he was trying to do something quite different. The best indication to me of what he was actually up to came not from any of the accounts of his peace-making in the Middle East but rather from his first book. His PhD thesis in which he wrote about the order that was constructed by Castlereagh and Metternich. The foreign ministers of Great Britain and Austria. The Austrian Hungarian Empire in the wake of the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the 19th century. And that book titled "a world restored - Metternich, Castlereagh and the problems of peace". The title itself captures the point that I have been underscoring here. For Kissinger peace was problematic. The pursuit of it with too much passion and energy by leaders was more likely, he argued in the first pages of his first book, was more likely to produce its opposite. He called it the paradox of peace. That the pursuit of peace could end up in war. Of course he was informed by his own experience with the appeasement and the resulting Second World War or the way in which the order that Castlereagh and Metternich had created in the 19th century finally came apart after about a 100 years of peace more or less maintained by the powers of Europe in the First World War. But that approach was something that he applied to the Middle East when he had the opportunity to make peace. For me in the final conversation I had with him about the book it became very clear. I said to him "how come you didn't go for the peace between Israel and Egypt that Jimmy Carter made three years later? Israelis and Egyptians were clearly ready as clear as it was from the documentation of your negotiations with them. Do you regret that you didn't do that?" He said no. I don't regret it. I am glad it happened. But I always felt that if I aimed too high, that if I tried to end the conflict, I would end up breaking it. And for me that that was a light bulb moment, as we say in America, for it helped to clarify something that we had actually done. I am talking about me and the other members of Bill Clinton's peace team when we took Arafat to Camp David and when Barrack tried to impose an end of conflict peace agreement, end of claims, end of conflict peace agreement and we failed. And the whole thing blew up in the 'Intifada'. Thousands of people killed on both sides. And the very framework of peace destroyed in the process. Such that it is not been possible to put it back together again. There is I think a real salutary tale in the dangers of overreaching. There are dangers in under reaching which we can get to as well. Opportunities that Kissinger himself missed because of his approach. But nevertheless I think that the idea of an incremental step by step effort when it comes to resolving long standing deep seated conflicts is something that I think recommends itself to those who would make peace in troubled regions of the world. Thank you.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you Martin. Thank you very much for that very brief introduction to a very rich book. A remarkable book quite frankly but because it is thoughtful, it is insightful, it is detailed about the process of negotiation and it is still readable. In fact not just readable it has moments of great drama in there. Quite from Yom Kippur war and the way that the principles then deal with the crisis, their negotiations among themselves. These are larger than life characters some of them. Apart from Kissinger, Rabin, Nixon, Sadat, these are not ordinary people that we are dealing with. So to say that a book of over 670 pages is readable and yet detailed and thoughtful. For me this is really a remarkable book. Congratulations on having done this. By the way welcome everyone and I must declare an interest here. I have known Martin since mid-90s when we were colleagues in Israel. We were both Ambassadors there at the same time. Martin is one of the most effective diplomats that I have ever seen. He had personal links across the Israeli political spectrum. He could work political processes, at home in Israel and understand what he was doing as he shows in in this book. This is a historian's book at one level. But it can be read as much more. What we will do is over the next few minutes I have a few questions that I would like to ask Martin about the book. Then we will throw it open to questions. So if anyone in the audience wants to ask any questions do put them in the chat box and I will then channel them to him. There is one thing about that comes through very clearly in your book is how Kissinger managed to carry out very high profile diplomacy and this is only one detailed case in Middle East at a time when he was facing bureaucratic infighting at home. Tremendous resistances when he was national security advisor from state and from the entrenched bureaucracy. He was handling his own president whose instincts were slightly different. To begin with Nixon had very modest ambitions for the Middle East. Later when he did get interested and President Ford certainly wanted a comprehensive peace and that is not, as you just explained, Kissinger was aiming for. And don't forget this was also when Watergate was happening. And yet he manages to do this kind of diplomacy, create an order, build an order in the Middle East where suddenly US is at the centre of things. And it lasts. Until pretty recently. What other people achieved after that, even up to Oslo I would say was really building on the building blocks that Kissinger had put in place in the Middle East. In fact this is his part of his achievement which I think has weathered best over time. Even when you compare it to the opening to China or to other things. I mean certainly the Vietnam which he got the Nobel peace prize for the Vietnam agreements. I think this really has lasted. You say at the end that this is probably the way forward in today's world as well. We will come to that later. But how did he manage to do this when he faced internal bureaucratic opposition and he had to carry along a reluctant and strong president with ideas and when domestic politics was collapsing around, the Watergate and so on?

