

**Israeli Political Culture in Israel's  
Relations with the United States over the  
Palestinian Question 1981-96**

**Submitted for PhD in International  
Relations**

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Political Science**

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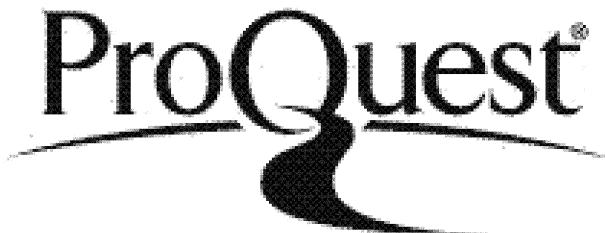


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### **Thesis Abstract**

This thesis makes a contribution to the study of Israeli foreign policy, Israeli-American relations and the role of Israeli political culture in foreign policy. First, all the works on American-Israeli relations focus on American policy. Second, works examining the role of Israeli values in foreign policy focus primarily on the values of the Israeli right, usually purely in regard to the Palestinian question and use a concept of political culture that is static. In contrast, this thesis examines, US-Israeli relations from the Israeli view point and encompasses the impact of the Israeli left's values on policy. Moreover, it uses a concept of political culture that is fluid rather than static.

Following a brief introductory section outlining the interpretative concept of political culture employed, the thesis turns towards a section on Israeli political culture. Here two main sub-cultures are identified; a universalist orientation which views Israel as a normal country and which aspires to normalisation and a particularist orientation which sees Israel as 'a nation that dwells alone', with a particular mission to fulfil. From this basis, four approaches within the Israeli elite towards relations with the United States over the Palestinian question are drawn out.

The next section then examines and accounts for shifts in Israeli political culture, first towards particularism and then towards universalism, as well as the impact of these shifts on underlying foreign policy attitudes and their political strength.

The third section consists of a number of chapters which demonstrate the role of the various approaches, motifs, values, and developments within Israeli political culture on relations with the United States over the Palestinian question 1981-96. It covers the main issues that arose in that period including the Lebanon War, the London agreement, the Madrid Conference, the loan guarantees question and the Oslo accords. The final part of this section focuses on relations between Israel, pro-Israel groups in the US and Congress.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction, Political Culture and Foreign Policy**

### **The Thesis as a Contribution to Knowledge**

This thesis covers new ground in a number of respects. First and foremost, there has been no previous study about the impact of Israeli political culture on Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question. Nor has there been an empirical study of Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question since Camp David. Some research has been done which, while not explicitly referring to the term political culture, nonetheless uses similar concepts to analyse the impact of Israeli attitudes on foreign policy in general and over the Palestinian question in particular (Sandler, Benvenisti). Some studies have also examined both the changing nature of these attitudes and the changing nature of the policy norms themselves. Occasionally, these developments have analysed in relation to wider changes within the belief systems prevalent in Israeli society at large (Inbar, 1991, 1991a, 1995, 1996a; Auerbach and Ben Yehuda 1991, 1993). There are also journalistic, literary and academic works which examine the relationship between Israeli political culture and the Israeli approach towards the question of the territories and the Palestinians (Arian 1996; Friedman 1990; Frankel; Grossman). Most of these, however, have focused on the Revisionist or religious nationalist right-wing approaches to the Palestinian question (Peleg). Only very recently, during the course of my research, did works examining the developments within the centre and left of Israeli political culture, and its changing attitudes towards the Palestinian question, begin to be published (Klieman 1994; Keren 1994; Inbar 1996).

Several journalistic and academic surveys sought to identify Israeli attitudes towards America and in particular towards American Jewry (Friedman 1990; Frankel; Schiff 1987/8; Sheffer 1996; Gruen 1988; Golan 1992), but there is virtually nothing written on the impact of Israeli values and political culture on its policy towards and relations with the American executive, barring some informal observations in several journalistic works (Friedman 1990; Frankel). The bulk of the academic literature analysing American-Israeli relations focused either on American policy processes and the American framework of reference (Schoenbaum; Ball; Quandt 1992; Novik 1984, 1986) or on questions of

leverage within the relationship (Efrat and Bercovitch; Bar-Simantov 1987, 1988; Ben Zvi 1986, 1993). Overall, the underlying assumption seems to have been that there was no need to analyse the Israeli policy process as it was simply seeking to maximise its leverage whatever the ultimate purpose. One of the main contributions of this thesis is to demonstrate how the different political sub-cultures within Israel and subsequently the different existential and instrumental values of the policy elite have led to differing approaches, both in theory and practice, to relations with the United States as pertaining to the Palestinian question.

In addition, although this thesis is not primarily a historical survey, in the course of my research I have been able to uncover some important new facts regarding Israeli policy. For example, regarding Prime Minister Shamir's willingness to withdraw from the Golan Heights in return for peace with Syria and the pressure put on George Shultz in 1987 by hawkish elements within the American Jewish community to not back Peres' London agreement. Again, although this thesis should not primarily be understood as a case study of political culture's influence on foreign policy, nonetheless, it does provide a distinct contribution to foreign policy analysis (FPA), given that the conception of political culture employed here has only just begun to be used in the field (Katzenstein). This will be demonstrated more clearly below.

### **Defining Political Culture and Finding a Methodology**

*Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the future controls the present* George Orwell, '1984'.

*The most fundamental failure of totalitarianism was its failure to control thought* Francis Fukuyama, 1992.

In the International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Lucian Pye defines political culture as:

“the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments which give order and meaning to the political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behaviour in the political system. It encompasses both the political ideas and the operating norms of a polity” (215).

A useful analogy is to look at the role of political culture as if politics was a sport. Rather than representing the flow of play in a particular sporting event, political culture can be seen as describing, “the larger framework that sets up its overall nature: the rules of the game; the contrasting ideas about it, even its purpose in the larger scheme of things, believed in by opposing coaches; the kind of people the two teams tend to recruit, their values, and their consequent style of play; who their traditional enemy is, towards whom they orientate themselves; and their sense of identity, of cohesion (Kelley xv). However any single definition of political culture can only take us so far. Of the hundreds of definitions available in the literature (Tucker: 1), why pick one over another? Why indeed are there so many definitions? The answer, I believe, lies in the fact that the vast array of definitions are symptomatic of the contested nature of the concept of political culture; a fact which is due to it touching on one of the key debates in the philosophy of the social science: that of agency and structure. The agency-structure problem relates to many of the meta-theoretical controversies within social science regarding dichotomies such as individual and society, actor and system, voluntarism and determination and so forth.

In Gibbens (1989), Brint (1991) and Welch's (1993) studies on the use of political culture, the main differences between definitions and usage related to the agency-structure debate. While some focused on individual orientation, others focused on collective orientation. Some defined political culture as embracing beliefs and behaviour, while others defined it in terms of beliefs alone. A third major distinction was between those who accept certain values as a given and those for whom values are a construction. Whereas the Marxist tradition conceived of political culture as part of the superstructure of society, an epiphenomenon, a function of economic relations, other theorists such as Wittgenstein, Oakshott and MacIntrye have, in one form or another, taken the opposite approach in which political culture itself is the most significant factor in the constitution of society. They have argued that traditions of beliefs and practices are what bind a society together within a common subscription to language, rules of life and some techniques of discourse (Gibbens 3-6). All in all, these differences are best summed up as differences over ontology and epistemology that are at the core of the agency-structure question. Hence, in order to decide which definition of political culture to adopt, we must first come to adopt one of the suggested solutions to this problem.

## **Epistemology and Ontology**

According to strict positivism, the social world is like the scientific world. The only variable to study is actual behaviour because this constitutes the observable data. Values and attitudes which make up political culture do not constitute observable data. Human beings are more or less reduced to the level of Pavlov's dog, merely responding unconsciously to stimuli. On this view, human consciousness does not have an independent existence, it merely responds rationally to the environment. The positivist tradition predated the emergence of the agency-structure question, a fact which is evident in the absence of any agency at all in its system, where all the emphasis is on structure. Although some, like Richard Dworkin, have sought to continue to work within its basic assumptions, the trend within the social sciences has been to recognise the inadequacy, or at least the incompleteness, of this approach. Subsequently, a modified positivist paradigm has been suggested. It tries to resolve the obvious fault with the pure doctrine by recognising a role for human consciousness, as part of a psychological domain, either individually or as part of a collective conscience. The element of agency is constructed in strict opposition to the external environment (Neufeld). Carlsnaes (1992) viewed this as a major ontological flaw. One of the central dichotomies he identified regarding agency-structure, was the question of whether society is made up of individual decisions, as Karl Popper and Ludwig Wittgenstein would have it, or whether society is a collective in of itself as Durkheim argued. The problem, however, with either of these options is that they reduce the components of the actor-structure linkage to an explanation of one in terms of the other, thereby excluding a reciprocal interplay between the two (Archer: 97). As Wendt has argued, adherents of this approach reify social structures when they assert or imply not only that certain social relations are irreducible but that these relations are politically independent of, and in ontological terms prior to, those agents (Wendt: 347). In other words, the modified positivist epistemology reifies both the agent, be it individual or collective and the structure. To resolve these problems, Carlsnaes lauds both Archer and Giddens attempts to demonstrate that agency and structure are mutually constitutive. In the end he comes down on the side of Mary Archer's answer to the agency-structure problem which is to unravel the dialectic interplay between structure and action which

constrain and enable each other, and which can be broken up into time bound intervals for the purpose of analysis: morphogenesis (Carlsnaes 259). In terms of political culture this suggests, at the minimum, the need to adopt a working definition which is cognisant of the imperative to avoid the agent-structure dichotomy. What this means in effect is the use of an interpretative epistemology.

Interpretative theorists argue that there is no such thing as a wholly external social universe of raw data, or events such that its complicated relations and conclusions can be grasped fully from out side of those data and events. Rather as Neufeld (1991) stated:

“Human beings act in the context of a web of meaning, a web that they themselves have spun. As a consequence the social world, in contrast to the natural world, is itself partially constituted by self interpretation.”

Charles Taylor explained in Interpretation and the Sciences of Man that meaning is not a property of the subjective mind, but part of the social and discursive practises that are *constitutive* of a society. Political culture then, is a, ‘supra-individual phenomenon’ and in order to understand it one cannot *only* observe the behaviour exhibited by individuals but one must also learn what might be called the cultural grammar of a polity, the internal coherence of its social, cultural and discursive practises (Brint: 117).

Some post-modernist theorists take this idea to its logical conclusion and deny the possibility of social science at all on the basis that researchers cannot escape their own cultural milieu. In this case their studies tells us more about researchers’ values/beliefs/culture than about the subject of research under consideration. However, this is not a necessary conclusion drawn by all those who accept this model. Rather, interpretative theorists refer to a ‘hermeneutic circle’ in which theorists endeavours to make sense of the social world by demonstrating that there is a coherence between the actions of an agent and the meaning of the situation for that agent. This involves explaining the web of meaning in terms of the concrete social practises in which it is embedded and demonstrating the coherence of the observed social practises in terms of the web of meaning which constitute those practises (Neufeld: 47-8). This requires the use of a modified dialogical concept of political culture, founded on the idea that society itself

is constituted through an on-going process, an interaction between social forces and discursive practise.

### **A Dialogical Concept of Political Culture**

The hermeneutic philosophical tradition views the production of culture as a dialogical process which cannot be made abstract. It takes place not only within the context of material social forces but also within a linguistic and cultural context. The fact that people are born into a community which they did not choose has great significance in shaping their sensibilities. We are all, as Michael Howard (1991) explains, ideologues despite ourselves. Heidegger in Being and Time argues that all reflection is preceded by pre-reflexive lived experience and that the logical order of timeless clear and distinct ideas can not be considered primary, for it presupposes a saying which presupposes a community of speakers. Consequently, our being in the world is revealed historically as a dialogical existence with others. Accordingly, consciousness must undergo a hermeneutic dialogue in which it comes to know itself through the mediation of signs, symbols and text. It must thus interpret itself by entering into a dialogue with the texts or traditions of a historical community or tradition (Kearney: 127-33). Human beings do not develop in a vacuum, but are born into a linguistic community which was not chosen; a fact which has great significance in shaping sensitivities. By speaking any national language we are participants in the history of a civilisation, shaped by the past and yet persistent into the present. As Jean-Paul Sartre stated, "existence precedes essence" (Sacks 1992: 227) so that even "common sense is a cultural construction, as distinctive as different languages but invisible" (Little 1990: 39). But the emphasis on uniform, implicit unconscious knowledge as a frame for political culture does not exclude the conscious, contested elements within it. Rather as MacIntyre (1985) explained, "A living tradition is a historically extended socially embodied argument, precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition." To a certain extent, political culture is prescribed as it is inherited from others who have thought, spoken and written previously. Yet it is the living who recreate this meaning according to their own projects and interpretations. Political culture then, can be said to develop through a process of interpretation.

Nonetheless, the approach adopted here does not accept a pure discursive autonomy for political culture, rather it sees it as part of the social process. Thus, while positivists have developed quantitative analysis through survey methodology in an attempt to measure attitudes and political culture, interpretivists reject this approach. For such an approach, based purely on interviews, would not fully reveal whether these meanings are rooted in social practise, which can only be done by interpreting social practise as a whole. Otherwise, one would not be able to tell whether the people interviewed believed to the point where it was a significant factor in their behavioural calculations. For example, missionary school pupils may say they believe in certain things but it may not effect their behaviour (Welch: 5). The approach adopted here analyses both the construction of political culture and the feedback of discursive practises into social action (Welch: 108).

### **The Construction and Development of Political Culture**

Both material factors and cross-cultural dialogue act as catalysts within the construction and development process of a political culture. As Hall noted, “cultural identity is a matter of becoming as well as being. It is not something which already exists transcending place, time, history and culture...Far from being fixed in some essential past, they are subject to continuous interplay of history, culture and power”. Political culture, “is the constant reconstitution of selves and other through specific exclusions, conventions and discursive practises” (Silberstein: 11-12). It is defined through a process of opposition, in which a network of meaning is created through the articulation of self-definition and difference. This process of differentiation is driven both by social and discursive practise.

No society is completely hermetically sealed from the outside world, especially not in the modern era. Either reluctantly or enthusiastically, societies engage in a cultural dialogue. This may be over issues of meaning and identity directly or just related to their preconceptions of one another. But the act of dialogue can call into question current self understandings and suggest different interpretations of reality. Thus, a cultural dialogue in which an Islamic culture is challenged by a liberal-atheist culture over human rights, will cause the Islamic culture to try and locate the term within its structure of meaning. It will

relate to the concept in a positive or negative way. But such a process is not merely an extrapolation of a belief system. The dialogue has altered the initial belief system which has been forced to define itself against this foreign concept, emphasising elements within the tradition which either promote or denigrate human rights, or as is more likely generating diverse interpretations.

Social process and events such as wars, will also act as a serious challenge to the previous assumptions that made up a political culture. For example, a political culture may be liberal-nationalist, concepts which may hold together well until a nation-state with an empire is confronted with demands for independence from the native population. At this point the political culture has to be re-interpreted in order to confront the new reality. There are a number of potential solutions provided by the culture and the debate over which to chose will take place within the context of the 'original' political culture. This debate will itself produce cleavages within the political culture expressed through alternate interpretations. Political culture can thus adapt itself to help people adapt to their environment. But it must adapt itself to changes in that environment in order to remain pertinent and resonate, or else be challenged and replaced by an alternative political culture.

This process of opposition and definition is especially influential when a great sense of grievance and upheaval are experienced, which is especially high during wartime. As Anthony Smith (179-80) noted, "the more violent the experience, the deeper it is etched in the memory and the memory of these common historical experiences are thus seen as vital in shaping identity and culture". Nietzsche in The Genealogy of Morals stressed that a community of pain and suffering provide a very strong basis for identity. Both Michael Howard (1991) and Lucy Davidowitz (1975) have pointed out the experience of the Napoleonic wars was a major catalyst in the formation of German national identity. Germany defined itself in opposition to France and its universal rationalistic notions. Instead it emphasised a particularistic, mystical German identity of a Teutonic volk tied to the soil. Similarly, Fouad Ajami (1992) has charted the impact of the Six Day War in the fall of Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

### **Adaptation and Change at Different Levels of Political Culture**

Although levels of analysis are usually set against agency-structure as modes of explanation (Wendt 1987), it is possible to make use of the notion of levels of political culture from within our model. Political culture comes about through the interpretation of common experience. These interpretations provide the intersubjective meanings which constitute a society's identity and without which there can not be shared attitudes or disagreements. Some of these meanings do not just facilitate social life, but make it distinctive for the society by expressing common values. Still within a political culture there will be many sub-cultures, held together by a common source of values which inform those beliefs. The presence of sub-cultures mean that a political culture is not homogeneous in the sense that diversity does not exist, but it does mean that there is an irreducible core to which most, if not all, make reference. Since early in the nineteenth century this "irreducible core" has been associated with a strong sense of national identity which large numbers of individuals have been able to share. This sense of belonging is the key to what Brian Girvin has termed a macro-political culture. This allows conflict, often serious conflict, to be mediated without the break up of the political culture or the common sense of identity. Thus, serious political upheaval such as experienced in the United States during the 1960s did not entail the break up of the system, whereas in other places without a shared identity, such as Northern Ireland, political order may collapse (Girvin 34-5).

Within the macro-political culture there will also be beliefs and orientations that have a long-term impact and help to define key sub-cultures. Such beliefs refer to assertions about the nature of society, the individuals obligations to society, the relationship of society to other societies, and the significance and meaning of the society. They include culturally defined concepts of causality, historical progress and perceptions of the way in which the world works. Such beliefs have also been referred to as latent attitudes, superordinate values, cultural referents or rockbed sedimentation (Seliktar: 7-10). It is through these beliefs that a society comes to understand itself and the world around it. It will include both beliefs explicitly held and the implicit beliefs which underlie them (Little 1989: 5). The macro-level also establishes the rules of the game that prove

acceptable to most participants. This macro-level of political culture is the least susceptible to change or adaptation especially in the short to medium-term (Girvin 34; Breslauer and Tetlock).

Macro-level beliefs also provide the basis for contested values, where values are defined as a kind of *enduring* prescriptive or proscriptive belief, “wherein some means or ends of action is judged desirable or undesirable.” As such they act as, “guides to and determinants of social attitudes and ideologies on the one hand and of social behaviour on the other” (Rokeah: 7). In this thesis I shall be using two terms; existential values and instrumental values. Existential values inform the content of overarching political goals and also play a part prioritising those goals. Instrumental values inform thinking about the preferred methods for pursuing goals (Rokeah 24).

Because values have a behavioural component, it is at this level that the macro-political culture and the micro-political culture begin to interact, at what Girvin called the meso-level. While the macro-level is fairly static, the meso-level is open to influence from the ongoing political debate and struggle at the micro-level, where normal political activity such as elections take place. The nature of political and economic power at this level will have an important effect on how a political culture, especially the contested elements within it, develop. These changes can create a climate where new ideas of what is possible and necessary emerge, these new ideas may well be consistent with traditional values, an adaptation of the macro or meso-level making them better equipped to respond to everyday political requirements. Alternately, they may eventually cause a major shift in political culture at one of these levels. However, given the malleability of the most basic concepts such as national identity, it is highly unlikely that these will be entirely swept away. Often the process of the rise and fall of various elements within a political culture can be equated with the rise and fall of the use of common myths and symbols (Lieberman and Don-Yehiya: 7, 149) which express and elucidate core beliefs and values.

## **Myths and Symbols**

Values derived from a political culture are expressed in myths and symbols. A myth is a story, that may or may not be true, but which is believed to be true. It evokes strong sentiments and serves to, “objectify and organise human hopes and fears and metamorphasises them into persistent and durable works” (Lieberman and Don-Yehiya: 7). A myth, “is a device men adopt to come to grips with reality” (Tudor: 17). “It serves to explain circumstances to those whom it is addressed. By rendering their experience more coherent, a myth helps them to understand the world in which they live.” But it is, “not only an explanation but a practical argument” that both transmits and reinforces basic existential and instrumental values (Tudor: 139). It is not just a story, but a story to be enacted. In this sense, myths provide rallying signs and inspiration to action. For example, the ‘Stab in the Back’ myth which asserted that the German political elite had sold Germany out by agreeing to the armistice in 1918 when military victory was still attainable. This myth, prevalent in Germany in the Weimar period, was instrumental in denigrating the prestige of democracy while sustaining the prestige of the military and the belief in the utility of military force. As such it contributed to the legitimacy of the para-military style of the Nazis and fuelled their belief that they could win another round of war as long as the politicians were restrained.

Symbols are also vehicles for cultural expression. “They stand for patterns of meaning but unlike signs, they also shape these patterns because symbols are perceived as part of the reality they signify...They are built into man's experience as such... an attempt to get beyond the empirical to meaning and value” (Lieberman and Don-Yehiya: 2) Thus, symbols such as a cross or a crescent store meaning for a culture. They are felt to sum up, for those whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is and the way one ought to behave in it. Their power comes from a profound ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give what would otherwise be merely actual, a comprehensive normative support (Geertz 1973: 127). They have the ability to explain identity and mission, making nobodies into somebody, organising people together in a community.

Until quite recently International Relations theory tended to ignore issues of agency-structure, culture and political culture, as the discipline tended towards a positivist bias. But analysis of the international system is now beginning to take on board issues of culture, as demonstrated in the writings on nationalism and the writings of post-modern, critical and social-constructivist theorists. In contrast, the term political culture rarely surfaces as a vantage point from which to analyse foreign policy. Nonetheless, similar concepts have been used which closely resemble at least elements contained within the concept of political culture defined above. Yet with few exceptions (Howard 1991; Coker; Katzenstein), FPA has lagged behind the development of an understanding of the agency-structure debate in international relations, remaining within the positivist, or modified positivist paradigm (Little and Smith, Carlsnaeas, Keohane and Goldstein).

Steve Smith grouped these studies into six approaches. All adopted the modified positivist approach, which presented beliefs as a filter between the stimulus: the international environment, and the response of the policy maker (Little and Smith: 5-17). The majority of such studies tended to propose partial bridging theories, similar to theories of cultural lag (Welch). Cognitive or psychological approaches were utilised to explain beliefs and misperceptions that prevented the enactment of 'rational policy' (Little and Smith 27, 40). Smith helped to identify three main shortcomings with these approaches. First, they emphasised individual decision makers, whereas policy is usually made in groups (Little and Smith: 31) Second, they ignored the connection between the policy maker's attitudes and those of the wider society/culture of which s/he was apart. Third, the values systems they used were static, encapsulated in the use of the word 'mindset'. These approaches ignored changes, by-passed the debate within and across societies which informs the interests and values of both the public and the policy elite and which also forms the structure of political institutions within which decisions are made. Overall, these criticisms mirror the criticisms made earlier of the non-interpretative epistemologies. Consequently, the resolution of Smith's criticisms can be achieved using the concept of political culture outlined above. With its concept of political culture as a process it avoids the static problem while, by taking into account the mutually constitutive framework, the constraining/enabling features of agency-structure and the individual-society issues are also dealt with.