Martin Indyk: It is fascinating and it was a virtuoso performance which is why I called him the 'Master of the game'. The title of the book. And it was a game as you point out that required him to deal with adversaries and competitors both in Washington and the Middle East. As you know Shankar, many of the Indian diplomats have been exposed to Washington. The battles in Washington are often far more intense and bloody in personality terms than even ones in the Middle East. Kissinger had a real challenge with Nixon. But it became easier over time because Nixon became almost completely preoccupied by Watergate. So initially Nixon told Kissinger he wanted him to stay out of the Middle East because of his views of Jews as being

subject to dual loyalty. He believed that Kissinger couldn't really promote the American interest when it came to Middle East because of his Jewishness. That offended Kissinger and made him I think even more determined to play a role. But Nixon had given responsibility for the Middle East to Secretary of state Rogers and told Kissinger 'listen, we'll go and take care of the rest of the world. Let's just leave that to the state department'. But because Kissinger had been explicitly excluded that was like a red rag to a bull and he went about systematically undermining the State Department and the secretary of state William Rogers. It was a real knockdown drag out bureaucratic fight. I will give you one quick example. When he finally met with Sadat's national security advisor in 1972 about ten months before the war he did so in a safe house of CIA in Ups in New York, outside of New York City. He did so because he wanted to avoid the State department finding out about it. There was no state department representative in this meeting. It was all done secretly behind the back of the State department. So much of what Kissinger did in those days was done behind the back of the state department. He was a very effective bureaucratic operator. Part of the reason he was effective was because in the end he could get Nixon to support him. Nixon was deeply suspicious of the state department bureaucrats. Thought they were all against him, the press was all against him and so he preferred the people around him and would defer to them if it was a choice between Kissinger and Rogers. He wanted to avoid the choice if he could. He didn't like dealing with people but in the end he would back Kissinger. Part of the reason he would back Kissinger was that Kissinger always had the superior strategic argument. He was always able to appeal to Nixon's sense of strategy. Because Kissinger himself was a master of the strategic argument. Then, once Nixon having been re-elected in 1972 got caught up in Watergate, Kissinger essentially became the president for foreign policy. He took over Nixon's role. Nixon didn't have the time to pay to it and he wanted Kissinger to be successful in foreign policy so that Nixon could claim some credit, could argue to his domestic critics who were trying to bring him down that he needed to be there as president because there are really important things to do in the world. So on the one hand he was happy for Kissinger to be out there scoring big victories in diplomacy. But at the same time he was intensely jealous of him. So Kissinger - Nixon relationship was one that was highly complicated as I go into in the book. Ford was a completely different story. Ford was an ingénue, he didn't know foreign policy at all. Kissinger met with him every morning to brief him, to educate him and essentially Ford went along with whatever it was that Kissinger wanted to do. By that point he had already become secretary of state because Nixon had been so fed up with the battles that were going on between Kissinger and Rogers that when he dismissed Rogers. Put Kissinger in the secretary of state and kept him as national security advisor. So he wore two hats and that was entirely to avoid the conflicts that had gone on in the first term. So Kissinger remained as national security advisor and secretary of state for most of the time that he was in office under Ford. That reduced the conflict and made it possible for Kissinger to basically run the show.

Shivshankar Menon: The other way of reading your book is as a sort of a text book of diplomacy, of diplomatic method of how to negotiate, how to handle a negotiation. It is full of examples of that I think for diplomats would resonate. But they have applications beyond just the Middle East. In what you described in the book itself and certainly over time, over space. It is quite remarkable, your account of how flexible Kissinger was in adjusting to shifts in the

situation. He would come in with one understanding or appreciation. The beginning of the Yom Kippur war was a good example where everybody expected the Israelis to prevail in a matter of days and when that didn't happen, when in fact there were clear Israeli losses. But he adjusted to it and he knew what he was heading for, this new order that he was trying to build. But he shifted tactics, shifted his understanding very quickly even though he had less intelligence than Brezhnev did at that time or less real time intelligence about what was going on. You see him using war to bring peace almost as if it were to create a role for himself. Your book argues that he and Sadat of course knew what he was going to do. And was using the war to shock the international system and to bring the Americans in to work with him. But Kissinger seem to know that this was coming too and maybe even if he didn't know it was part of his calculus right at the beginning. That using war to make peace, that's a pretty complicated strategic idea to actually implement as policy. And the use of back channels and how successful the idea that you can have motion without movement for instance which I think he... there was a long period when he didn't want to go anywhere but he wants to appear to be doing something. So for a diplomat this is really a rich mind of experience but also of analysis of that experience at a level which is very rare. For me that is part of the reason why what he built lasted so long. How would you explain it? How would you describe him as a diplomat? What prepared somebody, a refugee from Nazi Germany, an academic professor who studied early 19th century European diplomacy and politics, international relations? What prepared him to do all this? Where did this come from?

Martin Indyk: I think in the first place it was his understanding of history. That's for him critical. Not that history can be a guide to what to do in the future. But it can provide a very strong analytical capability for the way in which in particular states interact. That I think informed everything he did. The role of balance of power, the importance of seeking equilibrium in the balance of power so as to stabilise the situation. The historical precedence for that particularly in the 19th century Europe that he studied and he'd become a kind of 19th century man with this order that kept the peace more or less for 100 years in Europe. It is amazing when you think about it. I'm sure that Indian diplomats will find this ironic that he took a model that worked in the 19th century Europe and applied it to the Middle East. He had no knowledge of the Middle East. He'd never written about the Middle East, even about the Ottoman Empire, never touched it. He never visited any Arab country until he became Secretary of state. He visited Israel six times but he really had no understanding of the Arab world in Middle East. He takes this European model and he applies it to the Middle East and amazingly it actually worked in terms of maintaining order which from Kissinger's point of view was proof of concept. That you could take lessons that came from a history of interactions between states in one part of the world and actually apply it effectively in another part of the world. Secondly you referred to the war. For Kissinger wars provided opportunities, crisis provided opportunities. It created a kind of plastic moment in which you could mould the new order. And he seized on that opportunity. He had a very good sense of where he wanted to take the region because of his study of history. But it was only as a result of the war that Sadat and Assad launched against Israel in 1973 that he was able to actually try to achieve that. But in the end he would be first to admit this, he was only able to do it because he had leaders in the region who were prepared to work with him. And in particular Anwar Sadat a leader who had

the vision of transforming the region. From a region of war to a region of peace. He readily admitted to me that he couldn't have achieved anything in the Middle East when it came to peace making without Sadat. So it is also this question of the role of leaders in shaping events not just in terms of events and the broad flow of history and the dynamics of history that determined outcomes, but very much the role of individual leaders that he credits with his success. And his ability to do this. I think that really captures it and this latest book of his on leadership which I highly recommend to people really brings together his overall understanding of the way in which the world can be shaped by individuals. And it is based on history but also with a sense of how to lead their countries in a very uncertain environment in which as he lays out there, statesman cannot know what the future will be. It is entirely based on conjecture and intuition but also a sense of where the leader wants to take his or her people. I think it is that combination, that understanding of that combination that led him to be so successful in his diplomacy. There is one other thing I think emerges from my detailing of his way that he handled the negotiations. It is the one thing that he objected to me in the book rather strongly. Which is that he was very manipulative, he was very effective at saying one thing to one side and another thing to the other side and playing between them their different understandings of what he was up to, to lead them to places where they didn't really think that they wanted to go. You know that is what they say, better than me, the art of diplomacy is precisely that of trying to get people to move to places they would rather not go and the leverage that he used whether it was through force, threats of force or enticements. He was to say the master of that game of manipulation. I think that is one of the reasons why I wrote this book. Because I think there is a great deal to learn from the methods and tactics that he used. But having said all of that it was by no means a perfect performance. And if you can like it we can get into it.

Shivshankar Menon: You are not uncritical. You do draw attention to his misapprehensions, his overestimation of superpower influence. For instance of his broken promises on arms to Egypt, missed opportunities when Syria was ready for peace, Assad was ready for a border peace in 75 when he didn't take it etc. And Carter took the opportunity with Sadat two years later. So the book is not uncritical. I don't want to leave people with that impression. But I do want to ask about what we then draw with this knowledge, what do we draw about the situation today in the Middle East and particularly because what Kissinger did was to make America central to processes in the Middle East. Whether order building or peace making or whatever you want to call it. But basically to building an order which could sustain itself. How do you see America's reputation today as honest broker or as capable of creating outcomes, especially after the Trump presidency?