## **Elite and Mass**

Of course it is all very well to recognise the mutually reinforcing roles of individual and collective in the formation both of political culture and foreign policy, but where in practise shall we focus most of our effort? Any survey of the literature on political culture or belief systems, would register the overwhelming conclusion that elites have a particularly central role in the creative synthesis of political culture (Seliktar: 22; Habermas: 105). As Philip Converse asserted, "The shaping belief systems of any range into apparently logical wholes that are credible to large numbers of people is an act of creative synthesis characteristic of only a minuscule proportion of any population" (Converse: 211). In this vein, Gellner argued that meaningful national identity emerged out of an elite high culture of which the masses were passive recipients. This elite group is both highly educated and politically active. Ideas, as Max Weber insisted, must be carried by powerful social groups to have powerful social effects. In practise then, the elite refers to the policy-making elite, those actively engaged in political lobbying and those journalists, intellectuals or religious leaders that partake in the cultural dialogue out of which the relevant values and attitudes are developed. It is this elite that attempts to resolve the dissonant elements within the political culture which are continually arising as a result of new realities. It is they that lead the process of reinterpreting symbols and myths in a 'transvaluation of values'. It is therefore to their discourse that one must turn in order to gain an awareness of this process.

Nevertheless, one cannot wholly detach the elite political culture from the larger cultural environment. According to Arian (1988:16), politicians and citizens usually emerge from the same political culture. National traumas and collective memories are shared by all members of the group. At least at the level of general orientation when viewing international problems the same basic dispositions will be salient for the elite and the mass. Thus, no elite can simply manipulate the mass and impose its values; rather its values must resonate with the broader public in some sense. As Aldous Huxley noted, "Propaganda... may give force and direction to successive movements of popular feeling and desire; but it does not do much to create these movements. The propagandist is a man

who canalises an already existing stream. in the land where there is no water, he digs in vain.” (Welch: 7).

### **Pathways to Policy**

Building on the concept of a role identified by Hollis and Smith (143-170) we can say that political culture helps to constitute foreign policy in three ways: as an enabler, a constraint, and as a driving force. It will perform this role through the pathways of public opinion, elections, domestic political coalitions and the policy-making elite (Goldstein and Keohane: 12). A political culture will set the terms of the legitimate discourse for various policy options and make some more favourable than others. It will define the range of options placing some outside of legitimate use. This identification of the terms of definition is culturally contingent, a bounded debate. Firstly, political culture will affect policy by shaping the policy agenda, reducing the number of alternatives and thereby putting ‘binders’ on people. Political culture informs decision-makers aiding them in an evaluation of what is desirable and possible in the operational environment, providing them with a mindset through which to interpret the outside world. Max Weber described this as the process whereby, “...the world images created by ideas, have like switch men determined the tracks along which action has been pushed.” (Goldstein and Keohane: 11). Moreover, political culture can act not only as a track switcher or track obscurer, but also as a track creator. This occurs when it provides regimes with what Nietzsche termed, ‘a will to power’, a strongly directed motivation for foreign policy activity.

The most important way in which political culture will filter into policy is through the consciousness of the decision-making elite. Leaders such as Churchill, Hitler, Napoleon and Kissinger clearly played central roles in the conduct of their state’s foreign policies. The conglomeration of their existential and instrumental values informs a policy strategy that is used to define objectives and outlines a strategy for implementation. This strategy may be constrained by outside factors and eventually abandoned, but it remains the guide to action. Within any elite, different strategies will exist representing different emphases and different values within a political culture. The domination of one strategy over another will depend not only on the official power wielded by the various members of the

elite within the policy-making structure, but also on their ability to make their strategy appear successful in achieving common overarching goals and values.

Political culture will also impact on foreign policy through its role in legitimisation of the policy making elite and their policies (Bar Simantov 1994). Fukuyama (15) explains that in order to act effectively, even an authoritarian regime requires legitimacy, if not from the whole population then at least from a group of subordinates. Such people are necessary to maintain the dictatorship in power and enable it to carry out its policies. In relation to foreign policy this means that political culture helps the elite to legitimise its foreign policy to the mass of the population or at the very least to its active political supporters and domestic political allies. Although the elite may be viewed as the most important element in the generation and construction of political culture, their innovations will not successfully legitimise policy to the attentive public unless they resonate with that public by tapping into pre-existing themes. The most successful examples of this, according to Eric Hobsbawm, exploit practices which meet a genuinely felt, though not necessarily clearly understood need (Hobsbawm: 123). In other words, the mass is attracted by what the elite appears to stand for rather than the actual rationale behind its actions. Thus although policy flows from election results because the elections empower those who make policy, elections are only the beginning of the process of setting policy for the nation. Indeed, because decisions are specific and elections diffuse, it is usually incorrect to view elections as a referendum on a given issue (Arian 1995:129). In any case, public opinion has often been shown to be highly malleable by the elite. Yet, sometimes public opinion can be an important constraint on policy, at least in the short-term, either in of itself, or because policy makers themselves see it as such<sup>1</sup>. “A minimal statement widely accepted in the discipline is that public opinion delimits the option parameters of decision makers...especially in democracies, even though it clearly does not dictate their moves” (Arian 1992: 317). The policy-making elite’s perception of the British public as highly pacifistic and likely to rebel against any moves towards standing up to Germany in the 1930s, was a significant factor moving them towards pursuing the option of appeasement with Hitler especially in the early 1930s. It took the British

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<sup>1</sup> Comment by Alan Baker, Chief Israeli Foreign Ministry Legal Advisor to the Israeli-Palestinian talks 1991-, in private conversation, June 1997.

government several years of psychological re-armament before it felt ready to contemplate resistance to Nazism (Wilson and Pronay).

Political culture can also impact on foreign policy by forming the focal point or glue for domestic political coalitions and through its embodiment in political institutions or norms. These cultural codes may then remain embedded within institutions or codes of conduct long after their initial rationale could have made them redundant. Thus, the imperial values of Britain continued to be expressed in the large size of the Foreign Office long after the interests of Britain ceased to demand such resources. In the case of coalitions, as will be examined in the body of the thesis itself, the underlying particularistic orientation of the religious parties in Israel during the 1980s meant that they continually preferred coalitions with what they perceived as the more particularistic Likud, as opposed to Labour, despite the fact that they were generally relatively agnostic as regard the key issue dividing the two parties namely their attitude towards the peace process. As a consequence of this, as Labour leader in the National Unity government, Peres' foreign policy options were limited by the fact that it was unlikely that he would be able to form a narrow coalition government including the religious parties which could be more forthcoming in the peace process.

Occasionally, all these factors can combine to produce a major shift in political culture at the macro-level which will have enormous ramifications for foreign policy, as for example with the end of the cold war. The end of the cold war posed a problem to neo-Realist observers. They assumed that all states seek to maximise their power to protect their security in the anarchic environment of international relations. However, the Soviet Union did not seek to maximise its power as a state but rather abdicated its superpower position because it lacked the will to continue to exist. Realists tried to counter this charge by explaining Soviet behaviour as a rational response to SDI and America's technological superiority in the military sphere. It was this which supposedly made the Soviets give up. However, in the 1940s the Soviets had found their way around the problem of lagging behind in technology, by using espionage. Moreover, when the Soviet position in Eastern Europe collapsed and the Union itself imploded, it was not for want of Soviet military power. Rather, in the eyes of both the leadership and the people, communism had lost its

driving force and legitimacy. “It was the T-shirt and the supermarket, not the gunboat ... that destroyed the Soviet system” (Halliday: 97). With this loss came changed concepts of identity and security. ‘New thinking’ turned the Brezhnev doctrine into the Sinatra doctrine, as a result of which the Soviets told the Eastern Europeans to “Do it your way.”<sup>2</sup> Forty-five years earlier, after World War Two, the Allies recognised the crucial role of political culture in foreign policy and consequently had sought to “stamp out the whole tradition on which the German nation had been built” through political re-education (Wilson and Pronay: 18).<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the impact of political culture is not something that is confined to the domestic policy-making process. It is also something that can affect policy through the nature of the relationship that a state has with other states. In a relationship between two states, the ability to find allies, not purely on the basis of narrow interest denoted in terms of a balance of power, but rather on the basis of shared values or a sense of common identity can be highly significant. If a state can make itself resonate in terms of another’s values and crucially link that association to powerful political forces, then it will gain a lever through which to advance its policy agenda. In its relations with the US, Israel succeeded in taking advantage of this concept by playing on certain sympathetic strands within the Western, especially American, political culture. First, Israel sought to present itself as deserving of US support because of its uniqueness and its moral affinities with the US. As Abba Eban explained, “We based our claim on the uniqueness of Israel, in terms of the affliction suffered by our people, and in terms of our historical and spiritual lineage. We knew we were basically appealing to the Christian world for whom the biblical story was familiar and attractive, and we played it to the hilt” (Friedman 1990: 428). Israel also promoted itself as a modern technological country similar to America in that they had common roots, as immigrant societies trying to secure frontiers, as well as common democratic values (Eban 1993: 596). Later, during the Reagan era, guilt over not having done enough to prevent the Holocaust, was a powerful weapon in engendering American political sympathy for the Israeli government. Nonetheless, without the support of American Jewry which identified on a much more fundamental level of political culture

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<sup>2</sup> Phrase coined by Gennadi Gerasimov, Mark Steyn, ‘Frankie Goes To Moscow’, The Independent, 25 November 1989. For further exploration of this thesis see (Fukuyama: 29-32).

with Israel, this cultural resonance between Israel and the US may have been of only peripheral importance politically.

### **Thesis Outline**

In order to assess the role of political culture in foreign policy, it is necessary to chart its historical development and account for major shifts in it. Through this process, it is then possible to identify the main identities, sub-cultures, values and myths relevant to foreign policy. One is then able to look at foreign policy for a particular issue over a period and discover the role of political culture, through the pathways identified. When these analyses are complete, it will be possible to ascertain the degree to which changes or adaptations in a political culture have affected policy.

The question remains as to which aspects or motifs of a political culture, or indeed sub-cultures, should be focused on when studying on the impact of political culture on foreign policy. In the research process of this thesis I used some of the categories used by FPA theorists, such as Alexander George who looked to perceptions of the purpose of politics, the nature of politics, the self and other, role in world affairs and control over history. Later, in light of my research into Israeli political culture and foreign policy, I organised these general categories and identified the particular motifs and orientation which were most vital to understanding the Israeli case on the three levels of political culture identified earlier. This will be explored in the future chapters.

The first section of the thesis which deals primarily with Israeli political culture is contained within the next three chapters. Chapter 2 identifies the two main tendencies within Israeli political culture: universalism and particularism. It goes on to examine two sub-cultures within each tendency, their main beliefs and motifs. Chapter 3 analyses the attitudes and behavioural patterns of each sub-culture in relation to Israeli policy towards the Palestinian question and the relationship with the United States. Chapter 4 examines the development of Israeli political culture since 1967 and the political impact of these cultural changes as they affected Israel's relations with the US over Palestinian question.

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<sup>3</sup> Sir John Troutbeck, Head, Allied Post Hostilities Planning Committee.

The second section of the thesis, chapters 5-10, deal with the empirical aspect of the thesis. It examines the impact of the various sub-cultures and the development of Israeli political culture overall on the relationship with the United States over the Palestinian question 1981-96. The last of these chapters deals with Israel's relationship with Congress and the pro-Israel lobby in the US.

## **Chapter 2: Universalism and Particularism in Israeli Political Culture**

### **Introduction**

*In the 1990s, the national debate was really restricted to two schools of thought: one... the pessimistic siege mentality... the other a modest almost minimalist approach towards Israel and the world, according to which all that Israel should ask for is to be granted unexceptional status as a nation like all others.* Aaron Klieman (1994: 103)

Israel is a state created by a political culture, Zionism. Zionism, “was and is a programme to solve the problems of Jews and Judaism in the modern age by restoring the Jewish people to their ancient homeland in order to live as a modern nation in a political framework”(Beilin 1992: 155). The onset of modernity and the emancipation provided a revolutionary challenge to the traditional Jewish political culture of the Diaspora. The question was how should Jews respond to the opportunities being presented to them? Should they accept the citizenship offered by the European states in return for giving up on the national component of Jewish identity? Should they amend their religious norms to fit into the emerging political system of Europe? To what degree were such changes really possible, let alone desirable? Some Jews took the most extreme path towards integration, normalisation and universalism by actively advocating assimilation. Others sought to reform the religion to fit in with their host societies, while the more conservative elements tried to accommodate Judaism to the new reality. All of them rejected the idea of conceiving of the Jewish people as a political entity. Zionism rejected this approach. At the minimum, Zionism was a rebellion against the quietistic Jewish political culture of the Diaspora, adopted by Jewry since the failure of the Bar Kochba revolt against Rome in 135 CE, which relied on the non-Jewish authorities to protect Jewish communities within their jurisdiction. Zionism advocated political activism and a faith in the power of the collective will to overcome circumstance, summed up in Herzl's famous dictum, 'If you will it, it is no dream.' It was a movement which sought to resolve the problem of what seemed to be endemic anti-Semitism in Europe through the achievement of political sovereignty in the land of Israel.

As such, the Zionist idea provides the basic legitimacy for the existence of the state of Israel and remains a core consensus value, despite the existence of substantial non-Zionist minorities within the state since 1948. Zionism assisted in the maintenance of the society's cohesiveness through the provision of common myths and symbols, as well as providing the grounds, terms and boundaries of political debate. Between the birth of the state in 1948 and the Six Day War in 1967, this basic consensus was reinforced by an ethos of state building and the existence of implacable Arab enmity to Israel's existence embodied in the siege which surrounded the young state. The need to absorb over one million Jewish immigrants and create an economic and social infrastructure, helped to blunt deep differences within Zionism as to the character of the state, be they religious, liberal, or socialist. Similarly, the poor prospects for a genuine and secure peace, coupled with the cementing of the 1948 partition, kept the great differences between Revisionist Zionism and Labour Zionism over the boundaries of the state in abeyance. However, with the emergence of Israel as a developed state at the end of the 1960s, and particularly as a result of the capture of the territories at the core of the land of Israel (Judea, Samaria and Gaza) in the Six Day War, these fundamental cleavages within Israel's political culture began to emerge and assume importance. As a result, the consensus within Israeli political culture collapsed.

Broadly speaking, this dichotomy over the meaning of the state, as it applied to its boundaries and character, was divided into two conflicting tendencies: one towards universalism, the other towards particularism. In fact, the question of Jewish political independence and sovereignty has from the earliest times been understood in terms of universalism and particularism. On the one hand, a tendency towards normalisation, on the other hand, a tendency towards fulfilling a particular destiny. In the Bible (Samuel I: 9) the prophet Samuel castigates the people for wanting a king, in order that they might be 'like all the other nations'. In the end, Samuel informs the people of God's decision to allow Israel a king, but not in order that they may be like the other nations. Rather, the king would be required to lead the people in the ways of the Law and thus cement the particular covenant between God and the Jewish people. This tension over the purpose of sovereignty within the Jewish political tradition continued within Zionism and Israeli political culture, especially after 1967.

The universal tendency in Israeli political culture aspires to normalisation: to be a nation like all other nations. This was one of the primary purposes of Zionism and the attainment of statehood. Normatively, it seeks for Israel to be a part of a world community, which is usually defined within Western cultural terms. It seeks to contribute and receive from that world both economically and culturally. Ontologically, it views the Jewish people and the Israeli nation as, in essence, no different to any other, so that the same universal rational economic, social and historical regularities that apply to the gentile world apply in essence to the Jewish world (Beilin 1997: 266). If this tendency aspires to a historical mission, it is one defined in universal moral-humanistic terms. However, increasingly it has no sense of collective mission, instead focusing on individualism. By way of contrast, the particularistic tendency aspires for Israel to fulfil the biblical prophecy of Balaam that they should be "a people that dwells alone" (Numbers 22: 19), a prophecy which the universal stream sees as a curse (Leshem). On a normative level it aspires to singularity, it tends to see Israel as a purveyor of particularly Jewish values, which are more understood to be defined by unique mystical factors rather than by general rational ones. Israel is seen as central to a collective Jewish mission, often understood in messianic terms. Ontologically, the Jewish people and thus Israel, are understood as being subject to a unique reality of ever present anti-Semitism.

This basic lack of consensus within Israeli political culture is evident in the conflicting interpretations given to one of the most central symbols within Israeli political culture: the Holocaust. As Yossi Beilin (1992: 154) observed, "It is between two symbols, between the Holocaust which befell European Jewry and the fear of its recurrence, that Israeli society lives". Yet although the importance of the Holocaust has never been in doubt, its meaning for Israelis has always been contested. As Jonathan Sacks (1990: 154) remarked, "The Holocaust does not point anywhere but everywhere". Thus in 1983 when the Knesset (Israeli parliament) debated a memorial for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved Jews in Hungary during the Holocaust, the Likud emphasised the exceptional nature of Wallenberg's good deeds, whereas Labour emphasised that many gentiles had helped Jews, a fact which demonstrated that even in the Jewish people's darkest hour it had not stood complexly alone (Aronoff 1988: 9). Likewise, whereas the

first Begin government sought to emphasize the Holocaust within the educational curriculum as particular to the Jewish experience, the second Rabin government tried to place the study of the Holocaust within a broader general context of genocide (JP 27 January 1995: 7; Peres 1995: 39).

This chapter explores the two tendencies within Israeli political culture since 1967: universalism and particularism. It identifies two sub-cultures within each tendency. Within particularism: radicalism and conservatism, within universalism: *mamlachtiut* (statism) and progressivism. From each sub-culture core beliefs, values, myths and motifs are extrapolated and their political origins and current political expressions noted.

### **The Political Culture of Particularism**

*Two linked questions have always been at issue ... what was the true and desirable relationship between the Jewish people and other nations; and what was the true and desirable relationship between Jews and their own historical past* David Vital (1986: 83).

The particularistic political culture that has dominated the right in Israeli politics is united by two underlying principles. First, a commitment to the value of 'the land of Israel' which has led to a consistent rejection of the partition of the country between a Arab and a Jewish state. Second, an ontology of international relations which understands violent competition between nations and states as the norm and hence adheres to hawkish foreign policy positions, which are deemed necessary in order to survive in such an environment. Within particularism, there are two dominant sub-cultures, conservatism and radicalism.

#### **Conservatism**

The conservatives see Israel as an expression of Jewish patriotism founded on the Jewish historical experience especially during the ancient period. Their collective identity and the meaning they attach to the state of Israel follows from this premise. They also identify themselves and Israel as part of a larger cultural unit, be it 'the West', in the case of the

Revisionists, or the Middle East, in the case of the Sephardim. Either way, Israel's Jewish identity is held to be composite, in that it includes broader cultural elements of which Israel is understood to be a part. While valuing the historical continuity between Jewish history and the state of Israel, the state itself is not seen in terms of the particular messianic redemption of the Jewish people, nor are anti-Israel attitudes of non-Jews seen as proof of endemic anti-Semitism. Rather, Israel is understood as under siege in virtually the same way as any small nation would be within a tough world of nations competing in an anarchic environment for security. True, there are important historical reasons for the particular strength of opposition to the Jews and Zionism but most fundamentally, opposition is understood from a universally applicable Realist balance of power perspective. This Realist conception of international relations colours the outlook of the conservatives as to the necessary instrumental values Israel should adopt in foreign policy.

The conservative trend within Israeli political culture within the period under question was mainly represented by the pragmatic wing of the centre-right bloc: Likud. With the creation of the state of Israel, the conservative Revisionist tendency found expression within the Herut party led by Menachem Begin, which also contained elements of the radical Revisionist programme. Still, in contrast to radical Revisionism, Herut accepted the principles of liberal democracy. Hence its party platform stated: "man was not created for the state, but the reverse: the state was created for man." (Shapiro 1991: 128). In 1965, the Liberal party joined with Herut, on the basis of their agreement on economic issues. They formed a bloc called Gahal. After the Six Day War, they were joined by groups from within Labour such as Ometz which stood for a more liberal economy and a strong defence policy. Later it became known as the La'am faction, which merged formally into Likud in the mid 1980s. Moshe Dayan, himself a leader the hawkish Rafi faction inside Labour, moved to the Likud as Foreign Minister from 1977 to 1981. These groups, along with the Sephardim, formed the conservative tendency in the Likud, though the conservatives did not exist as a formal political faction.

The roots of conservatism lie in three places. First, among those who follow the Jabotinsky version of Revisionist Zionism, members of the successor to the Revisionist

movement and the core political party within the Likud bloc, Herut. Second among the hawkish activist followers of former Labour Minister of Defence Moshe Dayan. Third, among the Sephardi elite who joined the Likud in the 1970s.

### *Jabotinsky and Conservative Revisionism*

In 1925, Zev Jabotinsky formed the Revisionist Party. Two principles distinguished the Revisionist movement from other political movements within Zionism: absolute and unconditional territorial integrity of the whole land of Israel and, in the pre-state period, the openly proclaimed desire to establish a sovereign state on that territory by political or military means. Jabotinsky and the Revisionist tradition form one of the central foundations of the Israeli right. Yet paradoxically, the conservative Revisionist tradition is the least particularistic element on the Zionist right. Jabotinsky considered the Jews to be a part of a superior Western European culture and was particularly influenced by the romantic nationalism of Garibaldi (Avineri: 63). His concept of Zionism grew out of this affinity; fundamental traditional Jewish values were scarce and vaguely defined (Shavit: 123). Thus in The Idea of Betar, Jabotinsky restated ideas borrowed from both Herder and Mazzini whereby every nation, including the Hebrew one, could only make its own contribution to universal human culture from within the concert of nations as a sovereign body. This was how the French nation had contributed to the world the principles of the revolution, and the English nation, the concepts such as democracy and parliamentary system (Shavit: 115). Indeed, the conservatives patterned their ideal Jewish state as a neutral framework above party influences, which imposes law and order in the socio-economic struggle to enable the organic nation to lead its life. A state was considered the framework which fulfilled national expectations, as well as providing the required services to its citizens (Shavit: 84).