Martin Indyk: So, one of the things about Kissinger that I mentioned before was his very real understanding of the constraints of power even for a great power and the dangers of overreaching. The problem for American diplomacy in the Middle East was that those of who came after Kissinger knew not Kissinger. I think that is partly his fault because as I said he never explained it very well himself. And as a result we overreached. We overreached as I explained before in trying to achieve a comprehensive peace. And that failed. But we also overreached in the case of George W Bush's administration in Iraq and in the attempt to make the Middle East over in our image of a democratic realm. That combination of failure to

achieve the end of the Arab – Israeli conflict and resolve the Palestinian problem and failure to make the Middle East a democratic realm combined to dramatically weaken America’s influence in the region to open the gates of Babylon to Iranian influence and Iranian hegemonic ambitions in the region. Not to speak of the Russians and the Chinese and the Turks and so on. So today the United States and the region faces a very difficult situation. A nation that is weary of wars in the Middle East and weary of new engagements, a country whose image has been tarnished as a result of the missteps we made. And a need to focus on other parts of the world. Particularly a rising China in your part of the world and an aggressive Russia in Europe. And so the challenge and this is particularly appropriate to focus on this week because President Biden is making his first trip to the Middle East, to Israel, the West bank and Saudi Arabia. The challenge for the United States is how to maintain our interests in the Middle East even as we focus elsewhere and focus our attention and resources in Asia and in Europe. And I think we will see emerge from this visit an approach to the region which is designed not to turn our backs on the region which most of the players there feel that is what we are doing. But rather to engage in the region in a different way. Since the days of Henry Kissinger the United States essentially dominated the region. And kind of given up on that task. Now I think what we are going to see is a kind of re-engagement of the region. But given the other priorities it is one in which the United States will be looking to our regional partners and allies much as we did in Asia after the debacle of Vietnam, to have our allies and partners in that region step up. And we shift from being the dominant power to the supportive power. Kind of off shore balancer if you like. But it is really a shift in which Israel and the Sunny Arab states with their sense of common purpose generated by a common perception of threat from Iran that has led them to work more closely together to be more open to each other for key Arab states to normalise relations with Israel. And provide a platform of cooperation between capable regional players like Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and UAE, Jordon, Morocco. You see them also trying to bring Iraq under that umbrella. That has had the effect of calming things down and creating an opportunity for the United States to come back in in a supportive role where we can support them as they take on larger responsibilities for maintaining order and stability in the region. India too has an interest in this and it is no coincidence that as part of this broader arrangement of countries that have an interest in stability in the region, India is becoming a player through this forum of India, Israel, the United States and the UAE. But because of India’s interest in the gulf and its relationships there as well. So as a result we have a much more kind of multilateral framework for maintaining order in the region than was the case in Kissinger’s time.

Shivshankar Menon: I have a question from Ashok Chougule in the audience saying I believe Golda Meir said ‘if Israel puts down its arms Israel will not exist. If Palestine puts down its arms there will be peace’. She is also supposed to have said, ‘when Palestinians love their children more than they hate the Jews there will be peace’. Are not these statements a good basis for peace?

Martin Indyk: Well yes and no. Yes in the sense that... this isn’t the sense eventually... it would be necessary for the Arabs and Palestinians included in this to come to terms with Israel, to accept Israel, to be willing to put down their arms. As the questioner suggests. And make peace that is a necessary condition. But it is not sufficient and it can easily become an excuse

for not taking action, for setting conditions that are achievable and then therefore letting Israel off the hook and Israel not having to respond because they haven't changed their textbooks or they haven't completely given up on the use of arms in the case of Hamas. I think that Kissinger's experience in this regard is solitary because he brought Golda Meir's approach. And he maintained status quo based on Israel's power in the balance of power. Between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two external patrons of the clients of Israel and the Arab states. He thought that that was the way to stabilise the situation wasn't necessary to pursue peace. I am talking now before the 1973 Yom Kippur war. He thought that was the way to do it, just to basically go along with what Golda wanted as expressed in those words. As a result he missed the opportunity for avoiding war and making peace when Sadat frustrated in his inability to achieve a return of territory occupied by Israel in 1967 sent his emissary to Washington to talk to Kissinger. As I said it was actually in New York. He laid out a far reaching peace initiative. Kissinger and Nixon were both quite excited by that. But when Kissinger sat down with none other than Yitzhak Rabin who was Israel's ambassador in Washington and said 'hey listen to this. The Egyptians actually want to make peace'. Rabin said 'forget about it. There is nothing new here'. And Golda came to town and said those things just as you quoted her. As a result Kissinger let the moment pass. And instead Sadat had to go to war in order to make the peace as you said Shankar. You know it is conjecture of course, it's counterfactual. But if Kissinger had not listened to Golda Meir and listened to Sadat instead and tried to test the opportunity for peace making back in February of 1973 that war might have been avoided and all the horrendous consequences of it in loss of human life. I think it's a mistake to set absolute conditions before peace making is tried. Now on the other hand of course we tried and failed as I have explained. That has made it much more difficult. But in the balance between trying and failing and not trying at all, we somehow have to find a middle way. I think that is the real lesson. Sometimes the middle way is less ambitious, it is more incremental, it is small steps designed to build trust and create set conditions for an eventual negotiation. But to sit back and set conditions and say – we are not going to do anything until these conditions are met is I think in the end a mistake and history proves that to be the case.

Shivshankar Menon: Your book actually quotes Kissinger telling Dayan that Egypt is an American interest. But the West Bank is in Israeli interest. I think that sort of sums up his approach to that. I think you have answered Kanish Kanodia's question in large part. What would be Kissinger's evaluation of US's position in the Middle East today? On the one hand Abraham accord has brought key US allies in the region together strengthening the US position in some ways but on the other Chinese and Russian presence in the region and American withdrawal from Afghanistan has put pressures on the US position in the Middle East. I think you have answered most of this. Maybe on the Abraham accords?

Martin Indyk: Yes. The Abraham accords actually occurred on Kissinger's time table. You know, 40 years later these Arab states decide to recognise and make peace with Israel. And what did the then crown prince of United Arab Emirates and the now president Mohammed Bin Zayed say at the time explaining his intention to normalise relationship with Israel? He said "we are tired of the conflict". That was the essence of Kissinger's approach. They would get exhausted eventually and they would come to recognise Israel. The Abraham accords are real breakthrough not so much to peace because these countries weren't exactly at war with each

Israel. But rather to a breakthrough in terms of integrating Israel with its immense military capabilities into security arrangements between the United States and Arabs. That can help to make up for the fact that the United States cannot devote the same resources that it used to, to the Middle East. That is essential to achieving overall peace in the region as well. But the prerequisite is a stable order. In which those who are prepared to make peace are strong enough to do so and those who would destroy the peace are contained, deterred and they too eventually come to terms with the existing order. So that is very much I think the way that Kissinger would have the United States address the challenges in the region. Both to American interests and to a stable order. That essentially are coming from Iraq with its nuclear ambitions, its advance towards the nuclear threshold and its regional ambitions where it is engaged across the region in subversive activities designed to undermine the existing conservative Arab regimes in the region. Kissinger's approach to Iran is very much part of this overall picture. Which is as he says Iran eventually will choose or will have to choose between being a revolution and being a state. At the moment it is very much committed to being a revolution. Also the revolution has to be contained. But once it decides to become a state and then focus on its state interests, those interests can be accommodated. Iran too can become part of the state of order with its rights and interests respected. But until that day what is necessary is a balance of power in favour of those countries that want to stabilise the region that is Israel and the Sunni Arab states. Question that then tends to get ignored and I think is a big mistake to ignore is the Palestinian issue which tends to kind of get side lined. The Arabs are sick of it, they don't want to pay any more attention to it. They certainly are not prepared to have it disrupt their relations with Israel. With the notable exception of Saudi Arabia which isn't prepared to move to full normalisation until there is some progress at least in resolving Israeli – Palestinian problem. There I think that United States needs to bear in mind the lesson of Kissinger's diplomatic efforts that if you ignore the conflicts and in particular this one, it will blow up in your face eventually. It is impossible to say when but it will. Therefore its necessary as part of this overall approach I've been describing to regional stability and order, to have a process with the Palestinians that is incremental, that is step by step. But nevertheless, as Kissinger always insisted, would have a territorial component of Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories. Even if it is small, even if it looks inconsequential, there always has to be that territorial component, of a step by step process that doesn't resolve the conflicts now but leads us to a point where it will become resolvable over time. The Arab states in their normalisation with Israel can play an important role in anchoring the Palestinians, in anchoring their commitments, ensuring their commitments are fulfilled and in thereby reassuring Israel that the conflict can be resolved.