Unlike the founder of the Zionist movement Herzl, Jabotinsky thought Zionism was not simply the answer to the failure of assimilation and emancipation; it represented not only the path towards a universal goal but a valid expression of organic Jewish national identity. Zionism was not purely a means to an end, but an end in itself. For Jabotinsky regarded Zionism not only as a solution to the physical plight of European Jewry, but as a

means to rehabilitate and express Jewish national pride and honour. Whereas Herzl was prepared to see the Jewish state set up in Uganda, as this would effectively resolve the Jewish problem in Europe, Jabotinsky demanded that a Jewish state should have control over both sides of the Jordan, as the land of Israel was the historic homeland of the Jewish people. This maximalist territorial position became a key existential value for Revisionism. In Hebrew, this existential value became known as *Shlemut HaMoledet* [the completeness of the homeland/birthright]. Jabotinsky saw Eretz Yisrael as the natural environment in which the national consciousness of the Israeli nation had to be shaped, and from this it followed that only in Israel could the Jewish nation renew and revitalise its singular national characteristics (Shavit: 112). Yet conservative Revisionism cannot be characterised primarily by a romantic or theo-geographic attachment to Eretz Yisrael. In contrast to the radical Revisionists, Jabotinsky's objection to the 1937 Partition Plan for Western Palestine was not premised on the idea that a division violated the organic unity of the national homeland. His reasoning was pragmatic. He proclaimed a series of arguments of a geo-strategic and defensive nature. The main trust of his argument concerned the fact that partition would seriously impair the absorption capacity of the country to settle several million European Jews quickly, before the impending disaster which he predicted (Shavit: 124).

Although the conservative Revisionists viewed the nation's existence as a natural organic phenomenon, they did not see the cultural content of that identity as closed off and separate. Indeed, although Jabotinsky venerated the national spirit, he was extremely contemptuous of Jewish religious culture in the Diaspora. "My treasure", he declared, "is not religion, but something else for which this 'mummified corpse' was supposed to serve as a shell and protection" (Shindler 1994:17). Like many of the early Zionists, Jabotinsky accepted some of the anti-Semitic critique of the Jewish people. Consequently, he sought to transform the mild mannered Jew into an upright, proud Hebrew. This transformative existential value was *hadar* [dignity/honour]. *Hadar* was supposed to empower the Jewish people to obtain sovereign equality with the other nations of the world. Consequently, Revisionism emphasised importance of Jewish self-assertion. As Jabotinsky wrote, "because the *Yid* [Yiddish for Jew] is ugly, sickly and lacks decorum, we shall endour the ideal image of the Hebrew with masculine beauty. The *Yid* is trodden

on and easily frightens, therefore the Hebrew ought to be proud and independent. The *Yid* has accepted submission, the Hebrew ought to learn to command. The *Yid* seeks to conceal his identity from strangers, therefore the Hebrew should look the world in the eye and declare "I am a Hebrew" (Wheatcroft: 171). One of the keys to this goal was the veneration of military prowess as an existential value. Hence Jabotinsky's support for a Jewish Legion in both world wars and the militaristic style of the Revisionist youth movement Betar. In his novel Samson, Jabotinsky reflected on the redemptive quality of war, where military power is an aesthetic ideal, an expression of national virility (Seliktar 1986: 81). In addition, the Revisionist belief in the need for national self-assertion and their belief in the importance of the will as an instrumental value led them to the view that the use of declarations and strong rhetoric are important political acts in themselves (Rowland 65-78). The romanticism of Revisionism and its veneration of might are central to an understanding of its instrumental values. In common with much of the European right, Revisionism combined a nationalistic romantic belief in the power of the national will, with a Realist view of the nature of international politics.

The classic rational realpolitik foundation for conservative Revisionism's instrumental values can be found in Homo Homo Lupis where Jabotinsky identified international politics as comparable to an anarchic Hobbesian state of nature, a forever on-going war of all against all, contained by the balance of power. In this reality, political cunning and military might were deemed a universal rule, crucial to the survival of all nations including the fledgling Hebrew nation (Seliktar 1986: 81). Jabotinsky argued that "as with other nations also with us, our national future depends on arming ourselves...historical reality tells us: if you are educated, know how to plough and build houses, and if you speak Hebrew... But you don't know how to shoot, you have no hope. But if you know how to shoot - maybe there is hope." (Rael Isaac 1981: 139). Consequently, the Revisionist youth movement Betar received a paramilitary education, and the symbols and ceremony of military life were extensively employed.

Yet, conservative Revisionism augmented this pessimistic view of the international environment with a typically optimistic nineteenth century liberal belief in the power of public opinion to support moral courses, as Britain had done through the Balfour

declaration. In order to change a policy one had to influence the group of opinion leaders who formed the cultural milieu of the policy elite (Shavit: 209). Indeed, Jabotinsky appealed to British public opinion that Zionism was a reliable ally of the Empire and a cultural outpost of the West (Sofer: 184). In addition, as compared to the twentieth century concept of 'total war', conservative Revisionism was more comfortable with the more limited nineteenth century conception. Thus, despite their seeming veneration of militaristic values, the conservatives preferred the use of military power primarily as a means of applying political pressure (Shapiro: 58). Overall then, conservative Revisionism was actually closer to understanding the world in terms of a limited version of an international society (Bull) as opposed to a pure Hobbesian war of all against all. As Jabotinsky argued to the radical Revisionists, "We are not living in a world of robbers, but in a world of law and justice where conscience still holds some sway" (Peleg: 18).

#### *Dayan and the Labourite conservatives*

Despite the fact that Labour Zionism was supposed to be progressive, there had always existed within it elements which fit more neatly into the conservative or radical right. Within Mapai<sup>1</sup>, Moshe Dayan, Minister of Defence 1967-73, Foreign Minister 1977-81 and some of his supporters, had a lot in common with Jabotinsky. Dayan shared the conservative Revisionists strong attachment to the land of the Bible for nationalist and security reasons. After the Six Day War, Dayan could not envisage a safe<sup>2</sup> and realistic territorial compromise and, in a eulogy to the defenders of the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem who died in 1948, he stated "we did not betray your dream, nor did we forget your legacy. We have returned to the mountains, to the cradle of our people, to our patrimony... to give life to Jerusalem we have to place our soldiers and arms on the hills of Shechem and at the entrances to the bridges of the Jordan" (Bar On 1996: 40). Indeed Dayan can be seen as a symbol of the heroic fighting Hebrew, that Jabotinsky had yearned to create. Dayan was one of the key founders of the "activist" strategy of retaliation in the 1950s which emphasised military self-assertion. He saw this strategy not only in instrumental terms, but as an important existential value for the new state of Israel. Similarly, Dayan and his

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<sup>1</sup> Mapai- acronym for the Israeli Labour party.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the geo-strategic arguments against territorial concessions see (Wildanski: 31).

followers shared conservative Revisionism's Realist balance of power view of Israel's position. As Dayan saw it, in such an international environment, Israel had no foreign policy, only a defence policy with international implications (Brecher). However, while conservative Revisionism emphasised Israel as part of 'the West' denigrating the culture of 'the East', Dayan saw Israel as returning to be a part of the Middle East region again. Despite this difference, both their notions of identity conceived of the national element, not purely as a thing in of itself, but as part of a larger cultural identity and this differentiated them from the radicals.

### *The Sephardim*

Sephardi Jewry consists of a large number of Jews who came from Arab/Islamic countries and a small minority whose origins are in Mediterranean European countries. During the Middle Ages, Sephardi Jews were distinguished from their Ashkenazi brethren from northern and eastern Europe by a different rabbinical tradition. In modern day Israel however, the distinction is synonymous with geographical origin. By the 1970s, the Sephardim had come to make up about half of Israel's Jewish population. Aside from the importance of the Sephardi vote in the rise of the Likud to power after 1977, the Sephardi community also became increasingly active and important within the party itself. As a result, by 1986 Sephardim constitute the majority of the party's activists (Zuckerman). Several Sephardi politicians also became high profile party leaders including David Levy, Moshe Katzav and Meir Shitreet. This Sephardi group in the Likud tended to identify with the conservative tendency within the right.

The Sephardim were relatively more traditional and particularistic than Israeli Ashkenazim. For them Israel was first and foremost a Jewish state. They viewed the land of Israel as the traditional home of the Jewish people to whom it belonged and they favoured the Likud's tougher style in foreign policy as more likely to bring peace in the rough world of international politics (Roumani: 428). They were the least impressed of all the conservatives with the centrality of value of military force as a foreign policy tool<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>3</sup> David Levy was the only member of Herut in the Cabinet to vote against entering Beirut in 1982 and for leaving Lebanon in 1985.

the least ideologically committed to the integrity of the whole land of Israel. As strongly traditional Jews, they tended to value the land of Israel and the ingathering of the exiles to Zion, but it was not their central political value. Hence, there were very few Sephardim among the settlers. Having been bypassed by the French Revolution and the subsequent age of ideology which gave birth to Zionism, the traditional Sephardi political culture continued to demonstrate its hallmark pragmatism, rather than any sense of ideology, Revisionist or otherwise. Indeed many of the Sephardi leaders in the Likud had only joined it after having failed to advance in the Labour party (Zuckerman).

### **Radicalism**

Radical particularism conceives of Zionism and the state of Israel as an expression of an exclusively Jewish identity. The particularism of the radicals operates on two levels. First, it views Israel as "a nation that dwells alone" surrounded by existential enemies whose anti-Semitism is endemic and everlasting. This situation is viewed not within the universal system of a Hobbesian state of nature but as a specific reality for the Jewish people. Second, the radical right see Israel as being on a mission to fulfil its own particular destiny. The key particularistic value that it seeks to realise in this quasi-messianic scheme is to bring the 'whole land of Israel' under Jewish control within a state that will have a specifically Jewish culture. The territorial integrity of Israel serves as a focal point and as the absolute precondition for the realisation of all other Zionist aspirations. Between 1981-96, the radical sub-culture was represented strongly within the leadership and the rank and file of the Likud, as well as within the parties of the radical right: Techiya, Tzomet, Moledet and Kach. In addition, by the late 1980s most of the leadership and supporters of the National Religious Party (NRP) also came round to this outlook. Its roots lie within the radical factions of Revisionism, Labour activism and messianic religious Zionism.

### *The Radical Revisionist Trend*

The radical Zionist right formulated itself ideologically in the inter-war period and it became a recognisable independent political force in Palestine after 1938. It was

particularly strong within Betar which later became associated with the Irgun,<sup>4</sup> indeed both were led by Menachem Begin. The Irgun sought to mobilise the *Yishuv*<sup>5</sup> in a military offensive against both the Arabs and the British with the aim of forcing an independent Jewish state. Begin argued for this ‘military Zionism’, while Jabotinsky argued that the balance of power and the need to retain British support dictated prudence. At this point, the radicals split from Jabotinsky and Begin led a military revolt against Britain and the Arabs of Palestine. With the onset of World War II, the radical Revisionist movement split again when the Irgun declared a ceasefire with Britain in order to make common cause against the Nazis, while the Stern Gang [Lechi] continued the war against the British in Palestine.

When Begin reinstated the revolt at the end of World War II, the two groups remained organisationally and ideologically separate and in 1948 Begin formed the Herut party which did not initially include members of the Stern Gang. Despite the split in the radical right, gradually they too became associated first with Herut and then with Likud. For example, Yitzhak Shamir a former leader of Lechi, joined Herut in 1970. Nonetheless, after the withdrawal of Israel from Sinai, under Begin’s Likud government, some of the radical Revisionists split from Likud and formed Techiya and their influence was also to be found in the other parties of the radical right founded in the 1980s.

### Radical Revisionism

Radical Revisionism had a highly particularistic concept of national identity, whereby the Jews were a people that dwelt alone both ontologically due to anti-Semitism and normatively because Western culture was corrupt and decadent, while the Arabic Middle East was considered barbaric. Europe was understood as the Christian continent, the embodiment of anti-Semitism. Its rationalism and emancipation were regarded as decadent, empty, anti-Jewish values. In reaction, they aspired to an autarkic Jewish culture, that would grow from the native soil and express the unique national spirit: the

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<sup>4</sup> The Irgun was a Zionist underground organisation, separate from the Labour defence organisation- the Haganah whose policy was *havlagah* [restraint] against Arab terror attacks.

<sup>5</sup> Term used to denote the Zionist-Jewish society in modern Palestine pre-1948.

*Volksgeist* (Shavit: 148-150). They did not recognise any universal element to Judaism. Judaism was a national concept, pure and simple.

Although radicalism rejected ‘the West’, like many other nationalist groups of the time, they were influenced by extremists on both the European right and left, drawing on the outlook of German and Russian idealism as well as Polish messianic nationalism (Shavit: 24, 143). Prior to the Holocaust, Fascism was admired, while after 1945, Lechi attempted to combine Fascism and Communism into an ideology of national Bolshevism. Democracy and liberalism were seen as weak and corrupted systems. Nationalism was a supreme and total interest, politics a total pursuit. Political power was held to be legitimately attainable by convincing the masses to vote for one party or through a coup. There was no room for the niceties of liberal politics with its minimalist conception of the state and its restrained instrumental practices. Rather, it adhered to Millennialism (Kedourie), a kind of secular messianism, which inspired a commitment to self sacrifice and a belief that the end justify the means. Zionism had to be a totalitarian movement in the spiritual and cultural sense, devoted to one sacred purpose only.

The most elevated value of radical Revisionism and a touchstone of its whole ethos was the whole land of Israel. According to their conception, the Jewish people’s ties to the land of Israel could only be explained in theo-geographic terms. The land of Israel was not merely a piece of territory, but a land with a symbolic and mystical significance. The relationship of the Jewish people to it could not be compared to that of the various European nations to their countries. The connection between the people and the land was meta-historical. The longing for its soil was the longing for an independent and sovereign status in the face of the entire universe, anchored in the primordial spirit of Israel (Shavit: 137). Abraham Stern’s Eighteen Principles of Revival [*Techiya*] asserted that the borders of the land of Israel included not only the territory allotted to Britain by the Treaty of Versailles as Jabotinsky held, but from the Nile to the Euphrates as stated in Genesis. Stern declared that Jewish ownership of the land was absolute and could not be rescinded (Shindler 1995: 176).

The return of the Jews to their land and the conquering of that land was understood to signal the achievement of their particular historical mission. The Eighteen Principles of Revival declared the goals of the movement to be the redemption of the land and the revival of the nation. This Zionist messianism looked to the Second Temple period of Jewish history for inspiration perceiving Zionism as the organic continuation of the national messianic idea in Jewish history. Their early myths revolved around the heroic, but ultimately tragic, myths of Samson and the Jewish revolt against Rome which ended at Betar. Stern saw the Hasmonean zealots and the Bar Kochba wars not merely as wars of national liberation but wars with spiritual cause and significance. Consequently, the Eighteen Principles called for the building of a Third Temple, a symbol of complete redemption. All of this was in the expectation that it would be necessary to "fight a perpetual war with everyone who obstructs the realisation of the goal" (Shavit: 155).

This perpetual war dictated that force would be a key instrumental value. But military values were not seen as merely a necessary instrumental value; but as a positive virtue; a symbol of national sovereignty. In common with much of the European right, they combined a nationalistic romantic belief in the power of the national will, with a realist view of the nature of international politics. Radical Revisionism emphasised idealism and the dynamism of the will in combination with military power to produce the great epoch making event. Politics was construed as an either/or, 'to die or conquer the mountain': either the great victory or the terrible heroic tragedy (Harkabi 1988: 72). For radical Revisionism the crucial ingredient in the success of Zionism was not its realism, but its mysticism, its dynamic will and ability to endure, manifest through the exercise of military force at decisive turning points in history. As Israel Eldad explained, "Zionism is the process of turning a dream into reality... our existence and redemption reject everything that is real and rational" (Seliktar 1986: 81).

### Neo-Revisionism

Begin and Herut took a position midway between Jabotinsky's Revisionism and the radical Revisionists, termed by Ilan Peleg, neo-Revisionism. They adopted the formal liberal democratic constitutionalism and concern for *Hadar* of the conservative stream,

while placing greater emphasis on Jewish uniqueness. Whereas, Jabotinsky's conservatism was basically secular and even anti-religious, Begin's viewed traditional religion in a positive light. Neo-Revisionists also identified with the mystical approach towards the central value of the whole land of Israel.<sup>6</sup> In addition, while Begin shared Jabotinsky harsh vision of international politics, Jabotinsky understood it in universal terms, applicable to all nations, Begin understood the particularly harsh global environment for the Jewish people as having come about as a result of endemic anti-Semitism, that is, it was peculiar to Jewish experience. As he explained in *The Revolt* "if the annihilated people *happens to be Jewish*, the world will be silent and behave as it usually behaves" (Arian 1989: 22). After the Holocaust this tendency was reinforced, such that the Holocaust became the image through which everything was interpreted.

### *Labour Activism*

Labour activism originated around Yitzhak Tabenkin, the leader of Achdut HaAvodah, and can be identified with his general brand of Marxist-socialist Zionism. However, a significant number of Mapai activists shared his militancy without fully accepting his philosophy. In Tabenkin's eclectic theory, true Jewish redemption was a particularistic enterprise and could take place only in the context of communal settlement in the entire land of Israel. In 1972 Eliezer Livneh, a member of Tabenkin's Kibbutz, published Israel and the Crisis of Western Civilisation. According to Livneh "The Jewish people is not a nation that belongs to one of the great civilisations - the humanist-Christian, Buddhist and Hindu - but is a distinct phenomenon. Israel determines its own modes of interaction." For Livneh, Israeli control of the whole land of Israel after 1967 symbolised that, "Israel was now once again whole in both a spiritual and physical sense" (Sprinsak 58-9). The future model for Jewish living in Israel was to be a combination of Orthodox Jewish culture with a secular respect for the heritage of the nation. According to Livneh, Zionism before 1967 was mistaken in that it had detached itself from this genuine wellspring of the nation. Ariel Sharon, perhaps the most famous Labour activist, agreed (Sharon 531-542).

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<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, in 1969 Begin accepted that the conquest of the east bank of the Jordan was not a practical objective.

However, this normative particularism was not adhered to throughout Labour activism. What united the grouping was a deep suspicion of the Arabs, the British, and the rest of the world, a view reinforced by the Holocaust. When coupled with a typical Labour Zionist belief in self-reliance, this led to a belief in military activism as the best strategy for Zionism. In the 1930s, faced by the Arab revolt and British restrictions on Jewish immigration, Labour activism concurred with the military Zionism of Begin and rejected mainstream Labour Zionism's strategy of *Havlagah* (self-restraint). They advocated a constant expansion of Jewish settlement in Palestine with or without official permission of the mandatory authorities. After the creation of the state, the activist strategy was adopted for a while by the Labour led government under Ben Gurion. Spatial defence of the country through a network of border settlements was combined with an aggressive retaliatory policy overseen by Chief-of-Staff Moshe Dayan and carried out by the head of the infamous Unit 101, Ariel Sharon.

### *Messianic Religious Zionism*

Within religious Zionism there was always a tension between two versions of the ideology. The first doctrine was the political Zionism of religious Jews, associated with the first leader of the grouping Rabbi Rienes. He advocated a cautious politics as a pragmatic solution to the pressing problems of the persecuted Jews. The second school was messianic religious Zionism, associated with Rabbi Avraham Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the Yishuv. Kook held that secular Zionism indicated the beginning of the redemption promised by the prophets. His theology was quite revolutionary in that it allotted a sacred role in the messianic process to secular Jews who did not even believe in the Messiah, though, in the fullness of time he expected the secular pioneers to return to G-d and the observance of Torah<sup>7</sup>. The second pillar of his theology focused around the holiness of the whole land of Israel. Though concern for the territory of Eretz Israel never dominated Rabbi Kook's teaching, he believed that full redemption could only take place in the whole land of Israel.

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<sup>7</sup> Torah- denotes observance of Mosaic law and way of life as interpreted by the rabbis over the generations.

Following the capture of Judea and Samaria in the Six Day War, Kook's son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook ruled that it was against Jewish law to surrender territory, even though this was out of tune with mainstream religious rulings. Kook's followers then came the spearhead of the movement to settle the new territories through the Gush Emunim [the block of the faithful] movement. They were inspired to such acts through the frequently employed myth of, 'Nachson the son of Aminadav'. Quoting from Midrash<sup>8</sup> the Gush explained that God only split the Red Sea after Nachson the son of Aminadav went into the sea up to his neck, while the rest of the people were afraid. The moral of the story being that the Jews must act unilaterally with strength of will to acquire the Promised Land, for God will miraculously save them in the end, as long as they have enough faith. Thus, messianic religious Zionism also lauded the value of the unilateral initiative based on will power and mystical faith.

Moreover, for the followers of Zvi Kook, the territorial question was part of a broader cultural project to bring about a return to the Torah, the rebuilding of the Third Temple and thus full redemption. The whole land of Israel came to symbolise the entire conflict between Jews and non-Jews and between faithful Jews and those whose loyalties wavered. It was seen as a battle of the faithful Maccabees against the Hellenisers. According to messianic religious Zionist and settlement leader, Yehiel Leiter, "Holding on to Yesha<sup>9</sup> and building it, forces a particular identity on the nation, one which emphasises the uniqueness of the Jewish people, one that many in Israel's left-wing are trying to escape... The issue is the character of the state: is the Jewish state the fulfilment of a continuum of Jewish history and destiny, which acknowledges and emphasises the presence of a distinctive Jewish nation, or is it merely a Hebrew speaking carbon copy of Canada?" (Leiter 1993: 28). This internal cultural particularism was reinforced by a perception of endemic anti-Semitism. Especially, after the Holocaust, messianic religious Zionism came to share the radical right's conception of Israel as a people that dwells alone<sup>10</sup>. One major Gush Emunim Rabbi was wont to note, "There are two types of non-Jews those that simply hate us and those who attempt with all their power to destroy us"

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<sup>8</sup> Midrash- a collection of Rabbinical commentary on the Bible in the form of exegesis.

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew acronym for Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

<sup>10</sup> In contradistinction, Rabbi Abraham Kook viewed the redemption of Israel as part of a universal redemption (Herzberg 1984: 423).

(Liebman and Cohen: 59). The idea that Zionism could end this reality through normalising the position of the Jewish people, was considered unrealistic.

### *Techiya and the Parties of the Radical Right*

When in 1978 most of the Likud and the NRP supported the Camp David Accords, Zvi Yehuda Kook brought the Accords opponents together and formed Techiya. The party was made up of members of Gush Emunim, former members of Lechi such as Geula Cohen and Labour activists such as Yuval Neeman. The name Techiya appealed especially to former Lechi members for it also commemorated Abraham Stern's long forgotten principles of renewal [Techiya]. Techiya supported the whole land of Israel and settlement without regard to international consequences and was also emphatic that there was a need for a transformation of the entire education system to purvey more particularistic Jewish values (Sprinsak: 181). In 1987, former Chief- of-Staff Eitan split from Techiya to form Tzomet. which appealed to hard core Labour activists, members of the Kibbutz and Moshav movements, who opposed the religious ideals of Gush Emunim. They were strong supporters of the greater land of Israel idea who believed that military force could solve political problems (Sprinsak: 189). For many Israelis, Eitan was perceived as the model of the farmer-fighter who had never abandon the appeal of pioneering Zionism, that of a proud, productive and self-sufficient working Hebrew. Rehavam Ze'evi a legendary fighter in the Labour movement's elite force, the Palmach, caused another split on the far right when he set up Moledet. It publicly recommended 'transfer': an 'agreed on' removal of all the Arabs of the occupied territories to the neighbouring Arab countries.

On the outer fringe of the radical right was Meir Kahane and Kach. Ideologically, Kahane was greatly influenced by Revisionist Zionism and was especially taken with its attitude towards Jewish self-defence and dignity. He had a highly particularistic normative message, considering equal rights and humanistic principles as essentially non-Jewish. To Kahane, Jewish violence to protect Jewish interests was never bad. He was also obsessed with the Holocaust, which formed a foundation of his 'catastrophic Zionist philosophy', that predicted a new Holocaust and called upon the Jews of the Diaspora to return to

Israel before it was too late. In parallel, he argued that if the Jews did not expel the Arabs first, the Arabs would wipe them out or evict them from Palestine (Sprinsak 50-56).

### **The Political Culture of Universalism**

The universal tendency in Israeli political culture aspires to normalisation: to be a nation like all other nations. Normatively, it seeks for Israel to be a part of a world community. It seeks to contribute and receive from that world, in economic and cultural terms. Ontologically, it views the Jewish people and the Israeli nation as, in essence, no different to any other so that they the same universal rational economic, social and historical regularities that apply to the gentile world, apply in essence, to the Jewish world (Beilin 1997: 266). If this tendency aspires to a historical mission, it is one defined in universal moral - humanistic terms. There are two sub-cultures within universalism: *mamlachtiut* [statism] and progressive Zionism.

### *The Socialist-Zionist Precursor*

Socialist Zionism had a universal vision which conceived of Zionism as the source for the normalisation of the Jewish people. The Socialist Zionist thinker, Syrkin, argued, “Socialism will do away with wars and the conflict of interest among civilised peoples...it will pave the way for the uniting of separate histories.” Yet although socialism bore, “the seeds out of which internationalism, that is cosmopolitanism would develop,” it would not do so for the Jewish people in the foreseeable future due to anti-Semitism which resulted from the particular economic and social position of the Jews and not the inherent wickedness or folly of the Gentiles”(Hertzberg: 75-6). The socialist Zionist version of normalisation incorporated socio-economic imperatives as well as political imperatives. In order to be a part of the universal triumph of social justice, the Jews had to first become productive and thus be removed from their ‘parasitic’ economic position in Europe. According to this thesis, it was the parasitic existence of the Jews which caused anti-Semitism. Hence, in order to end anti-Semitism and bring about the economic and the political normalisation of the Jews, a pioneering socialist community in Palestine had to be created. Once the Jews had their own state and society, their diaspora weak ‘Jewish’

characteristics would be transformed into proud ‘Hebrew’ ones and anti-Semitism would disappear. To achieve this it argued that first of all the Zionist movement had to establish an economic and social base before statehood could be conferred. The first necessity was to change the occupational structure of the Jewish people so as to build the homeland. This school argued that achievement do not come as a dramatic event, but from a process of incremental actions ‘Acre after acre, goat after goat.’ Despite these pragmatic instrumental values, the Socialists retained the messianic idea in Judaism in its universal form. Thus, Syrkin saw Israel’s mission as the creation of a classless society in Palestine that would serve as a light unto the nations (Rael Isaac: 20).

Socialist Zionism succeeded in creating the dominant political force in the Yishuv: the Labour movement. The emphasis within the Labour movement in the pre-state period was on the ideal collective settlement in Kibbutzim for society at large and sought a total integration between the political party and the Histadrut, which was not just a trade union but a future socialist state in embryo consisting of businesses, industries and a health service. After statehood, the Socialist Zionist stream was represented within Mapai and especially within the more left wing Mapam, which merged with Mapai on an off until 1984 when it regained its independence.

### **Mamlachtiut**

Gradually after statehood, the leader of Mapai, Ben Gurion, came to de-emphasise socialism and collective settlement and instead promote the fulfilment of the Zionist dream through Jewish immigration and absorption, a goal facilitated by the ethos of state building. Normalisation was still the objective, but no longer through a change in the Jewish people’s class structure, but through statehood. For *mamlachtiut*’s chief theorist, Ben Gurion, anti-Semitism did not result from an abnormal class structure but “from the Jews peculiar status which does not accord within the established framework of the nations of the World” (Lieberman and Don-Yehiya 1983: 104). In order to resolve that problem, the exiles had to be ingathered to a Jewish state.

*Mamlachtiut* expressed the centrality of the state and its superiority to any other factor or value. But it was not etatism. Rather, *mamlachtiut* was a means to save the Jewish people rather than a goal in of itself. The ingathering of the exiles was a core value, a sovereign state was a precondition to that and thus its survival became the main operational goal (Teveth 1985: 183). Thus, after the state's foundation, Mapai moved increasingly away from Labour Zionism. Ben Gurion redefined *chalutziut* [pioneering] so that it could be any kind of pioneering, not just settling on a Kibbutz (Liebman and Don Yehiya 1983: 84). *Mamlachtiut* made great efforts to transform the state and its institutions into the central locus of loyalty and identification. It affirmed the centrality of state interest at the expense of non-governmental groups and institutions, even those of Labour Zionism. Labour trends in the education system were eliminated and an attempt, although it failed, was made to create a health insurance programme separate from the Histadrut. The ideological militias of the right and the left were demobbed, leaving a unified Israeli Defence Force in their place.

But *mamlachti* normalisation was not only about state structures. *Mamlachtiut* was hostile to traditional Judaism. It was viewed religion as a symbol of unproductive, uncivilised diaspora weakness, which had to be overcome in order to normalise the Jewish people. Thus, those espousing *mamlachtiut* preferred to disregard Jewish history in the Diaspora, drawing their myths and symbol from previous periods of Jewish statehood. *Mamlachtiut* raised the *Sabra* [the native born Israeli] to the rank of hero who was portrayed as the inverse image of the exilic Jew. Unlike the Diaspora Jew, the *Sabra* had no fear, no materialistic appetite. He was destined to bring an end to the humiliation of his parents. All that the diaspora Jew lacked, the *Sabra* had: strength, health, physical labour... rootedness. Designated as it was to cultivate feelings of strength, self-confidence and national pride, *mamlachtiut* represented a stark contrast the conditions of weakness and humiliation that found their most extreme expression in the Holocaust. In an article entitled 'Israel's security and her international position,' Ben Gurion aptly summarised the ideology of *mamlachtiut* vis-a-vis the Holocaust. According to Ben Gurion, the legacy of the Holocaust was to prevent such a disaster. The lesson deduced from the entire course of Jewish history in exile taught to the need to accumulate Jewish strength through the establishment of a state and become a sovereign people, equal in rights in the family of

nations (Don Yehiya 1993: 147). Only thus would the normalisation of the Jewish people be complete.

The relationship between the goal of normalisation and Zionism's sense of historical mission was a central concern to Ben Gurion. In 1961, he expanded on this distinction between ideals and political priorities. He stated that he did not recognise a Jewish 'nationalism' only Judaism; which was not a series of commandments, but a 'spiritual-moral destiny.' As he understood it, the concept of 'a state' in the English sense of the word did not exist in the Hebrew at all, only the concept of a people. Thus, he explained that as a Jew, he had no need for the concept of sovereignty, but was in need of redemption and freedom for the whole Jewish people. Did this mean that he was ready to sacrifice sovereignty, political interest, *raison d'etat*, statism? No. Ben Gurion did not state how he thought the Jewish people could fill their 'spiritual-moral destiny.' But it is clear that he did not link it to the nation-state. This was the reason he stated that Hebrew had no word with the exact meaning of state in the English sense. For Ben Gurion, generally speaking, Israel's destiny as a nation state moved on a different, though parallel, track from that of the "spiritual-moral destiny" of the Jewish people (Leshem 1989: 194). Ben Gurion went to great effort to encourage this spiritual-moral approach within Israeli society and among its intellectuals (Keren 1983). However, politics consisted of modernisation and pragmatism: *mamlachtiut*. As we shall see later, this became extremely relevant as regards *mamlachtiut* and the value of the whole land of Israel. We can suffice for now with a statement by Ben Gurion during the 1937 debate over partition: "Eretz Israel from the Red Sea in the south and the Lebanon and Herman the North, and between the Mediterranean in the West and the Syrian desert in the East... I believe today, no less than I did 35 years ago, that this land will be ours. But in the present conditions it is necessary to accept that the unity of the land is a spiritual and not a political fact. One should not mix spiritual concepts with political" (Sandler 1993: 61).

In 1965 the *mamlachti* [statist] wing of Labour split from Mapai temporarily to form the Rafi party. Rafi adopted a technocratic programme which called for a modern, industrialised Israel as an alternative to outdated socialist vision. It campaigned for a strong defence establishment and was seen by some as more hawkish than Mapai. The

resemblance between some of the aspects of *mamlachtiut* and conservatism led some of its adherents to move across to the Likud after 1967, most notably Moshe Dayan, while others such as Shimon Peres gravitated towards the progressive stream. Nonetheless, the true heirs of *mamlachtiut*, were those created in its image, high ranking army officers, such as Yitzhak Rabin. They were socialised within the most highly regarded arm of the state, the armed forces and not within the Labour party, which they tended to join after completing their military service.

### **Progressive Zionism**

*Being Jewish means belonging to a people that is both a chosen people and a universal people...continuing to plough the historic Jewish furrow in the field of the human spirit* Shimon Peres (1995: 358)

The progressive stream of Zionism has always been the most universalist with the most positive assessment of the ontology of international relations. One of the main themes of its history has been the tension between whether to regard a state as an end goal, the fulfilment of normalisation and the resolution of the Jewish question, or whether statehood is just a step on the way to the broader fulfilment of a universal human progressive agenda that requires going beyond the framework of the nation-state. The roots of the progressive trend derived from four sources: socialist Zionism, *mamlachtiut*, spiritual Zionism and liberal Zionism.

### *Spiritual Zionism*

Spiritual Zionists wanted Zionism to represent the universal moral vision of the Biblical prophets and liberal Western ethics. Ahad Ha'am, the founder of this school of Zionism, was not primarily concerned with the need to resolve the problems of the Jews caused by anti-Semitism through the creation of a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Rather, the aim was to create in Palestine a cultural Jewish centre which would help sustain Jewish cultural life worldwide and provide the grounding for the Jewish people to play the role of being a moral light to the nations. In the inter-war period, intellectuals who held similar views banded together to form Brit Shalom and the Ihud, its members included Martin

Buber and Judah Magnes. They favoured a binational state in Palestine and accepted Arab supervision of Jewish immigration, believing that another nation-state would just cause more political strife. Instead, the Jews had to merge into a new 'civilised community' of free men to raise the level of human culture throughout the Middle East, thereby paying homage to the highest of human ideals (Ellis: 47). Therein they saw the only possible justification for Zionism in universal terms. The ideas of Spiritual Zionism influenced the progressive stream of Israeli political culture, but they had no formal political base.

### *Liberal Zionism*

Liberal Zionism saw a state as a solution to the Jewish question in Europe. They saw two sides to the problem which Zionism was to cure; the physical persecution of the Jews and the inner problems of the Jewish character, the neurosis implanted as a result of this persecution. Zionism was to lead to external and internal freedom for Jews: normalisation. Yet one of the questions which liberal Zionism was unclear about was whether or not a Jewish state was a permanent or temporary answer to the problem.

Initially, this affirmation of Jewish particularity was seen as a concession by the highly acculturated and assimilated liberal European Jews, such as Theodore Herzl, who made up the early leadership of Zionism. They held to the 'ideology of emancipation' the system of thought which, in the wake of the *Haskalah* [Jewish enlightenment], began to affect the integration of Jews into the modern world. Originally Herzl saw the solution to the Jewish problem as the creation of an atmosphere of tolerance that would precede the mass conversion of all Jews to Christianity. Herzl and his ilk only turned to Zionism after perceiving that it was impossible for individual Jews to assimilate into West European society due to the persistence of anti-Semitism *in spite* of the emancipation. Thus, Herzl wrote in Der Judenstaadt: "we are a nation, one nation. The enemy, by no volition of ours, forces us to be a nation" (Evron 1995: 44). So instead of becoming a person like all others, they "decided that the only way out was to become a nation like all others. They felt they had to return to their home, and acquire what any nation has: territory and sovereignty." (Oz 1994: 38). According to Leo Pinsker, the creation of such a Jewish nation-state would put Jewish-Gentile relations on the basis of self respect and equality,

such that anti-Semitism would disappear. This was the core of political Zionism. Given this fact, territory was primarily of instrumental value in the Zionist equation. Consequently, Herzl had been prepared to accept Uganda as the foundation for a Jewish state in 1903, since his political priority did not attach any intrinsic importance to the territory of Palestine, though obviously its historical resonance meant that it was the preferred territory for the Zionist movement. Ultimately, the Zionist movement rejected the offer of Uganda, feeling not only that they did not want Uganda but that their only legitimate claim was to Palestine. For liberal Zionists also saw Zionism as a means to an ‘inner freedom’ which allowed true integration into the world without compromising one’s identity.

True integration meant that the state of the Jews was conceived not only a practical refuge for the Jewish masses, but as a way of resolving the moral imperative of leaving the ghetto, that is of fully joining with mankind, fulfilling the promise of the emancipation. Normalisation represented the antithesis of the concept of a chosen people. As the writer and Peace Now activist A.B. Yehoshua (21) argued, “the demand to be different, singular, unique, set apart from the family of nations, is a neurosis of *Galut* [the Diaspora], to be cured by Zionism.” Liberal Zionism was thus not only an attempt to escape from external persecution, but also an attempt to break down the internal obstacles, the invisible walls of the ‘new ghetto’ which were deemed to have prevented Jews from being honourable, happy, morally proper, self-respecting human beings.

As to the character of this state, they wanted to see a large measure of freedom from monetary and bureaucratic restrictions while adhering to the progressive objectives of social justice. Individual freedoms were to be protected by a constitution and religion was to be limited to the private sphere. Although liberal Zionism aspired to this kind of normalisation, it had a dual sense of mission: first to save Jews from anti-Semitism and second the more universal goal that Israel be in the ‘vanguard of human liberation’, a model liberal state at the forefront of social and technological progress, not only for self-emancipation of the Jews, but the emancipation of mankind itself (Beller: 45-61). Liberal Zionism wanted Israel to be a model of tolerance, freedom and humanity; the achievement of what the emancipation tried, and failed, to do in Europe. This was what

would define the Jewishness of the new society. As Herzl urged his fellow Jews, "...hold fast to the things that have made us great, liberality, tolerance and a love of mankind, only then is Zion truly Zion." (Rubinstein 1984: 139).

From the pre-state period until the mid 1970s liberal Zionism was of peripheral importance. Then the Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) emerged inspired by the ideas of Herzl's liberal Zionism (Rubinstein). Its primary targets were to anchor civil rights in a written constitution, to reinforce the responsibility principle in the public administration, and to incorporate the values of "good and active citizenship in a democratic society" (Barzilai 1996: 120). Although the party disintegrated by 1981, out of it grew *Shinui*, an avowedly middle class liberal party with a dovish foreign policy agenda.

#### *Growing out of mamlachtiut*

Within Mapai, Moshe Sharett, Israeli Foreign Minister 1948-55, Prime Minister 1954-5 was the most influential early representative of the progressive stream. He wavered between the idea that the Jews were cast in a biblical role as the guardian of universal values, and the idea that they were just another normal Middle Eastern people (Brecher 1972: 262). However, aside from Abba Eban, he had no real protégés. On the other hand, from out of the group which had sided with Ben Gurion on the issue of *mamlachtiut*, the *Tzi'irim* [young ones], emerged a leading Progressive of the 1980s and 1990s, Shimon Peres,. The *Tzi'irim* were known as *Bitzuistists* [doers] technocrats. They had no patience for the abstract ideological hair splitting of the older generation. They emphasised scientific development and technological expertise. In the 1950s they sharply criticised the socialist pioneering ethos symbolised by the Histadrut for its inefficiency and argued that the state should be the vanguard of pioneering. In the early 1970s, the Young Guard within Labour, which included Yossi Beilin and Chaim Ramon, proposed a move away from statist socialism to 'market socialism.' In line with changes across the progressive stream of politics in the West, they placed increased emphasis on society while de-emphasising the collective, the state and social control. At the same time another group emerged out from Labour touting a more liberal politics; the Citizens Rights Movement

(CRM). It sought to promote individual rights, feminism, the separation of religion and state and a more dovish foreign policy. At the end of the 1980s, a post-Marxist Mapam joined with Shinui and the CRM to form Meretz, a progressive party based around a dovish approach to the peace process. More importantly the ideas and policies proffered by these parties began to seep their way into the mainstream Labour Party. Since 1989, Yossi Beilin and Chaim Ramon have called for an alliance between Meretz and Labour. The party was to be based on a belief in peace, civil rights, increasing the well being of individual citizens, bridging the social gap and decreasing the size of the government bureaucracy (YA 11/10/89: 19).

There were two versions of this progressive Zionism. The first version advocated by Yossi Beilin, takes a national-liberal view. It values Zionism as a particular manifestation of a universal human right to form of collective identity. National self-determination and national identity are not only a human right but also a human necessity, not something to be transcended.<sup>11</sup> Although nationalism has been a potent destructive force in the world and in Israel, it is not seen as rotten to the core because it serves to give a sense of belonging, meaning and continuity in individual lives that is vital to the existence of any society. As such, national identity helps to combat individual anomie and provide the link between individual egoism and the ability to sacrifice for the collective good (Beilin 1997: 226-30). However, for liberals, if Zionism is to remain worthy of support it must be an authentic expression of an individual's identity and social preferences. In this vein, the continuing existence of the Jewish people is a value not for collective, mystical, objective historical or religious reasons, but because *individual* Jews feel it is an important part of their self-definition. Jewish continuity is a value because through it the individual Jew can sense their own *individual* continuity (Beilin 1997: 253). As a consequence of this valuing of national identity, they argue that Israel should retain its Jewish identity<sup>12</sup>, while guaranteeing the rights of minorities, thereby opposing the post-Zionist call for Israel to

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<sup>11</sup> According to Beilin the expansion of the state system to include many new states in Eastern Europe including the new republics of the former Yugoslavia, demonstrated the continued power of the nation-state as the organising unit of international relations (Beilin 1997: 26-7).

<sup>12</sup> Although Beilin advocates a separation between religion and state, he seeks to promote the existence of a majority Jewish culture in Israel through the strengthening of the teaching of Jewish tradition among secular Israelis (Beilin 1997: 254, 303).

become “a state *purely* of its citizens”<sup>13</sup> Finally progressivism retains a historic universal mission, expressing its Zionist, Jewish and universal values by seeking to play a role in international mediation and the promotion of liberal causes in the way that other states such as Norway and Denmark have (Beilin 1997: 226-30).

The second version of progressive Zionism prevalent in this period is the European neo-functionalism approach of Shimon Peres, which emphasises technological and socio-economic instrumental values, as opposed to Beilin’s concern with psychological issues of identity, culture and recognition. Peres’ conviction, fully shared by Ben Gurion in the days of their association, was that the nation’s future depended upon skilled manpower and the imaginative exploitation of technology, upon the ‘scientification of Israel’. In 1984, Peres told the Knesset that he aimed at bringing Israel “into the forefront of the advanced nations in the skills of science, technology, education, industry, agriculture, and tourism” (Keren 1995: 7). Indeed, from his early days as Director-General of the Ministry of Defence, Peres took a strong interest in technological development based on the mobilisation of professional knowledge as a means to overcome the external and internal forces opposing a danger to Israel. In particular through his involvement in helping to create Israel Aircraft Industries.

Like Herzl, Peres has a profound faith in science, technology and progress, arguing that they will carry the enlightenment to success. Whereas the enlightenment’s failure in the nineteenth century led Herzl and many Jews to Zionism, Peres predicts that its success this time will lead to the end of the Zionist era. As he put it, “Universalism is succeeding nationalism... Today, science has no national identity, technology no homeland, information no passport. ...National cultures and heritage must compete for man’s attention with the mind-absorbing advances of universal science.” (Peres 1995: 356).

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<sup>13</sup> Post-Zionism views the Jewish people and the Israeli people as two distinct notions. The Jewish people are understood as a religious community which was born and flourished in the Diaspora, while the Israeli/ancient Israelite nation is understood to be and have been a multi-cultural grouping defined territorially, according to those living under Israeli/Israelite jurisdiction in the land of Israel. According to post-Zionist theory, Zionism arose under the specific circumstances of Eastern European Jewry at the end of the 19th century. Zionism was not about normalising the Jewish condition but about transforming it to a new Hebrew/Israeli nation (Evron, B. 1995). On a normative level, post-Zionism sees Zionism as having been legitimate and necessary to solve the Jewish problem in Europe. However, now that anti-Semitism no longer threatens Diaspora Jewry’s survival, it argues that the state of Israel should become purely the state of its citizens, on the US model.

According to Peres the “Seventeenth Century concept of sovereignty is disappearing because economy does not know sovereignty” (Peres 1995a). He argues that self reliance cannot supply Israel's vital needs and that the “ultimate goal is the creation of a regional community of nations, with a common market and elected centralised bodies, modelled on the European community” (Peres 1993: 62). Thus:

“The social group has expanded, and today our health, welfare, and freedom can be insured only within a wider framework, on a regional or even an ultra regional basis. *One day our self-awareness and personal identity will be based on this new reality, and we will find that we have stepped outside the National arena.* Western Europe is already showing signs of this... In the Middle East... people are not yet ready to accept an ultra national identity. (Peres 1993: 81, 98)

This progressive vision does not accept the divorce between Israel and the Jewish people or seek to curtail the right of any Jew to immigrate to Israel. It seeks to protect the Jewish majority in the state and hence its Jewish/Zionist character, nonetheless, it aspires to post-Zionism in at least one sense. For a key element in post-Zionist thinking is that the era of the nation-state is over. As Evron explains, “The absolutely sovereign nation state, a phenomenon of the post-renaissance era, has outlasted its usefulness and is slowly being phased out from the advanced areas of the world. A revision to separatist nationalism in the age of the new expenses technologies, the multinational corporations, and the new capital structures is inconceivable (Evron 1995: 92).” Shimon Peres, especially in his book The New Middle East, but also earlier (Peres and Eshed 258), exemplifies this approach.