Shivshankar Menon: We are running out of time Martin. But one last question. Let me squeeze this in. What would an out of the box thinker like Kissinger have done in the present situation in the Ukraine? That is from Hemant.

Martin Indyk: He caused quite a controversy lately as some of you may have noticed in an interview that he did for Davos a couple of months ago. In that he suggested that there should be a return to the status quo ante which would have left Russia in control of the Donbas area. That caused a huge fuel. It was fascinating for me because that is precisely what Kissinger tried to do at the outset of the Yom Kippur war in 1973. His first proposal for a ceasefire was a

ceasefire that would have returned to the status quo ante before the war. Before Egypt in particular had succeeded in crossing the Suez Canal and regaining Egyptian territory on the east bank canal. Because the Egyptians rejected it, Syrians rejected it and then Kissinger had to come in with a new proposal. But he didn't do so until he with Nixon's backing launched a massive resupply effort to the Israelis which enabled them to turn the tide of battle, to launch counter offensives, to put pressure on the Egyptians, Syrians and Russians to the point where they decided to accept his second ceasefire and negotiations. The negotiations were based on resolution 242 and the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. A hallowed principle in our rules based order. By the way a principle that the Russians have accepted in so many different cases but especially in the Arab Israel case. So I think that actually... and I have tried this on Kissinger and he says – yes, yes, you are right... that is the point. It is not Kissinger at Davos but Kissinger in October 1973 when after a massive resupply that enabled the Israelis to turn the tides of the battle and a massive resupply in this case which hopefully will enable the Ukrainians to turn the tide of battle at least in the south. And we see today the beginnings of a Ukrainian counter offensive in the south. That would then set the conditions for the Russians to realise that they are better off by pausing their conflict rather than trying to take more territory. Then you have a negotiation and a separation of forces just like Kissinger did in 73 that stabilised the situation. Yes. Russia will retain the territory that it has already occupied much as Israel retained the territory it occupied. But there will be a negotiating process based on the principle – of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. And the negotiation will take some time. It is still going on in the case of Arab-Israeli relationship. It may take some time. But nevertheless will need to resolve in a step by step process of Russian withdrawal. I think that that is essentially the Kissingerian approach to the Ukrainian conflict and has some very clear parallel.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you Martin for a fascinating book and a most interesting conversation and for leaving us with many, many thoughts to actually think our way through. This is really an amazing book and I strongly recommend it to everyone. Thank you Martin, as usual a pleasure.

Martin Indyk: Thank you very much.

Shivshankar Menon: It is amazing how you can make complex ideas clear. Well done. Really quite an achievement. Tino back to you.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you Ambassador Menon. I don't really have much to add except saying this was enlightening, educating. First of all Ambassador Indyk, thanks for joining us, for making time for bringing this fascinating book. As Ambassador Menon mentioned so much in it, pragmatic approach to peace, the middle way and the art of diplomacy... hopefully you can continue this in Delhi at CSEP sometime. We'd love to host you. I think much more here to be discussed on the lessons for Asia and peace in Asia. Always a pleasure to host you in Delhi where you have many friends and admirers. Ambassador Menon thank you again for leading the discussion. Always a source of encouragement and guidance and inspiration for our work on foreign policy and other issues at CSEP. The best way to thank you is to recommend your own book, not the most recent one, 'India and Asian geopolitics, The Past, Present'. But the prior one 'Choices'. Which I have noticed a lot of parallels with Ambassador

Indyk's books on the difficult diplomatic decisions under political pressures, limited information, time constraints and the art of taking those diplomatic decisions and navigating difficult choices. In particular I was thinking of your chapter on Sri Lanka which of course is very relevant these days for India and its own regional periphery. Finally a last note of thanks to all of you who joined us here for this CSEP flagship dialogue. There will be many more. Do stay in touch. Until then stay well and stay healthy. Thank you.