## Chapter 3: Political Culture into Foreign Policy, the nexus: Israeli attitudes to the Palestinian Question and the United States

*Hawks and doves are divided over much more than boundaries and territories. They disagree about the very purpose and character of a Jewish state... the philosophical significance of Jewish history. Whereas the hawks are convinced that the Jews are liable to some mysterious primeval curse, the doves maintain that there is no such mystical verdict and that there is a correlation between Israel's actions and the Arab and world response.* Amos Oz (1994: 5)

This chapter examines the connection between each sub-culture, its beliefs and values presented in the previous chapter, and their respective attitudes and approach towards the Palestinian question and relations with the United States.

### Introduction

In the early years of Zionism there was a general blindness to the existence of a Palestinian question. Most of the early Zionist pioneers put Arab opposition to Zionism down to either violent gangs of criminals or the class based opposition of the Arab land owners. However, after a series of major Arab riots against Jewish immigration particularly in 1929 and 1936, the Yishuv as a whole came to recognise the existence of nationalist based opposition to Zionism among the Arabs of Palestine (Gorny 1987). Subsequently, the Yishuv armed itself and the majority led by the Labour movement accepted the partition of Palestine between an Arab and a Jewish state as a solution to the problem, while a minority led by the Revisionists opposed partition. In the event the Arab states and Palestinian leaders rejected the 1947 UN partition plan, as a result of which the 1948 War of Independence was fought. The war resulted in a more generous partition for Israel than that envisaged by the UN and the partition was between Israel and Jordan rather than between Israel and the Palestinians. Between 1948-67 the Palestinian movement was subsumed within Arab nationalism and was under the control of the Arab states. For Israel, the Palestinian question had become a question of the *fedayeen*, Palestinian refugees who carried out attacks on Israeli border settlements.

In 1967 when Israel captured the rest of mandatory Palestine- 'the territories', in the Six Day War, the Palestinian question was again transformed. From the Israeli point of view the question became whether to agree to pursue peace in exchange for partition or whether to carry out the more maximalist version of Zionism. A related question for those who sought some form of compromise was the identity of any future negotiating partner. From 1948 until 1974 both Israel and the international community looked to Jordan to fulfill this role. As far as Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir was concerned the Palestinians did not exist (Sunday Times June 15 1969) and the majority of Israelis concurred. However, after the Arab League summit in 1974 recognised the PLO as the 'sole legitimate representative' of the Palestinian people, the question arose as to who to turn to for negotiations: Jordan, the PLO or the Palestinian Arabs of the territories. In any case, from 1967 onwards the Palestinian question gradually assumed greater prominence in Israeli politics. Following the peace with Egypt and the withdrawal from Sinai completed in 1982, it moved to the top of the foreign policy agenda.

Zionism had always looked to at least one great power to help it secure its primary objectives. After the Second World War the United States replaced Britain in this role and Zionist lobbying of Congress and President Truman was crucial in obtaining American and hence United Nations backing for the creation of the state of Israel. Following independence, Israel looked to the United States as a potential ally. However, the United States refused to supply Israel with weapons until the 1960s and it was not until the Jordan crisis in 1970 that the strategic relationship that Israel had sought, began to reach fruition. At the same time American political support was becoming increasingly indispensable to balance Soviet backing of the Arab states. During the War of Attrition Israel not only needed US military supplies to match the Soviet resupply of the Arab states but also sought a US deterrent against direct attack from the USSR. The US became Israel's only major arms supplier. After the 1973 War, Israel's military budget soared and it became increasingly dependent on US aid to pay for these weapons. In addition, in the wake of the Arab oil embargo, Israel became increasingly isolated and thus diplomatically reliant on the US. Subsequently, the United States took the leading role in mediating the ceasefire agreements between Israel, Egypt and Syria. Under Carter, the United States expanded its mediating role and succeeded in brokering peace between Israel and Egypt.

As a result of both sets of negotiations American aid to Israel rose to approximately \$3 billion a year. This level of aid has been maintained since then. The United States also became involved in the Palestinian question. In 1975 in a secret annex to the Sinai II agreement, the Israelis managed to secure Kissinger's assent that the United States would not negotiate with the PLO unless it recognised Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism. In the 1979 Camp David agreements, Carter succeeded in getting Menachem Begin to agree to a five year interim period of autonomy for the Palestinians in the territories [Judea, Samaria and Gaza], the terms of which were to be negotiated and then followed by final status negotiations.

By 1981, Israel's relations with the United States and the Palestinian question had become entwined at the top of its foreign policy agenda. The question was how to deal with this issue. Most Israelis agreed that all of the territory captured in 1967 formed part of the land of Israel to which the Jewish people have a historical right. But the question remained as to whether the territories represented an absolute core value, an instrumental strategic value or just a bargaining chip for peace? Related to this question were others: did the Palestinians also have a claim to the Land and if so, was it equally valid? Similarly, virtually all Israelis agreed that Israel benefited from the support of the United States. The question was in what form should Israel seek to elicit American support? How reliant should it allow itself to become and at what price? These questions were answered in different ways by the different sub-cultures identified in the last chapter. All of these sub-cultures produced elite groups that were heavily involved in the formation of Israeli policy 1981-96. Below, each of their approaches to relations with the United States and the Palestinian Question are explored.

### **The Conservatives, the Palestinian Question and the US**

#### **The Conservative Decision Makers**

The leading figure among this grouping was Moshe Arens. Arens had a life long association with Revisionist Zionism beginning with his links to *Betar*. He was Israeli Ambassador to Washington 1981-3, Minister of Defence 1983-4, 1990-92. During the

national unity government (NUG) 1984-90, he was a key player in foreign policy, especially as Foreign Minister 1988-90. Most<sup>1</sup> of the younger conservatives in the Likud, such as Dan Meridor, Salai Meridor, Binyamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu and Roni Milo were known as 'the princes' as their parents were members of the 'fighting family' of Revisionist Zionism. Although they were not of crucial importance in determining policy between 1984-92 they did play a role both as advisors and go-betweens for Shamir and as the public face of Likud foreign policy in America. After 1988, Dan Meridor, previously Cabinet secretary to Begin, and Ehud Olmert were quite close to Shamir and were important figures in the mechanics of the US-Israeli relationship regarding the peace process; while Salai Meridor and Netanyahu were in the Foreign Ministry and more associated with Moshe Arens.

Zalman Shoval was a Likud MK who was important as Ambassador to the US 1990-92, while Eli Rubinstein was Cabinet Secretary 1985-1992 and chief Israeli negotiator with Jordanian-Palestinian delegation at Madrid 1991-93. Neither of these two figures had any independent power base, although both were crucial components in Israel's relationship with the United States regarding the Palestinian question during this period. Both Shoval and Rubinstein were former associates of Moshe Dayan. David Levy was an important member of the Cabinet from 1981-92 and as Foreign Minister 1990-92. He was an active participant in the relationship with the US over the Palestinian Question though he was always on the outside of the major decision-making groups. He became a member of the Likud, not because of any strong ideological commitment to Revisionist Zionist ideology, but primarily as a reaction against the way the Labour party treated Sephardim and Oriental Jews.

### *The Palestinian Question*

Jabotinsky was one of the first to recognise the reality of a specifically Palestinian Arab nationalism (Brenner: 74). He argued that, "They [the Arabs] look upon Palestine with the same instinctive love and true fervour that any Aztec looked upon Mexico, or any Sioux

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<sup>1</sup> One 'Prince' Zev 'Benny' Begin was closer to the neo-Revisionism of his father, while Ehud Olmert who was not formally a 'Prince' nonetheless belongs to this conservative grouping.

looked upon his prairie". Therefore Jabotinsky argued that even if the Zionists were able to convince the Arabs of Baghdad and Mecca that Palestine was a territory of marginal significance, "Palestine will still remain for the Palestinians not a backwater, but their birthplace, the centre and basis of their own national existence" (Peleg: 8). Consequently, he accepted that the land of Israel would always be the home of two nations (Evron: 148). Dayan too recognised the existence of a Palestinian people (Bar Zohar: 208) and used to talk openly to Palestinian-Arab nationalists including the Fatah people, much to the aggravation of the Israeli public.

Nonetheless, the Palestinian Arabs were to have no national, the state was to be purely an expression of Hebrew sovereignty. Indeed this was the underlying message within Jabotinsky comparison of Palestinian national sentiment and the national sentiment of the Aztecs and the Sioux. The point was that the mere existence of ethno-nationalist sentiment was not a sufficient moral reason for the creation of another nation state. After all neither the Aztecs, the Sioux or for that matter the Basques in Spain had their own state. The Jews on the other hand, had an excellent case for sovereignty. Not only did they possess an ancient national identity but they were also part of the a higher Western culture that did not incorporate the above mentioned ethnic groups. Moreover, given the objectively desperate situation of European Jewry before 1948 and the profusion of Arab states, Jabotinsky viewed the Jewish claim to the land of Israel as objectively superior to that of the Palestinian Arabs. Contemporary conservatives continue to understand Israel in the same manner. Thus, Dan Meridor asserted that, in essence, the Jews had a superior right to the land than the Palestinians, whose right derived purely from their residency in the land (Frankel 248). For conservatives, Israel is primarily the expression of Jewish nationalism, the state of all the Jewish people, a state which remains of crucial significance to Jewish survival worldwide (Simon: 129).

However the conservatives sought to reconcile these convictions with their belief in liberal-democracy, this was to be achieved through the idea of autonomy. Jabotinsky made a distinction between national self-determination and sovereign nationality (Shavit: 258). The national minority would have a right to regional self-rule in religious and cultural matters, as well as the right to unite on a country-wide basis to safeguard its

rights and organise its education, the provision of health services, employment and internal taxation. The Arabs in a Hebrew state would also be granted full civil rights. The state would have two national parliaments and a rotation of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister between Jewish and Arab representatives (Sofer: 131-4). Nonetheless, Jabotinsky thought that the constitution would be in effect Jewish, "for the entire spirit of the constitution directing the lives of the citizens, with the exception of the narrow framework of schools, religion, family and philanthropy, the entire social regime of the state, their kind of social struggle that is fought with in it... All of these, as well as the very rhythm of life, will bear the fundamental imprint of the independent Jewish society" (Shavit: 260)<sup>2</sup>.

After 1967, the then Chief-of-Staff Moshe Dayan essentially adopted a similar approach, which allowed for maximum co-existence and freedom within a conflict situation. The Palestinians from the West Bank were allowed to run their own affairs and maintain connections with the Arab world while Israel maintained control over security. After 1977 the Likud officially adopted the general idea of autonomy as a basis for the solution of the Palestinian question. The Arab population of the territories were supposed to be given the option of becoming Israeli citizens or retaining their Jordanian citizenship and staying in the territories (Simon: 100, 106). Dayan opposed annexation of the West Bank, looking instead to a 'functional compromise' in which Jordan was to be Israel's partner. Following the Camp David Accords, the Likud effectively accepted Dayan's position. At the time, it represented the best means available, given the balance of power, to reconcile the maintenance of a Jewish state, liberal-democracy and the value of the whole land of Israel.

Opposition to partition had formed one of the main pillars of the conservative approach to the Palestinian Question and hence the conservatives were opposed to territorial concessions by Israel in the territories after 1967. But, like Jabotinsky, they based their

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<sup>2</sup> Jabotinsky completely opposed the idea of expelling the Arab population, although he did not oppose voluntary transfer. One of the reasons he advocated a Jewish state on both banks of the Jordan was so that there would be room to incorporate the Jews of Europe without having to displace the Arabs in western Palestine (Shavit: 262). As to the question of how Jewish supremacy was to be maintained in this relatively open and liberal political system Jabotinsky posited that Jewish immigration would solve the problem by

opposition not simply on Jewish historical rights but to a great extent on statist security considerations which flowed from a Realist reading of international relations (Simon: 101-06; Netanyahu 1993: 154-60; Shapiro 1991: 138). Consequently, after the Intifada, the Gulf War and the end of the cold war, when the state of the demographic balance and the balance of power demanded it, the conservatives were reluctantly prepared to move beyond the traditional model of autonomy as an interim solution (Arens 1995: 278). For Arens, "the borders of the League of Nations mandate over Palestine...were not sacrosanct" (Arens 1995: 210). Both Arens and Milo favoured a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Gaza (Arens 1995: 209, 268; Avnery 1993:11). In fact, Dayan had already contemplated an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza during the Camp David negotiations. Such proposals were a clear indication that the existential value of the whole land of Israel was not of singular primary importance to them. Indeed, to the conservatives, the existence of 'red lines' on security matters was more important than exactly who or what replaced Israel in the West Bank (Arens interview). Nonetheless, they still wanted to maintain control over as much of the land as possible. Hence, they continued to advocate settlements, albeit limited to blocks away from dense concentrations of Arab population (Arens interview). Again, this represented the best way to reconcile the maintenance of a Jewish state, liberal-democracy and the value of the whole land of Israel. Ultimately, the conservatives also envisaged Jordan as being part of the solution, particularly in Jerusalem (Gold 1995). There would be some sort of Israel-Jordanian-Palestinian condominium in the West Bank, involving partial territorial concessions, rather than a fully fledged Palestinian state (Arens 1989; Dan Meridor 1991; Salai Meridor interview; WJW 19 November 1991, 30 January 1992:9).

### *The Palestinian Question, instrumental values and strategy*

From the earliest times, unlike most of the early Zionists, Jabotinsky did not expect the Arabs to welcome Zionism as the bearers of modernity and civilisation. "There is no precedent in history", he observed, "for a native population accepting a colonial project by foreigners" (Peleg: 8). Given this fact, Jabotinsky advocated an 'Iron Wall'. Zionism

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creating a permanent Jewish majority (Rael Isaac 1981: 11). The difference between Herut after 1948 and Jabotinsky was that the former sought to integrate the Arabs into Israel.

had to be resolute until the Arabs recognised the reality of a Jewish state. This would only occur when the Arabs accepted they were unable to destroy Israel. Military deterrence was the mechanism by which Jabotinsky sought to achieve this goal. Dayan applied Jabotinsky's analysis to the post 1967 situation. He expected that his generation and some others to come were destined to live without peace and that therefore if Israel wanted to continue to exist, it would have to do so in contradiction to the Arab will (Bar On 1996: 40) His followers continued to adhere to the old Labour concept from the early years of the state *ein brairah* [No Choice] which dictated an 'Iron Wall' strategy based on military deterrence.

However, the peace with Egypt moderated this approach. A pure 'Iron Wall' was relevant to a Hobbesian state of nature, however, conservatism posited that once the strategy succeeded, Israel would find 'its place among the nations' and no longer be a people that dwelt alone. Arens explained that such a situation had began to be brought about through the peace with Egypt. In such an environment limited concessions were legitimate and even necessary(Arens 1995: 223). Subsequently, Arens supported the Israeli withdrawal from the disputed enclave of Taba (Arens 1995: 234). Nonetheless, in the absence of a deeper acceptance of Israel by the Arab world, Arens and the conservatives continued to see the Arab-Israeli conflict primarily through the prism of the Iron Wall, (Simon: 4; Netanyahu). But, building on their underlying perception that the world and the Arabs were not endemically hostile to Zionism and Jews, and influenced by the optimistic Republican ethos in the US, they argued that while the Iron Wall would bring a balance of power peace, true peace would come about through the Westernisation and democratisation of the Arab world (Simon 152; Netanyahu). In the absence of this genuine peace and given the gap between the maximum concessions they were prepared to envisage and the minimal concessions that the Palestinians were prepared to accept on final status issues, the conservatives envisaged only the possibility of coming to an interim agreement with the Palestinians (Olmert, Arens interviews).

#### *The role of relations with the United States*

Like Jabotinsky, the conservatives felt a part of the West. Some looked to Western Europe as a political model, where the state is more closely linked with a particular

dominant culture (Meridor interviews) but many of them looked to the US as a political model (Arens interview; JR 14 February 1991: 10; 27 July 1991: 16; Netanyahu: 121). However, such thinking was only a minor consideration in their conception of the American role in Israeli foreign policy.

Given Zionist weakness before 1948, the role of Britain, the great power, in Jabotinsky's strategy was to help bolster Zionism in the face of Arab opposition, a crucial component to the Iron Wall. Due to Israel's increased reliance on the US after 1973, the Israeli conservatives saw the US in the same light. They understood Israel as being besieged by undemocratic, totalitarian, intolerant regimes (Arens 34), but the idea that this was due to endemic anti-Semitism particular to the Jews was rejected. As Netanyahu wrote, "Israel must resist the... immature conception of the Israeli right that nothing we will say or do will make a difference to an implacably hostile world" (Netanyahu: 395). The Arab-Israeli conflict had to be viewed in balance of power terms (Dore Gold interview). Israel had to act in the international arena as any normal state (Arens, Dan Meridor interviews). Central to this concept was a belief in the need to use military force to maintain Israel's deterrence capability. In this spirit, they attached great importance to the advances in US-Israeli strategic co-operation that happened in the 1980s. As Arens asserted, " the first objective of Israel's defence policy is to attain the kind of posture that will deter aggression. There is little question that the US-Israeli relationship is a very important part of that posture... It is important that a country such as Syria... see strategic co-operation between the United States and Israel. They will then see clearly the consequences, both from Israel and her allies, of planning an attack on Israel" (Simon: 152).

In the conservative mind, America and Israel could co-operate as equal allies based on the common components in their national interest which consisted of opposition to the Soviet Union and its radical Arab allies in the Middle East. They were reluctant to recognise the reality of the lopsided nature of the relationship, as it infringed on their self image and the core values of *hadar* and self-reliance. As a consequence of these values, conservatism was more inclined than *mamlachtiut* to favour the use of military power for purposes of deterrence, in instances when there was likely to be a political price in terms of relations with the US. For example, once the Gulf war was drawing to a close and it was clear that

Israeli involvement would not have detrimental affects on the American led war against Iraq, Arens favoured a retaliatory strike against Iraq irrespective of America's opposing wishes (Arens 205-10). Similarly, the conservative preference for 'self reliance' and the Revisionist value of *hadar* expressed through the symbols of Israeli power, was evident in their unflinching support for the Lavi fighter project, a project Yitzhak Rabin and the *mamlachti'im* [statists] opposed, for pragmatic reasons (Zackheim).

With regard to the American role in the peace process, the conservatives argued that the United States as Israel's ally, should back the Israeli position whatever. Nonetheless, when this did not happen, they were not quick to abandon the US and endanger relations with Israel's strongest ally by adopting an unfettered policy of 'self reliance' based on retaliation, as the radicals wanted. Israel deterrence posture was greatly strengthened by its association with the United States and this had to be taken into account. They recognised that the policy positions of the United States were of great significance in the peace process and that Israel could not simply ignore the United States and act unilaterally. Self reliance had to be tempered by the instrumental values of realism. Thus, after the announcement of the Reagan plan in 1982, which was a clear indication of US opposition to the Likud agenda on the Palestinian question, Arens suggested to Begin that Israel should at least agree to a 3 month settlement freeze in order to sustain Israel's credibility in Washington; a suggestion Begin and the radicals utterly rejected (Blitzer 58).

Given the conservative's recognition that the US opposed their conception of an acceptable compromise in the territories, they tended to want to minimise the role of the Americans on the Palestinian track of the peace process to that of facilitator only (Dan Meridor 1991). Moreover, following Jabotinsky's line of thought, they were quick to exploit the instrumental value of public opinion in a liberal-democracy to their cause. They promoted Israel as a sister democracy sharing a biblical and democratic heritage, one that was fighting the same enemies as the US (Dan Meridor interview; Shindler 1995: 215-224). Like Jabotinsky before them, they were effectively arguing for Israel as a cultural and strategic outpost of the West. As Netanyahu explained, "we tried to put the (Israeli) relationship with America into a larger context... i.e. the threat of the Soviet

Union or radical Soviet regimes in the Middle East. When we did this the West Bank and Gaza took on a much smaller perspective" (Friedman 1990: 485).

### **Radicalism, the United States and the Palestinian Question**

#### **The Radical Decision Makers**

The most important radicals members of the policy making elite were Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Ariel Sharon, Raful Eitan and Yossi Ben Aharon. Begin was the leader of the Revisionist youth movement *Betar* in Poland during the 1930s, the head of the Irgun and Likud Prime Minister 1977-83. Shamir's formative years were spent in Lechi. He became Likud Foreign Minister in 1981 and was Prime Minister 1983-4, 1986-92. Sharon was brought up in a household sympathetic to Revisionist ideas but was not an original member of Herut. He is closest to the Labour activist tradition with Zionism. He was Minister of Defence 1981-3 and Minister of Housing 1990-92. Raful Eitan was also a Labour activist and was head of the far right party; Tzomet. He was Chief-of-Staff during the Lebanon War. Yossi Ben Aharon was a top aide to Shamir. From 1986 onwards he was Head of the Prime Minister's office and was heavily involved in the direction and execution of policy relating to the peace process between 1989-92. As a religious nationalist, Ben Aharon believed firmly in the 'whole land of Israel' as a central existential value. He viewed the Arabs as essentially fanatical and treacherous. Indeed, his view of Israel fitted closely the paradigm: 'Israel are a people that dwelt alone' (Frankel: 126; JR 20 December 1990: 8-15).

For all the radicals, the concept of Zionist normalisation and the idea that it had been achieved in 1948 with the foundation of the state of Israel, was anathema. The Zionist mission was an ongoing mission to ingather all the Jews to Israel and settle the whole land of Israel (Frankel: 39). As Shamir explained on his last day in office:

"We will not exist for long if we become *just another country* that is dedicated to the welfare of its residents... The Jewish state cannot exist without a unique ideological content." (Frankel: 330)

In this vain both he and Sharon bemoaned the increased materialism and lack of idealism

in Israeli society, which they argued was detrimental to the cause of Zionism which required self sacrifice and toughness (Shamir interview; Sharon: 531)

### *The Palestinian Question*

To the radicals, the land of Israel was a core existential value. As Begin declared to a group of settlers in 1981, "I, Menachem, do solemnly swear that as long as I serve the nation as Prime Minister we will not leave any part of Judea, Samaria, the Gaza strip." (Sofer: 127). Similarly, Shamir's commitment to the land of Israel was brought home by his refusal to countenance the conservatives call for a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, on the grounds that it was part of the land of Israel (Arens 1995: 21, 209 294). However, neither Begin or Shamir were overly impressed by the strategic-instrumental value of territory captured by Israel in 1967. Thus, Begin felt able to return the whole of the Sinai peninsula to Egypt in return for peace, while Shamir hinted to Baker (Baker: 424) and stated explicitly to David Kimche (interview) that he would be prepared to withdraw from the Golan in exchange for a peace treaty with Syria.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, radicals from the Labour activist tradition, while advocating the retention of the West Bank because it was the "core of historic land of Israel, the cradle of the Jewish people" (Sharon: 359), were primarily concerned with the security value of the territories based on their inherent endemic pessimism as to the chances of peace for the Jewish people. As Sharon explained, "I cannot see any political agreement that can put a stop to terror, therefore Israel must retain security control here (in Judea and Samaria). Everything starts from that" (Sharon: 551-2).

The absolute commitment to the retention of the core areas of the land of Israel captured in 1967 i.e. Judea, Samaria [West Bank] and Gaza, provides one of the key factors defining the radical approach to the Palestinian question. By adhering to territorial maximalism, the radical camp ruled out the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question based on territorial compromise. Their moral particularism emphasised the particular historical right of the Jewish people to the land of Israel over and above the universal juridical right. As a result, to them there were no occupied

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<sup>3</sup> See also Rabinovitch (1998: 63-4).

territories, only liberated territory. The 1947 UN Partition Plan and the subsequent partition of Palestine in 1949 had no legitimacy in their eyes (Sofer 137). This contributed to the tendency on the radical right to refuse to accept the existence of an authentic Palestinian nationalism (Shavit: 266). Begin and Labour activists like Yisrael Galili were able to recognise the existence of Arab nationalism in general, but not the existence of a specific Palestinian nationalism (Sofer 125; Bar On 1996: 39).<sup>4</sup> For Begin and his followers, the Munich Myth helped to explain this situation. Just as Hitler used the 'right' of Sudet Germans to self-determination as a cover to hide his real intention of destroying Czechoslovakia, so the Arab world used the Palestinian question as a cover to hide their real intention to destroy Israel (Peleg: 58-9).

Moreover, to the radicals the conflict with the so called Palestinian national movement was not about land but about the struggle for existence (Shamir: 182; Shavit 248). To them, a genuine peace was an impossibility because, in Shamir's immortal words, "the Arabs are the Arabs, the Jews are the Jews, and the sea is the sea." (Bar Zohar: 125). Because they saw Israel as the key to Jewish survival in the shadow of the Holocaust, they presented the PLO as a modern day SS and the Palestinian National Covenant as an up to date version of Mein Kampf. "Since the days of the Nazis," asserted Begin, "there has not arisen a organisation as barbaric and anti-human as the PLO" (Sofer: 131).

Nonetheless, at least formally, the radicals within the Likud were committed to autonomy for the 'Arab residents' of the territories. Begin accepted that individual Arabs in the territories had civil rights. However, his view of autonomy was far more limited than Jabotinsky's. It applied only to autonomy for people and ruled out Arab control over land. Sharon's autonomy plan further constrained self-rule by limiting Arab control to detached cantons which covered less than half the area of the West Bank (Sharon: 259). Moreover, in practise, Begin hardly showed enthusiasm for implementing autonomy. He was not concerned when talks over autonomy with Egypt broke down, while Shamir abstained in the Knesset vote over Camp David. For some among the radicals the solution was not autonomy but the 'voluntary transfer' of the Palestinians from the territories, an idea

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<sup>4</sup> Sharon acknowledged the separate national identity of the Palestinians on both banks of the Jordan river (FBIS 9 April 1976). Indeed, on occasion Begin expressed anger at both Shamir and Sharon for admitting

favoured by the radical Revisionists from the late 1930s onward (Shavit: 267). In the 1980s and 1990s, the transfer solution was primarily associated with Rehavam Zeevi and Meir Kahane though it was popular among all sections of the radical right. Michael Dekel, a Likud MK and a confidant of Shamir, made a declaration in favour of the idea, as did Yuval Neeman the head of Techiya and the NRP's Yosef Shapira (Sprinsak 175; Shindler 1989: 53-55). Their fundamental disbelief in the possibility of peace coupled with moral particularism permitted the radicals to ignore the common rules of the international system<sup>5</sup>.

### **Two Radical Approaches to Policy**

Within the radical camp there were essentially two approaches as to how to deal with the Palestinian Question and for that matter, the relationship with the US. The first approach represented by Begin, Sharon, Yossi Ben Aharon and Raful Eitan within the policy making elite was radical in both the style and substance of its policy. The parties of the radical right also supported this approach, usually with greater fervour and consistency than the policy makers themselves. The second approach identified with Yitzhak Shamir was radical in substance but pragmatic in style.

### **The Radicalism of Style and Substance**

This approach sought to incorporate the whole land of Israel to the state of Israel: the radicalism of substance. It also sought to achieve that aim through the mechanisms it valued for existential reasons such as *hadar*, self-reliance, the military offensive and settlement activity throughout the whole land of Israel: the radicalism of style.

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the existence of the Palestinian people (Sofer: 30).

<sup>5</sup> Instead some radicals looked to justification in what they understood as Judaism's own system of morality. Yisrael Eldad, radical Revisionist and Techiya member, looked to the Bible as a guide for nationalist and militant values and rejected any moral scruples in the conquest of the land, which he saw as a moral be mandated by the Bible. Since an opponent existed that interfered with the fulfilment of the divine command, the Arab population of Israel, this opponent had to be viewed as an enemy which would have to be dealt with as the Canaanites of old by Joshua, meaning that they would have to be either subjugated or eliminated (Shavit: 157-8). Most figures in Gush Emunim saw Arab rights in terms of the *Halachic* [Jewish religious legal] concept of *Ger Toshav*, which allowed for civil, but not political, rights. Others like former Chief Rabbi Goren argued that the Arabs did not even have these rights (Sprinsak: 122).

Radical Revisionism split with conservative Revisionism in 1938 over the use of force as an instrumental value. While Jabotinsky advocated Zionism backed by force encapsulated in the *Betar* slogan "I will lift my sword only in defence", Begin advocated military Zionism and proposed adding to the slogan the phrase "of my people and the conquest of my homeland" (Shapiro: 58). The radicals' idealism, their belief in the power of the collective will, drove them to assert that military force could be used not just for survival purposes or deterrence but for Clausewitzian goals: *Machtpolitik*. Herut ideology justified the extensive use of military initiatives in order to redeem the whole land of Israel (Barzilai 1996: 30). Their 'event mentality' led them to believe that military activism was a key instrumental value relevant to foreign policy. Sharon shared this Revisionist romanticism regarding the use of military force as an instrumental value. One commentator referred to him as the 'Napoleon Bonaparte of Israel' (JR 9 May 1991: 10-13); a masterful military tactician, a 'realist' on the tactical level, but an idealistic on the strategic level.

Another reason for their preference for a 'military' solution to the Palestinian problem was the refusal to accept the legitimacy the Palestinian national movement's political claim and the fear that the movement represented a 'Nazi type threat' to Jewish existence. As Sharon explained, "With the Lebanese nothing ever comes to an end... but with the Jews it can come to an end, a bitter end" (Friedman 1990: 128). Begin justified the Israeli bombardment of West Beirut by explaining, "If in World War Two Hitler had taken shelter in some apartment along with a score of innocent civilians, nobody would have had any complaints about destroying the apartment even if it had endangered the lives of the innocent as well (NYT 20 September 1982). The radicals were determined that the Jews should *never again* be the powerless passive victims going like lambs to the slaughter. By way of contrast, the daring frontal military assault of Sharon, as leader of Unit 101 that carried out retaliatory raids in response to *fedayeen* attacks, represented the approach of the 'New Jew'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In 1971 Sharon demonstrated his belief that military force was the best method of dealing with terror attacks when between July and December 1971 his forces staked out the Gaza Strip killing 742 suspected terrorists and reducing terror raids from over 30 a month to 1 a month (Benziman).

To Gush Emunim and Labour activism, settlement in the whole land of Israel, even in areas of high Palestinian population density, represented the classic existential and instrumental values of Zionism. To Labour activists like Sharon, settlement was "Zionism's true banner"<sup>7</sup> (FBIS 6 April 1976). While the Revisionists had always laid more emphasis on military activity and rhetoric, they came to appreciate very quickly after 1967 the value of the settlement plan formulated by Sharon and the Gush, which was designed to create 'facts on the ground' that would rule out any possibility of a territorial compromise. The combination of military power and settlement represented the key instrumental values for radicalism, as Sharon explained, "In the precarious and violent world, Jewish existence can not be left to trust or paper agreements. Survival depends not on faith in someone else's goodwill, but on facts, actually building the land and defending it" (Sharon: 210).

#### *The Role of Relations with the United States*

The radicals understood the global environment as particularly harsh for the Jewish people, the result of endemic anti-Semitism, a defining feature of Israel's existence as a people that dwelt alone. "We", Sharon declared, "the people of Israel, are a small and isolated people against the entire world." (Chomsky: 31). To Begin the Holocaust was the most potent symbol of this reality, after all, "the good offices of the West had not been used to save them [the Jews] from Hitler's ovens." (Rowland: 5). Indeed, for Begin and the radicals, the Holocaust was explained precisely by an over reliance on outside powers and an inability to act forcefully and independently. As he declared:

"Our scourge was the defencelessness of the Jewish people. And that defencelessness which became helplessness was the real provocation... A cruel man is a coward. If he sees no resistance... then he doesn't have any limits" (Rowland: 60).

Self reliance and military force were the only answer. Thus, explaining the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, he declared, "there won't ever be another Holocaust in history again. Never again, never again!" (NYT 10 June 1981:1). As with the Holocaust symbol, so with the particularists central myth, Munich; the lesson was self-reliance. For

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<sup>7</sup> Sharon saw the ideal group of Israelis as the religious pioneers of Gush Emunim, fiercely patriotic, prepared to make material sacrifices for a vision and strongly nationalistic (Sharon: 534).

Begin there was simply "no guarantee that can guarantee a guarantee!" (Sofer: 65). Begin's political maturity had been reached just after the Munich Conference in 1938 when the radical Revisionists broke with Jabotinsky because of his continued preference for entente with Britain (Peleg: 18). In place of reliance on outside powers, they postulated military self-reliance, political independence, greater unilateralism in the realm of foreign policy, combined with a more defiant overall approach to the world.

Subsequently, these values characterised the radical approach to relations with the US.<sup>8</sup> The radicals were concerned that reliance on the US would damage the self image of Israelis as being capable of defending themselves and that in turn this would weaken Israel's deterrence posture vis-a-vis the Arabs (Sharon: 345). They feared the 'Vietnamisation of Israel' and becoming an American "protectorate." (JR 7 August 1997: 19). Such fears were evident after the US suspended the recently signed Memorandum of Strategic Understanding (MoU) in response to the radicals unilateral extension of Israeli law to the Golan in 1981. Then Begin's response to this action had been to tell US Ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis, "We have no reason to get on our knees... Are we a vassal state, are we a banana republic?!" (Lewis 1988: 236). Similarly, Begin told the Knesset "the people of Israel have lived for 3700 years without a strategic memorandum with America and will continue to live without it for another 3700 years" (Melman and Raviv 1994: 209). Certainly, the radicals wanted Israel to retain American support, but not at the price of a free hand. Outside powers such as the US were always of secondary importance to Israel's ability to act directly with force. Maintaining good relations with the United States was not worth sacrificing for Israel's tactical room for manoeuvre on the battlefield, let alone its political objectives. So for example, during the 1970 Jordan crisis, Sharon had advocated using force to help the PLO overthrow King Hussein and set up a Palestinian state there, despite the fact that by aiding King Hussein who was an American ally, Israel greatly enhanced its own standing in the US (Sharon 246, 356-7).

What went for US-Israeli relations in general, went for US-Israeli relations over the Palestinian question too. For Begin, the myth of Munich was dominant in explaining the

need to stand firm and act independently with regard to territorial concessions and pressure from even a 'friendly' government as he opined in response to American Secretary of State Rogers, 1970 peace plan, "What is Munich?... There stand a cruel aggressor... Pretending to seek peace and threatening a war of attrition, a bloody war, if his wishes are not fulfilled. In the face of this aggressor, the friend of the small state and even its allies who are committed to its defence tell it: surrender, save peace, give up part of your territory" (Sofer: 123). Consequently, Begin did not try and co-ordinate positions with the US in the peace process. As he declared after meeting President Carter for the first time in 1978, "we acted in accordance with a new strategy... we did not try and reach agreement with the US on the critical issues of the peace negotiations" (Sofer: 121).

Despite a seeming willingness to go it alone, Begin and Sharon felt that they could retain American support and even equal status as an ally, and still maintain a free hand to act on issues of vital interest such as the Palestinian Question. The romanticism of the right suggested that Israel could, as an act of will, get what it wanted from United States through the forceful presentation of its case (Sofer: 130) or through the presentation of a military fait accompli. Intoxicated with the belief that he had the 'truth in his back pocket', Begin was certain he could convince America of the rightness of their ideological cause. Accordingly, on coming to power Begin announced, "President Carter knows the Bible, that will make it easier for him to know whose land this is" (Sofer: 150). In addition, Begin argued, even in the early 1960s, that Israel could be a strategic asset to the US, if it demonstrated its power and usefulness. Although this was a widespread view across the Israeli establishment, the radicals' idealism led them to overestimate the importance of Israel to the US and underestimate the importance of the US to Israel<sup>10</sup>. As Begin put it after the 1973 war, "citizens of America ask not what your country has done for Israel, asked what Israel has done for your country" (Sofer: 146). In return for services rendered to the US as an ally, the radicals assumed that the US would agree not to

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<sup>8</sup> Gush Emunim was also extremely opposed to the intervention of the United States in the peace process, both because the US favoured territorial compromise and because compromising with Washington was seen to detract from the spirit of the nation (Aviad 1991: 209).

<sup>9</sup> Comment by Ezer Weizmann, Minister of Defence in Begin's first government (Silver: 186).

<sup>10</sup> For example, when Begin initially turned down an American offer of grants to compensate Israel for the loss of its airfields in Sinai. Instead he asks for loans, which he considered the more honourable independent course. However, once his advisors had explained to him the enormous cost of his suggestion Begin was forced to review his suggestion (Schoenbaum).

interfere in Israel's vital interests; which meant a free hand regarding the Palestinian Question.

### **Radicalism of Substance, Pragmatism of Style**

For Shamir, peace was not the most important objective of policy, far more important was the fulfilment of the Zionism as he saw it, by ingathering all the Jews to Israel, the settlement of the whole land of Israel (interview) and its eventual incorporation into the state of Israel. Although Shamir greatly valued ideology he also greatly valued pragmatism and was critical of both Abraham Stern's and Begin's excessive concern with ideological rhetoric at the expense of coming to grips with applying their ideology as best as possible, given the circumstances (Shamir: 30). In this vein, he expressed admiration for Mao and Lenin as ruthlessly pragmatic ideologues (JP 7 April 1992). Unlike Begin and Jabotinsky, he lacked a belief in liberal values and was not as concerned as Begin was that things were done according to legal procedures (Shamir: 80). His only concern was whether the action served the ideological purpose(Shamir interview).

Shamir recognised the political utility of force. It was a necessity given the inability of the Jews to rely on anyone but themselves to survive; it was also part of the Zionist revolution, necessary in order to transform the historic weakness of the Jewish condition. Yet, he did not value the use of force to the extent that others on the right, such as Sharon, did. He did not believe that military might alone could decisively secure Israeli interests. Indeed, he was concerned to keep Sharon's rather reckless maverick approach away from the Defence Ministry (Arens 24). He recognised that often the excessive use of force hindered advancement towards Likud goals. In this context, he was reportedly unhappy with the Lebanon War (Shindler 1995: 172; Dan Meridor interview). Shamir thought that the use of force had to be subjugated to political prudence, no matter how radical the objective. Consequently, in his eyes, while the heart of the Jewish underground which attacked Arab mayors in the mid 1980s, was in the right place, their actions did not serve their purpose. Shamir told them, "I love you with all my heart and I have expressed it, but I also know your mistakes. The history of the people of Israel is full of examples. The

best people with the best intentions have sometimes harmed, out of miscalculation, their own ambitions" (International Herald Tribune 1 February 1985).

For Shamir the territorial status quo was favourable, so there was nothing to be gained in warfare, the use of force would not advance the overall ideological goal in concrete political terms. In Shamir's long-run scheme, a large immigration from the Soviet Union and eventually even from the West (Shamir interview) would enable Israel to obtain permanent control of the territories. However, Shamir thought that this objective would probably not be possible in his own life time. Consequently, his objective was merely to take advantage of whatever opportunities presented themselves and at the very least, "hand over the banner to the next generation without a change in the situation" (HA 2 February 1989: 33). On this basis he had opposed the Camp David Accords and was extremely reluctant about any concessions to the Palestinians including schemes put forward by loyalists who worked with him such as Dan Meridor and Ehud Olmert (interviews). The main thrust of the long-term strategy to incorporate the land of Israel into the state of Israel focused on settlement activity. For Shamir, unlike for the early Labour Zionists, settlement was not an existential value in its own right. Rather, as Michael Dekel, Shamir's advisor on settlements, explained, "Shamir's settlement policy was designed to prevent the possibility of territorial compromise by denying the Palestinians territorial contiguity and instead creating islands of autonomy as in the Sharon Plan" (JP 28 July 1992:1). Shamir's diplomatic strategy towards the Palestinian question, was simply to protect the settlement programme and prevent any erosion in Israel's position which could undermine its control of the territories. Ultimately, what determined Shamir's diplomatic tactics was a calculation as to whether a particular move enhanced or reduced the possibility of success for the achievement of the Likud's overall objectives through the settlement strategy. One of the major factors for Shamir in this calculation was the attitude of the United States.

#### *The Role of Relations with the United States*

Shamir had no intrinsic admiration for the US. In his early years he expressed praise for the Soviet political system (Shindler 1995: 183). Later, Shamir came to appreciate

Shultz's special concern for Israel and he was particularly touched by sincere efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Indeed he even referred to the Americans as "the best *goyim* [Gentiles] in the world" (interview). But these acts were seen as exceptions. Shamir shared with the radical Revisionists a conception of the world as an inherently hostile place. Shamir himself referred to the American Secretary of State, James Baker as, "a new hangman for the Jewish people" (Arens 1995: 60) and remarked, "We have plenty of 'friends' in the world who would like to see us dead, wounded, trampled, suppressed-and then it is possible to pity the wretched Jew. When Jews are killed in this country does the United Nations discuss it? It has never yet happened" (Friedman 1990: 449).

Shamir recognised that the United States supported Israel because of common strategic interests in the Middle East (JP 17 April 1992). Nonetheless, he gave the impression that he did not think that US-Israeli strategic agreements had much value vis-a-vis the 'Soviet threat' to Israel (Shamir interview). Far more meaningful, was the symbolic value of close bilateral ties afforded by the US-Israeli Strategic Memoranda in deterring the Arabs from attacking Israel. As he explained, "... Arab aggressive intentions towards Israel begin to surface as soon as they see cracks or breaches in the wall of friendship between Israel and the United States. If one can characterise the 1980s in the Middle East as years of a certain measure of moderation, at least as far as tactics are concerned, it is because this period was characterised by strong progress in the friendship and co-operation between the two countries. It is only natural, therefore, that the Arabs convince themselves that the United States is backing Israel, and the liquidation of Israel is an absurd notion" Shamir feared that, '...giving emphasis to any distancing between Israel and the United States almost automatically generates dangerous tension in the Middle East for Israel' (JP 5 May 1990). Consequently, Shamir was always cautious about opening a breach in US-Israeli relations.

This was not the only reason that Shamir was cautious about opening a breach in American-Israeli relations. Shamir recognised that the United States was the most pivotal international actor as regards the peace process. Like Begin, Shamir was concerned with maintaining Israel's independence. In order to protect it, Shamir forbade discussion of tying the Shekel to the Dollar in 1983-4 (Schiff 1987/8: 7). But unlike Begin, Shamir

accepted that the ultimate American position on the future of the territories did not conform to the particularist vision. For this reason Shamir always sought to minimise any American mediatory role in the peace process, especially regarding the Palestinian question. Ultimately, Shamir believed that Israel could maintain control of the territories without an open breach with the US because the balance of interest, both domestically and internationally, on that particular issue lay with Israel (Shamir interview). Therefore, he reasoned that so long as Israel did not cause too much commotion, it could quietly get on with the business of Jewish settlement (Frankel: 38-9).

In order to achieve this, it was necessary to try and keep the United States from actively opposing his long-term plan for the territories. It was important that Israel should not be seen as the cause for a breakdown in the peace process in American eyes (HA 11 October 1989: 9). In that event, the Likud's public relations position: that Israel needed territory for security reasons, would be severely weakened. Subsequently, processes could be set in motion which could impair Israel's ability to hold on to the territories, by damaging the crucial domestic balance of interest in the US, between Israel's supporters in Congress and the executive which was more resolute in its support for 'land for peace.' Consequently, although Shamir had originally opposed the Camp David Accords, once they were adopted he accepted them pragmatically as the Likud negotiating stance. Throughout most of the 1980s, as far as Shamir was concerned, such a stance had the advantage of keeping Israel on reasonable terms with the United States, without threatening real concessions, as no Arab party appeared willing to negotiate on that basis.

### **Mamlachtiut, the Palestinian Question and the United States**

*Mamlachtiut* implied a conception of a normal state that interacts like any state, promoting its survival over all other values and interests. As Ben Gurion proclaimed:

"There is nothing more important, more precious and more sacred than the security of the state." If all the great ideals of the world are placed on one side of the scale and Israel's security on the other, I would choose without any hesitation the security of Israel." (Liebman and Don Yehi 1983: 86).

As a result of this security emphasis there developed an elite group of army officers who attained high positions within the Labour Party especially regarding the formulation of foreign policy. Among these were: Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister 1974-7, 1992-5, Minister of Defence 1984-90, 1992-95, Ambassador to the US 1968-72, and Chief-of-Staff 1964-68, and his political allies within Labour, such as, Motta Gur another former Chief-of-Staff and deputy Defence Minister 1992-4, Brigadier-Generals 'Fuad' Ben-Eliezer and Efraim Sneh Minister of Health 1992-6, both of who had been military governor of the territories during the 1980s, Major-General Ori Orr and Ehud Barak, Chief-of-Staff 1991-4, Foreign Minister 1995-6 and leader of the Labour party 1996-. They were all products of Labour Zionism, *mamlachtiut* and Israel's professional military elite, disciplines of Ben Gurion and Yigal Allon. By far the most influential and important of these figures was Rabin, the first Israeli Prime Minister to be born in the land of Israel. Rabin, following *mamlachti* doctrine, saw the primary purpose of the state of Israel was to normalise the position of the Jewish people by providing them peace and most importantly security in their own state. Indeed, Rabin became known in Israel as 'Mr Security'.

### *Partition and the Palestinians*

*Mamlachtiut* was differentiated from particularism by its consistent acceptance of the partition of the land of Israel as part of the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Ben Gurion recognised a spiritual-ideological element to Zionism which valued the whole land of Israel, but this was only minor consideration in the formation of foreign policy. Rather, *mamlachtiut* accepted partition for two main reasons:

- 1) The threat to the core value of *mamlachtiut*, the maintenance of a democratic state with a Jewish majority, posed by the incorporation of the Palestinian population of the territories into the state of Israel. This was the reason Ben Gurion gave for not taking the opportunity to conquer the West Bank during the War of Independence (Bar Zohar: 18-21).
- 2) The constraints of the balance of power, as understood primarily in terms of the

military and political power of states. Thus, in 1958, when Israel assisted in helping prevent a Nasserite take-over in Jordan, Ben Gurion resisted the desire of two Chiefs of Staff (Dayan and Laskov) to take over the West Bank. He preferred a weak Arab state on the eastern border to a strong state and the West Bank, following the disintegration of Jordan (Sandler: 114).

Considerations of security and demography overruled considerations of history.

Consequently, after 1967 when Israel captured the Golan Heights, the Sinai, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Ben Gurion and the Labour party were generally prepared to exchange the vast majority of the territory captured in return for peace (Schoenbaum: 160). The unofficial map of the Labour party regarding territorial compromise 1967-93 was the Allon Plan (Allon 1976). The most distinctive element of the plan was the proposal for a security zone along the Jordan river and the western shores of the Dead Sea. These two regions of the West Bank were not densely populated by Arabs and they constituted a natural barrier between Jordan and Israel. In exchange for a peace treaty with Jordan, Israel would return most of the West Bank and the Gaza strip to Jordan. The plan thus reconciled the desire that Israel remain a Jewish and democratic state. It also demonstrated the value Labour attached to territory, perceiving Jerusalem as a existential value<sup>11</sup>, but the rest of the West Bank in instrumental strategic terms. As Allon explained, “If I endorse compromise it is for realistic politics and humanistic Zionism. A territorial compromise is designed to promote self defence borders from the strategic perspective and the prominent Jewish features of the state from the national perspective” (Yishai 1991). As a disciple of Allon, Rabin continued to favour a territorial compromise on the West Bank which would leave the Jordan valley as Israel's security border if not as its sovereign political border (Divrei HaKnesset 18 October 1982: 41; HA 21 April 1989; Medzini 1993: 112-4). He was also prepared for a territorial compromise even if this involved the abandonment of Jewish settlements established after 1967 (Slater 232).

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<sup>11</sup> Thus while Ben Gurion favoured returning the territories after 1967, he advocated mass Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem (Gilbert: 300).

### *Palestinians and Jordanians*

Despite a refusal to accept Palestinian nationalism as equally valid in moral terms to Zionism, by at least 1929 Ben Gurion had recognised the reality of a particular Palestinian national movement (Teveth 1985: 80-83, 170). However, despite this recognition and the acceptance of partition as a cornerstone of policy, *mamlachtiut* was unclear about whether to partition the land between Israel and a Palestinian entity or between Israel and Jordan. As with the question of partition itself, the *mamlachti* attitude was determined primarily by pragmatic balance of power considerations. This led to a flexible attitude towards the question of Palestinian representation and statehood. In December 1948 prominent Labour leaders, notably Prime Minister Ben Gurion and Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, had favoured an independent Palestinian state over the annexation of the Arab parts of mandatory Palestine to Trans-Jordan for statist geo-strategic reasons. In Ben Gurion's words: "An Arab state in Western Palestine is less dangerous than a state that is tied to Trans-Jordan, and tomorrow, probably to Iraq"<sup>12</sup>. However, after the War of Independence, Israel would have been very content to sign a peace treaty with Jordan which effectively recognised its control over the West Bank, thereby forestalling the possibility of a Palestinian state<sup>13</sup>.

Immediately following the Six Day War, the dilemma re-emerged and once again statist balance of power considerations determined attitudes. Members of the Cabinet including Yigal Allon, Levi Eshkol and Rabin spoke favourably about an intermediate period of autonomy followed by the setting up of an independent Arab state with United Nations representation in an enclave surrounded by Israeli territory. It would have an independent foreign policy, but be connected to Israel economically and by a mutual defence pact (Pedatzur: 271-8). Subsequently, the Cabinet allowed for many meetings with Palestinian notables to discuss these ideas. But according to then military governor of the territories, Chaim Herzog, it was unclear as to whether their loyalties lay primarily with Jordan or with some sort of Palestinian entity. There was also reluctance to come to an agreement with Israel, without a parallel deal being done with the Arab states (Avineri 1971). Subsequently, (Kimche: 239-249; HA 2 November 1997) Prime Minister Levi Eshkol

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<sup>12</sup> Ben Gurion, *Yoman HaMilchmah [War Diary]*, Vol III, 18 December 1948: 885, cited in (Karsh 1997).

<sup>13</sup> For the debate on this subject see Shlaim (1990) and Karsh (1997).

ignored the tentative proposals of Palestinian leaders who were ready to negotiate with Israel. Instead, following the statist bias inherent in *mamlachtiut*, they insisted on negotiating only with sovereign nations.

The Israeli elite had good pragmatic statist strategic reasons for favouring Jordan over the Palestinian alternative, which, by the early 1970s, was the PLO. First, Jordan had considerable support among the residents of the territories up until the Intifada. The two countries shared a threat from radical Pan-Arabism and in practise the Zionists consistently found that the Jordanian state was more reliable and less of an ideological and irredentist threat than the Palestinian national movement. In contrast, the PLO showed no signs of accepting the legitimacy of the state of Israel, it carried out terrorist activities and was rife with internal dissent. This made it difficult to see how the PLO could deliver peace even if it had desired it. Moreover, the PLO represented primarily the Palestinian diaspora, the refugees of 1948 and while some Israelis sought to exchange land for peace on the basis of the results of the 1967 war, few Israelis thought it at all advantageous to open up questions relating to the right of return for Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war. Such a move would flood the Jewish state with Arab refugees and thus threaten its existence. For these reasons Rabin and the *mamlachti'im* opposed negotiating directly with the PLO until 1993 (Medzini 1993: 120-1, 163; WP 4 June 1985; Aronson: 319).

#### *The Palestinian Question: Instrumental Values and Strategy*

By at least 1955, Ben Gurion had concluded that the Arabs had not reconciled themselves to Israel's permanent existence (Teveth 1985: 198-9). The Arab states were perceived as holding the strategic desire to wipe out the state of Israel, and hence any agreement could have only been of a tactical nature. Israel was in a state of siege. Subsequently, Labour adopted a Hobbesian view of the international environment, summed up in Rabin's description of Israel as involved in a continual 'dormant war' (Horowitz 1993: 11). Its central concept was that of, *ein brairah*, that Israel had 'No Choice' but to pursue a foreign policy based around the use of military force for the purpose of deterrence. Military force was perceived as having very limited political utility. As Israel was incapable of imposing on the Arab states by military force its political goal of peace and recognition. For despite

its short-run military superiority, Israel was at a long-term strategic disadvantage to its enemies, being inferior in terms of physical size, population and material resources (Sandler 1993: 119). Hence war could not have a political purpose in the Clausewitzian sense (Barzilai 1996: 23). As a direct outcome of this thinking, from the early 1950s onwards Israeli policy was guided by the attitude that, due to implacable Arab hostility, Israel had to stand firm and demonstrate to the Arabs through military action that it was here to stay, in the hope that through this the Arabs might become reconciled to its existence. In the short-term Israel opted for a policy of deterrence.

However, support for the deterrence strategy was not fixed but contingent, flexible both tactically and strategically. Thus in the later 1930s, for tactical reasons, Ben Gurion and Labour had favoured a policy of self restraint, *havlagah*, over a retaliatory policy in order to try and maintain the support of the great powers for Zionism (Teveth 1985: 76-9). Proponents of *mamlachtiut* preferred to picture the Arab-Israeli conflict as a conflict of interest, such as those that flared up not infrequently among sovereign states, rather than yet another battle in the all out war between Jews and Gentiles (Don Yehiya 1993: 146). Thus, Ben Gurion never thought the Arab masses were intrinsically warlike and always asserted that ultimately the conflict could only be decided politically, even if in the short to medium term only force could really make a difference (Karsh 1997: 57). Accordingly, in the long-run Ben Gurion argued, "we should not place our trust on force alone. we should seek a way for [reaching] an understanding with the Arabs" (Karsh 1997: 199). This attitude led to a major change in policy strategy towards the Palestinian Question after 1967.

After the Six Day War, both Ben Gurion and Rabin reckoned that force could be used, not only for purposes of deterrence but also, to soften Arab hostility through a 'diplomacy of violence'. As part of this strategy, Israel would use the territories as a bargaining chip in exchange for a full contractual peace, security guarantees and normalisation (Auerbach). The degree to which the adherents of *mamlachtiut* perceived their Arab counterparts as willing to accept 'land for peace' in a strategic rather than a tactical sense (Harkabi 1988: 57-61) combined with the conduciveness of the international and regional environment to such a peace, established the degree to which the *mamlachti'im* determined the

instrumental-strategic value of most of the territory they captured in 1967. Thus, the majority of the Labour party voted in favour of the Camp David Accords, despite the cession of the Rafiah salient in Gaza which had previously been central to the Allon Plan. As Rabin explained:

“There is a difference between military options and political strategic assessment and policy. The more you have of the Golan Heights the better. The question is how much can you compromise to achieve peace” (JP 5 September 1994: 5).

“For me peace is a more important value for the future of Israel's security than one group of settlements or another...Let's put things once and for all in the context of the new reality of a great and strong country. This is not the eve of the War of Independence when every settlement was vital” (JP 27 January 1995: 1).

This willingness for compromise did not carry equal weight at all times and on all fronts. The representatives of *mamlachtiut* were always more concerned with the diplomatic priorities dictated by the immediate exegesis of the balance of power between Israel and the Arab states, than with the essence of the Palestinian question itself. Thus, following the Yom Kippur War, rather than deal with Jordan over the West Bank, Rabin preferred instead to concentrate on disengagement agreements with the Arab states who posed the greatest military-strategic threats to Israel, Syria and Egypt. Coming from this perspective, prior to the Intifada, Rabin was not an active proponent of the need for an immediate diplomatic initiative regarding the Palestinian question. Although Rabin spoke about the national aspects of Palestinian identity, recognising it as a component of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in general he persisted in the belief that the conflict was primarily between the Arab states and Israel and not between the Jewish people and the Palestinian nation (Divrei HaKnesset 21 October 1985: 75).

#### *The Role of Relations with the United States*

After independence Mapai had sought non-alignment. But despite being avowedly socialist, generally Mapai felt a greater kinship with the liberal West than the communist East and even feared Communist infiltration (Bialer: 278). Rabin, in particular, had a

great admiration for the United States, its political system and, despite his origins within the Labour movement, the vibrancy of America's free market economy (Slater: 428; Horowitz: 140-144). However, images of America were of peripheral importance in policy attitudes. Rather, it was the statist security requirements of Israeli policy that drew it seek a strategic association (Sandler: 111) with the US. It was clear that only the West could provide Israel with the economic and military aid which the state needed. Hence, as the state of siege solidified and the cold war globalised, Israel tilted to the West.

Yet Ben Gurion and his followers were reluctant to pursue too close a relationship with the United States. *Mamlachtiut* taught that all states had to be self reliant. Hence, the doctrine of self reliance took precedence over an American guarantee as this would have meant curtailing Israel's military freedom of manoeuvre (Bialer: 268). Thus, Rabin, who did most to strengthen US-Israeli relations in the 1970s, always argued against a defence pact with the United States (Schiff 1987/8: 5; HA 3 December 1995: A1). However, unilateral deterrence was not at the core of *mamlachtiut*'s approach to the US. It attached great importance to US approval for its major military actions. They knew Israel needed American understanding, if their military operations were to be successful in political terms (Barzilai 1996: 106). This was especially the case after 1967 due to Israel's increased dependence on the US. Hence, they were particularly careful to obtain at least minimal US acceptance of Israeli military action in 1967 and 1973 (Schoenbaum: 210). While in 1982, Rabin supported the thrust into Southern Lebanon until he felt that its continuation was causing great damage to US-Israeli relations (JP 10 November 1995: 6).

Given the change in circumstances after 1973, the *mamlachti* reading of the balance of power dictated a smaller role for Israeli military initiative and a larger role for the association with the United States. Subsequently, according to Joseph Sisco, former Under Secretary of State, "For Rabin, the survival of Israel was inextricably linked to the United States" (Horowitz: 47). The US strengthened Israel's ability to deter a major conflict through the supply of the arms and technology necessary for the maintenance of Israel's 'qualitative edge'. The existence of a close political relationship provided Israel with a kind of 'extended deterrence'. According to this concept, Israel's enemies, including the Soviet Union, would be deterred from attempting to destroy Israel by virtue of the fact

that they would not want to come into conflict with the United States at the same time. Rabin advocated a closer strategic relationship with the US by tying Israel's existence to America's national interest and its prestige, thereby ensuring its support for Israel. Rabin recognised that the institutionalisation of the process of strategic co-operation could develop a rationale of its own that would secure a continued American commitment to Israel's security. Even if the US wished to go back on co-operation, there would be a great risk of undermining both deterrence in the region and American credibility to its allies and commitments (Puschel: 26-7). Rabin succeeded in moving from tactical to strategic co-operation with the US by institutionalising routine consultations and a strategic dialogue (Schiff 1987/8: 5).

After the Yom Kippur War, Rabin was relatively quick to recognise that new realities meant that Israel could no longer obtain the benefits of a burgeoning relationship with the US without paying a political price. Thus, in conversation with Kissinger on the disengagement treaties with Egypt and Syria, Rabin accepted that, in future, the US would make friends in the Arab World, but in return he explained that Israel would expect compensation (Slater: 172). Subsequently, unlike Begin in 1981, Rabin, who was unconcerned with issues of *hadar*, was against using the pro-Israel lobby to prevent the supply of AWACS to Saudi Arabia, preferring instead compensation in the form of military hardware for Israel (Melman and Raviv 1994: 103, 192-3). This approach had the advantage of enhancing Israel's qualitative edge without threatening its closeness with the US executive.

#### *Relations with the US, the Peace Process and the Palestinian question*

“The central line of Rabin's foreign policy is co-ordination with Washington and acceptance of the American position on every issue that does not effect the security of Israel directly” (MM 26 January 1996)

Traditionally *mamlachtiut* had been keen to prevent the possibility of a superpower imposed solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. For this, Israel needed to avoid dependence on the US (Inbar 1996a: 11). While sticking to this objective and generally opposing the

introduction of American positions into the negotiations, after the Sinai II agreement, Rabin came to accept and even began to view positively a US role in the peace process. Moreover, Rabin advocated the intertwining and co-ordination of US-Israeli positions, as a means of strengthening the Israeli bargaining position. He recognised that US policy on the Palestinian question could be as important to Israeli security as its military deployment on the West Bank (FBIS 13 March 1989: 30). The relationship with the US was a political-strategic tool to demonstrate to the Arabs that they had no military option to resolve the conflict and hence it was worth their while to negotiate peace. Consequently, he generally favoured co-ordinating strategy on the peace process with Washington. For example in 1975 one of the secret annexes of the Memorandum of Understanding between Israel and the United States, dictated that the US would not open negotiations with the PLO so long as that organisation refused to accept Israel's right to exist and continued to practise terrorism.

Moreover, Rabin did not believe that the peace process could succeed without a major US role (JP 12 March 1993). Only the US could offer the necessary inducements to compensate the parties to the conflict, to counter-balance the risks of pursuing peace (Inbar 1996: 12). Hence, Rabin was looking to further institutionalise the strategic relationship with the US (JP 24 July 1992) in return for Israeli territorial concessions. Basically, the US was to compensate Israel for doing something which it wanted to do for existential value reasons, to preserve the Jewish and democratic character of the state; but only felt it could do, in terms of the balance of power, with compensation from the US. Efraim Sneh even went so far as to suggest that for Rabin the actual peace negotiations were of little value unless this co-ordination was in place (JP 8 July 1992: 1). The *mamlachti'im* also recognised the value of the US as mediator/facilitator reassuring the Arab side, keeping them in the peace process, sounding them out on ideas that might be more acceptable coming from an American mediator rather than the Israelis themselves. This was particularly the case on the Syrian track of the peace process 1992-96. Yet despite this enhanced role for the US in *mamlachti* policy, ultimately the foundations of *mamlachtiut* remained the same; co-operation did not imply regional integration or reliance on a great power guarantee. Thus in April 1993 speaking publicly about the Holocaust, Rabin asked, "What will we learn from it? We will learn to believe in a better

world. But most important, we will not trust in others any longer, generous as they maybe: only us, only ourselves. We will protect ourselves" (Arian 1995: 175). The recognition of that 'better world' by the adherents of the *mamlachtiut* paradigm, led them to believe that their goal of normalisation was within reach, if Israel could successfully adapt to that better world. But such opportunities were understood to be built ultimately on the bedrock of independent Israeli state power.

### **The Progressives, the United States and the Palestinian Question**

*The peace movement in Israel is an expression of the universalistic aspects of Judaism*  
Amos Oz (1994: 69)

Shimon Peres is associated with technocratic tradition of the young followers of Ben Gurion. Indeed Peres himself was often referred to as 'the arch technocrat' (Brecher 326, 344). Apart from being Director-General of the Defence Ministry in the 1950s and Defence Minister in the 1970s, he was Head of the Labour party 1977-91, Prime Minister 1984-86, 1995-6, Foreign Minister 1986-8, 1992-5 and Finance Minister 1988-90. Like one of the founding fathers of the European functionalism he adopted, David Mitrany, and his mentor Ben Gurion, Peres gathered around himself young, highly educated and cosmopolitan technocrats. These aides worked closely with professionals, scientists and heads of universities. "A knowledge-power nexus was formed, comprised of formal and informal contacts centred mainly in the Prime Minister's Office" (Keren 1995: 8). Michael Keren views them as representatives of Israel's professional knowledge elite, who took over the reigns of power from Labour party apparatchiks in the 1980s (Keren 1995: 8-23). At the core of this group were "the Blazers": Yossi Beilin, Nimrod Novik, Avi Gill and Uri Savir. Novik was a particularly important advisor and political fixer for Peres 1984-90, co-ordinating relations with Egypt and the US, often without reference to the Foreign Ministry and its officials while Labour was part of the NUG (Keren 1995: 67). After gaining a doctorate in the US and working at an influential think tank, Novik had strong connection with the policy elite in Washington (Bar Zohar: 131). Uri Savir,

who became Director-General of the Foreign Ministry in 1992, was a key figure in the Oslo talks (JP 17 November 1995: 9). Of the Blazers, Beilin was the most important. He was a founder of the *Mashov* faction in Labour, served as Head of the Prime Minister's Office 1984-86 and then followed Peres to the Foreign Ministry and the Finance Ministry before becoming a minister in his own right after 1992. While Beilin was a publicly active member of the Labour party, the others were career professionals who had no power base independent of Peres. Their vision was of an economically successful society to be built on Western models based on the achievements of science and universalist ethics. Finally, sharing the general ethos of this group without formally being a part of their decision making activities was Ezer Weizman and his advisor Avraham Tamir. Weizman had been Head of the Israeli airforce, then joined the Likud becoming Minister of Defence under Begin, before switching to Labour following his conversion to a dovish approach in the wake of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. They favoured talks with the PLO in 1985 and met PLO officials unofficially. For all of them the era of Zionist constructivism was over; politics was primarily about promoting Israel's interests in a normal manner.

The progressives argued that if Israel wished to retain its Jewish and democratic character, it must make territorial concessions, or else the higher birth-rate among the Arab population of the territories would mean, in the long-run, that Israel will be forced to choose between these two values (Peres 1980: 891). Neither did they wish to rule over another people (JP 7 August 1992). To them, the value of the whole Land of Israel was unimportant in both existential and instrumental terms. Within this progressive stream of Israeli political culture there were two different approaches to the Palestinian question. The first approach was associated primarily with Shimon Peres, the second with Yossi Beilin and the Blazers. The second approach also had the support of Peace Now and the small parties of the Zionist left, but it was Peres and Beilin who were most influential in policy. The main difference between Beilin and Peres was the former's belief in the mid-1980s that only the PLO and a Palestinian state could deliver peace and that the diplomatic sphere, rather than the functional sphere, was the place to start. However, as regards the role of the United States in the Palestinian question, the progressive stream was united in its approach.

## **The Traditional Doves: Yossi Beilin, and the Palestinian Question**

*The Six Day War was a military success but a moral disaster. Amos Elon (186)*

The traditionally progressive Zionist elements had always been most sensitive to Palestinian self-determination. Prior to 1948, Hashomer Hatzair had favoured a binational state, while after the War of Independence, Sharett lamented, “We were so filled with the sense of the historical justice of our claim that we did not consider how this justice looks from the other side... Nor did we realise the depth of the nationalist consciousness in the Arab world. We offered the Arabs economic advantages and social progress with total disregard of the national question and expected them to sell their national birthright.” (Brecher 1972: 285). Similarly, after the Six Day War, because of their universal understanding of nationalism, the progressive stream was quickest to recognise the existence of a Palestinian nation. Thus by 1974, Mapam, and the progressives in the Labour party such as Lova Eliav (Oz 1987: 205; Bar On 1996: 47) and Yossi Beilin, recognised a Palestinian right to self-determination and advocated negotiations with the PLO under certain conditions (Yishai: 144). Beilin and his supporters in Labour and Meretz saw the resolution of Palestinian question premised, first and foremost, on the recognition by Israel of a Palestinian right to self-determination and the recognition by the Palestinians of a parallel Israeli right. Consequently, their address for peace negotiations was the Palestinians and the PLO and not in the first instance Jordan. They proposed a demilitarised Palestinian State, preferably but not necessarily in confederation with Jordan (Beilin 1997: 232).

Progressive Zionists have been particularly concerned with the abuse of individual human rights that has resulted from the Israeli occupation since 1967. They perceive such abuses as wrong in themselves and believe that, as a result of continued abuses, the democratic character of Israel itself could be threatened<sup>14</sup> (JR 29 December 1994: 12-17); hence they favour withdrawal. More fundamentally, for them the right of self-determination is universal and thus the Jewish claim to the land is no more or less legitimate than the Palestinian claim. Since self-determination is the main collective political value of progressive Zionism, Palestinian self-determination is understood as a higher value than

control of the whole land of Israel. Land is viewed as merely an instrumental value necessary for the actualisation of self-determination. In contrast, previously mainstream Labour Zionism had recognised the Palestinian problem as of a practical demographic nature for Israel and not in terms of universal rights. As Amos Oz (1994: 69) stated:

“The conflict between Israel and Palestine is a tragic collision between right and right... A Zionism which asks for a part of the land is morally justified; a Zionism which asks the Palestinians to renounce their identity and give up the whole land is not justified...All these considerations lead me to accept the moral (and not merely pragmatic) rightness of partitioning the land between two nations”.

Thus, the existential values of progressive Zionism tend towards support for an Israeli withdrawal and the creation of a Palestinian state.

Moreover, the main goal of the universal stream of Israeli political culture is normalisation and the progressive stream believe that normalisation is only possible through the achievement of peace, and peace is only possible through the resolution of the Palestinian problem. On this view, the political question of recognition associated with the Palestinian Question and not the balance of power between Israel and the Arab states was at the centre of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Avneri 1971: 60). Recognition was seen as a central policy tool, on the basis that it can satisfy the legitimate appetite of a nation for self-determination. Since non-recognition is assumed to be among the main sources of international conflict, it follows that removing it will bring peace. Political stability resulting from a comprehensive peace settlement will reinforce security in the region and the promotion of economic prosperity and interdependence will, it is thought, ensure a common interest in maintaining a lasting peace (Chazan: 66).

Given Palestinian self-determination and mutual recognition, Beilin argued that it would not be so difficult to resolve the core final status issues of refugees, Jerusalem, and borders as people commonly made out. Regarding borders, land was only minimally conceived of as an instrumental value let alone as an existential value. Thus Beilin did not even envisage an Israeli presence in the Jordan valley as crucial to Israeli security in the

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<sup>14</sup> As Director-General of the Foreign Ministry Uri Savir set up a Human Rights division.

long-term (JP 22 October 1993: 3; 25 November 1993). Indeed the value of territory to Israel in existential or instrumental terms in Beilin's eyes was so limited that for the sake of a stable peace based on universal liberal nationalist principles, he was prepared to cede sovereign Israeli territory next to the Gaza strip in order to provide the future Palestinian state with room to develop (Beilin 1997: 232).

Beilin recognised that tension and dangers would remain after the creation of a Palestinian state but, in line with the progressive ethos, he looked to a co-operative multi-lateral security framework in order to deal with these problems. Beilin's lack of emphasis on the Holocaust allowed him to by-pass the mainstream Israeli 'lesson' of the Holocaust-self reliance- and instead advocate the multi-lateral security model of ASEAN as the solution to Israel's security problems. In the model, Israel served as the parallel to Australia; a country with an essentially Western culture co-operating and integrating economically and strategically in a region of non-Western powers (Beilin 1997: 25). Beilin believed that if the Palestinian problem was resolved in this manner, then the Arab-Israeli conflict would have effectively ended allowing Israel to concentrate on domestic problems (Inbar 1996: 46). What was required was an Israeli peace initiative, aimed at the Palestinians, designed to bring about this state of affairs. Given the lack of contact between the two sides and the mutual demonisation, Peace Now and Beilin began by pioneering meetings between mainstream Israelis and Palestinians in an effort to facilitate mutual recognition.

### **Peres and the Palestinian Question**

Peres supported the idea of a functional compromise on the West Bank. In part, his support stemmed from his association with Moshe Dayan, one of Peres political allies from his days with Ben Gurion in the Rafi party. The difference between Dayan's version of a functional compromise and Peres', was that while for Dayan a functional compromise was the final status solution, for Peres it was part interim solution, part tool towards building the possibility of a negotiated final status agreement and peace, as well as, part of a final status solution itself. Peres vision of the potential for functional co-operation as a foundation for peace also stemmed from his adherence to the progressive

European vision of neo-functionalism espoused by Jean Monet. According to Peres, the reason Western Europe has been so peaceful since 1945 was that peace was not made dependent simply on military arrangements and border delineation but on the institutionalisation of economic and social co-operation (Peres and Eshed 258). Building peace in the Middle East meant following that European example.

Peres neo-functionalism rationale was particularly apparent in his approach to the Palestinian question. In the 1970s, Peres preferred a functional compromise with Jordan rather than an territorial compromise. He argued that a straight separation without economic integration and open borders would only increase radicalism in the West Bank (Peres and Eshed: 258). In one outline of his ideas, Peres saw this as involving a three tier system of government including three regional parliaments in the territories and a Jordanian-Israeli condominium in the West Bank on issues of defence and currency, possibly involving joint Israeli-Jordanian units on the Franco-German model (Elazar 1984). Later on Peres compared the future situation between Israel, the Palestinians and Jordan to the Benelux model (Peres 1993: 173). As far as Gaza was concerned, Peres wanted it to follow the rapid economic development model of Singapore and Hong Kong. He suggested to Egypt the unilateral implementation of self-administration there, even under Egyptian sovereignty (MECS 1985: 64).

Within this model Peres generally saw the Palestinians expressing their political rights within some sort of Jordanian federation. Still, he accepted, even in the 1970s, that a genuine lasting peace in the Middle East was impossible without a resolution to the Palestinian problem (Peres and Eshed: 226). Peres acknowledged the legitimacy of Palestinian national aspirations (Divrei HaKnesset 12 March 1979: 1837; 6 March 1980: 2202), however, he did not favour the foundation of an independent Palestinian state in the territories for one fundamental, and two transient reasons.

First, Peres initially supported the Jordanian option because until 1974 Jordan, and not the Palestinians, was recognised internationally as the address for negotiations on the future of the West Bank. Even after 1974, Jordan retained significant political influence in the West Bank. In any case Peres argued that the connection between Jordan and the

Palestinians was not only political but ethnic and historic to the point where it was difficult to talk of a separate Palestinian nation. The fact that the Palestinians in the territories had always proven incapable of providing their own independent leadership and that neither Jordan nor Syria recognised the legitimacy of a separate Palestinian nation-state, strengthened Peres argument in his own mind (Peres and Eshed: 281).

Second, Peres supported the Jordanian option because the alternative to Jordan was the PLO. The PLO was extremist both in its objectives and in its terrorist methods and in any case was incapable, given its internal structure, of making and keeping a meaningful agreement with Israel (Peres 1980). Still unlike Begin, Peres criticised the PLO for its lack of realism and pragmatism rather than their inherent moral deficiencies. This difference was significant as it left open the door for future PLO involvement in the talks, should the PLO accept Israel's right to exist and demonstrate a propensity to deliver peace. Thus even while ruling out negotiations with the PLO, Peres accepted that in the highly unlikely event that the PLO recognised the existence of Israel, abandoned terrorism, and declared its readiness for peaceful negotiations, it would have to be accepted as a legitimate negotiating partner (JP 7 October 1983).

However, the fundamental reason for Peres' opposition to a Palestinian state was his neo-functionalism. After World War One the European states had tried and failed to prevent war by allowing for national self-determination and rectifying the borders of various states including Germany. The failure of this scheme to prevent a general war, contrasted clearly in Peres' mind with the success of the post World War Two European structures (Divrei HaKnesset 30 October 1967: 159; FBIS 5 April 1977). Learning from the European experience, Peres argued that peace in the Middle East was dependent on raising the level of economic, social and technological development in the region (Peres and Eshed 219) through increased integration including a regional security framework (Peres 1993: 76).<sup>15</sup> This approach led to a distinction between national self-expression and territorial sovereignty. Thus, even after he negotiated the Oslo Accords with the PLO, Peres retained his belief in a neo-functionalism approach to the future status of the West

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<sup>15</sup> Avraham Tamir, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry and Prime Minister's Office under Peres, also subscribed to this vision see (WINER 1988).

Bank. Although the Oslo Accords opened the way for an independent Palestinian state, in Peres' conception this seemed to apply primarily to Gaza, while the West Bank was to retain a stronger link with Jordan and Israel for the final status (HA 15 December 1995: B3; WP 28 May 1995: C2). Indeed, one of the reasons he opposed a document of understanding on final status issues reached between his protégé Yossi Beilin and Abu Ala, was precisely because it envisioned the creation of a Palestinian state without strong enough ties to Jordan (MM 22 February 1996).

To Peres, speedy progress towards this goal was essential and as such required Israeli initiatives<sup>16</sup>. War was no longer a rational instrument of policy<sup>17</sup>. First, because in the modern world, economic prosperity was primarily achieved through trade and technological development, as opposed to conquest. Second, in any case the threat of mutual assured destruction, through the escalation of any military conflict into a nuclear confrontation, made war irrational and détente a necessity. In the case of the Middle East, Peres argued that the Arab states would come to the realisation, due to their failure in past wars and Israel's enhanced deterrence capability, that they could not achieve their maximalist goals vis a vis 'the Zionist entity'. Moreover, the economic cost of maintaining such a military posture was high and came at the expense of socio-economic development, a fact which would, in Peres' opinion, present political problems for Arab regimes from the disgruntled masses. For these reasons, Peres thought peace would become a rational interest for Arab regimes. Nonetheless, without a peace initiative Peres thought that a terrible war could still breakout for 'irrational' reasons. For Peres, the progressive rationalist, the main enemy was not Egypt or the Palestinians, but all forms of irrational fundamentalism. Without a peace initiative, fundamentalism would make

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<sup>16</sup> In common with classic Zionists instrumental values, Peres and the technocratic strata valued the taking of the initiative and activism. Consequently, Peres became known as a [doer] *bitsuist* who believed that a great amount of initiatives and activities would allow him to overcome political constraints" (Sacher: 218).

<sup>17</sup> Up to the mid-1970s Peres argued in favour of concentrating on strengthening Israel's deterrence posture and its ability to achieve victory in war. This gave him the reputation for being a hawk. However, as early as the 1950s Peres had expressed the belief that deterrence was only the starting point for peace and security, the foundation for greater regional economic and technological advancement that would provide deeper foundations for peace and security. Thus, in 1955 as Director General of the Defence Ministry, Peres favoured the launching of a preventative war in the Sinai as an act of deterrence. But he also talked of the operation as a mechanism to advance economic and technological co-operation and progress across the Middle East in general (Teveth 1972).

further strides and fundamentalist regimes with non-conventional weapons would seriously threaten both Israel and the whole Middle East (Peres 1993: 39; 1995: 317-320).

### *The Role of Relations with the US*

For the progressives, the basis of the special relationship that developed between the US and Israel was not common strategic interests and a common enemy but rather common values (Peres and Eshed: 218-222; Peres 1995: 85). Although they recognised that American "credibility", a crucial commodity in the cold war, was closely tied to Israeli security, they never believed that the United States needed Israel on its side in the global confrontation with the Soviet Union nor that Washington sought a place alongside Israel in its conflict with the Arabs (Peres 1995: 85).

The idea of an American guarantee for Israel had been popular in dovish circles in the Israeli Foreign Ministry in the 1950s but it had been opposed by the activists who preferred 'self reliance' (Bialer: 268; Shlaim 1983: 184). In any case, the Americans were not interested then, and could not guarantee Israeli security until the state had agreed borders. With the prospect of a final settlement on the horizon, the idea of a US guarantee/alliance was revived. Some doves, such as Yossi Sarid and Amnon Rubinstein of Meretz, resurrected Moshe Sharett's idea of a defence treaty with the United States, following an Israeli withdrawal from the territories, as a guarantee for peace and security in the future (JP 1 March 1991: 6; 8 March 1991).<sup>18</sup> Another figure close to Peres supported the idea of a formal security pact in the context of an Israel-Syrian peace treaty linked to a comprehensive regional peace. He felt it would add immeasurably to Israel's deterrence posture. The idea of such an alliance fitted the Peres image of post 1945 European Security where the US had played a leading role in regenerating European economies through the Marshall Plan and then guaranteeing the freedom of the democracies through a multi-lateral alliance, NATO (Peres and Eshed). However, for the progressives the relationship with the US was not the cornerstone of Israel's security policy. Peres put far more stock in Israel's non-conventional deterrent than did Rabin. In

any case, for the progressives, deterrence was only the starting point of security. They asserted that the region should not aim at a system for defence against a common enemy but rather a security system aimed at intra-regional security (Peres 1993: 67; Peres and Eshed: 217; Beilin 1997: 25). For them, the key to peace was not a militarily strong Israel backed by the US, but direct reciprocal political and economic arrangements with Israel's immediate neighbours and all states in the region. Nonetheless, they were always interested in the American potential to help underwrite their vision through diplomatic and economic support (SWB 29 July 1995).

In distinction to the Likud, the progressives were open to, and even at times in favour of, an American mediatory role in the resolution of the Palestinian question. They were not overly concerned with issues of *hadar* and independence. For example, during in the 1950s Moshe Sharett, preferred to respond to *fedayeen* raids by using diplomatic connections with the great powers, especially the United States, as a means to encourage the Arab states to prevent border attacks, while Ben Gurion and Dayan preferred unilateral acts of military retaliation (Brecher 1972: 287). Similarly, while Shamir had forbidden the tying of the Israeli Shekel to the American dollar to preserve its independence during the economic crisis in the mid-1980s, Peres accepted an American plan which had conditions attached, in order to resolve that economic crisis (Lewis 1987: 588-593). Moreover, because Labour and the United States had a much closer understanding as to how the Palestinian question would be resolved than did the Americans and Likud, Labour was keen to work with the most important external actor in the region in order to advance their similar agendas. The progressives appreciated that, as an external mediator, the United States could do things that were very helpful to brokering an agreement, that Israel itself would find difficult to do, especially during a period of Labour-Likud national unity government 1984-90. Hence they were prepared for, and often argued forcefully in favour of, American pressure on *both* sides in order to produce the compromises that would push the peace process forward, as Kissinger had done in the mid 1970s (WP 17 August 1986). Many progressives nurtured the belief that American pressure could bring a lasting peace and 'save Israel in spite of itself albeit at

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<sup>18</sup> For the contours of the Israeli debate on this subject See (MM 12 March 1996 10, 51, 24 April 1996 10, 80; HA 26 March 1996: B1, 9 January 1996: B1; 13 March 1996:B1, 2 February 1996: B1; JP 8 December

the expense of Israel's freedom of action. When Labour was either out of power or sharing it with the Likud, the US appeared to be critical in facilitating peace. Hence, progressive politicians tried to get the US Administration to facilitate peace by pressuring the Likud. In the early 1980s a US official claimed that a Labour politician had asked him to cut US aid to help break Begin's political power (Shindler 1989: 106) and in November 1983 Labour politicians met the US Ambassador in order to Israel, Sam Lewis, to get the US to make aid conditional on a settlement freeze (NYT 16 November 1983; MA 18 November 1983).

## **Chapter 4: The Development of Israeli Political Culture since 1967**

*Great Revolutions which strike the eye at a glance must have been preceded by a quiet and secret revolution in the spirit of the age Hegel*

### **Introduction**

The previous chapters identified the different strains within Israeli political culture and their various approaches towards the Palestinian question and relations with the United States. However, the model of Israeli political culture presented thus far is incomplete in that it has been presented as a diverse but essentially static construct. This chapter will analyse the development of Israeli political culture since 1967. This enables us to identify which political sub-cultures and approaches were dominant at particular times and why. In turn, this allows us to begin to get an idea of the role of Israeli political culture in policy making, because which ever sub-culture(s) was politically dominant also succeeded in gaining control over foreign policy and, by extension, relations with the US over the Palestinian question. Consequently, in the second half of the chapter, the impact of the development of Israeli political culture on this process is analysed through the mediums of elections, coalition building and the rise of elites in internal party politics.

Broadly speaking, this chapter will argue that Israeli political culture since 1967 became increasingly polarised between particularism and universalism. Yet, the split was not precisely fifty-fifty, nor was it stable. The political culture of particularism was dominant from 1977 until 1992. While from the mid-1980s onwards there was a gradual shift towards universalism and dovishness culminating in the Labour election victory in 1992. The turn towards particularism was brought about by a combination of the exhaustion of Labour Zionism, the rise of a new civil religion, and the experience of war in Israel between 1967 and 1973. While the turn towards universalism was brought about by the a combination of the exhaustion of Labour Zionism and the Israeli experience of the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1973.

### **The Rise of Particularism**

*Israel would inculcate a fierce national pride...while imparting at the same time respect for universal humanism that transcended national boundaries... The dichotomy was accentuated after 1967. Nationalist Israel pushed for the annexation of the territories, Humanistic Israel for their return. The rise of the Likud and messianic religious fervour led to a greater sense of national particularism. In its nationalist form, it fuelled parochialism and a 'world is against us' philosophy.*

Leslie Susser (Butt: 79)

After 1967 a new civil religion (Lieberman and Don Yehiya) became the most powerful political sub-culture in Israel. In contrast to the dominant political sub-culture since 1948, *mamlachtiut*, its goal was not normalisation. The new civil religion accorded respect to Diaspora Jewry and it recognised the past and present Diaspora as intimately connected to and integrated with the Jewish state. This contrasted strongly with the original Zionist notion of rejecting the Diaspora which emphasised the 'new Jew', the Hebrew identity of Israel, as opposed to its 'Jewish' identity. It also resurrected the traditional Jewish view of Jewish-gentile relations which found anti-Semitism to be the norm, the natural response of the non-Jew. In this scheme it was the absence of anti-Semitism that required explanation. The concept of a people that dwells alone, and the interpretation of the Holocaust in this light were central to this new civil religion.

Parallel to these developments, concern about the weakness of *mamlachtiut* prompted a move towards greater identification with Jewish particularism. The collective leadership of the Labour party were worried by the rise of Canaanitism which sought to sever all ties with the religious-historical Jewish culture and rejected identification with Jews outside the land of Israel. In order for Jewish national potential to be realised, the early secular Zionist argued that a complete disassociation from the old Jewish framework was required. Subsequently, the Zionists used the term 'Hebrew' to define the Jews who had undergone a transformation thereby ceasing to be Jewish in the former sense. The term Hebrew did at least imply a connection with the pre-exile Jewish past, yet when the leaders of Israel after 1948 saw the rootless Sabra they had created, they feared he would become a Canaanite, reject his Jewish identity totally and relate to himself as merely a native of the Levant. Responding to this challenge, in 1957 the Israeli education system

began an initiative to increase the amount of time devoted to the study of Jewish tradition, Jewish history and Diaspora Jewry (Liebman and Don Yehiya: 171).

This rise of particularism was also underwritten by the exhaustion of *mamlachtiut* and the impact of the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War on Israel. By the 1970s there were no more swamps to drain, Israel was no longer considered a developing country by the IMF. The *mamlachti* elite had become associated mainly with the trappings of power and was saddled with an image of corruption. The challenges which had fired Labour to create and build up the state had been achieved and its ideology had trouble articulating a message for a more mature society which was become increasingly bourgeois in its outlook. Into this vacuum moved a more particularistic political culture, abetted by the experience of war. Before May 1967, Nasser had been generally portrayed in Israel as a 'paper tiger'. This illusion was shattered when he moved his troops into Sinai blatantly violating the understanding reached in 1957. The UN willingly agreed to withdraw the UN troops, leaving no buffer between the Israeli and Egyptian armies. The Soviet Union backed its Egyptian ally, very few European nations were willing to risk any involvement, and an American proposal to reduce tensions failed miserably. No nation was willing to help Israel in her predicament. Abba Eban described the sensation of isolation in those days: "As we looked around us we saw the world divided between those who were seeking our destruction and those who would do nothing to prevent it" (Eban 1977: 392). Israeli self confidence was severely eroded. An immense sense of national vulnerability and memories of the Holocaust filled this period prior to the outbreak of the war.

Suddenly, within a week all the Arab armies had been defeated and Israel had returned to take control of much of its biblical territory. The spectre of destruction that Israel had so forcefully banished served to reinforce the determination that another Holocaust would never happen again. Following the Six Day War, political rhetoric became increasingly laced with the heady word 'never'. A new sense of history began to permeate the public debate and the words 'Jewish fate' became almost ubiquitous (Rubinstein 1984: 77; Sprinsak 36-8). The strength of solidarity with the Jewish world was also strengthened as world Jewry, many of whom as non-Zionist Jews had never identified with the Jewish state before, now appeared as Israel's only ally. Before 1973 this tendency was counter

balanced by an optimism regarding Israel's new found strength and security. However, after the Yom Kippur War, when many countries broke off diplomatic relations with Israel, and the UN declared Zionism to be Racism, the sense of Israel as an isolated state became ingrained in Israeli consciousness. One of the most popular songs of the period declared, "the entire world is against us, its an ancient melody, that we have learned from our forefathers" (Rubinstein 1984: 80). The Yom Kippur War also marked a sharp increase in the cultural penetration of traditional religious symbols (Lieberman and Don Yehiya: 168). Zionism had not apparently normalised the position of the Jewish people and consequently the particularistic stream within Zionism gained ascendancy. Israelis identified with the Jewish fate they had sought to escape when they came to Israel. It seemed that anti-Semitism had not disappeared with the creation of a Jewish state, it had merely been transmuted into a new form, anti-Zionism. Israel was a people that dwelt alone.

This new sense of isolation manifested itself in the resonance and centrality in Israeli consciousness of the Holocaust. As an expert in Holocaust education in Israel explained, "No one will ever forget that month before the Six Day War... We had this feeling of being caught in circumstances beyond our control just like the people in the Holocaust" (Friedman 1990: 279). Early on in Israel's existence the Holocaust was virtually ignored. Even when the genocide did get an official mention in 1950, the particularly Jewish experience of Nazism was not explicitly mentioned. This was a reflection of the government's attempt to demonstrate that even the Holocaust did not set the Jewish people apart from other nations. For Ben Gurion, anti-Semitism even after the Holocaust was a natural universal reaction to the Jews' unnatural situation, a position statehood resolved. Others stressed that there were other victims of Nazi brutality, which was directed not especially against Jews but against humanity or that the Holocaust was not a unique phenomena, comparing it to the Turkish crime of genocide against the Armenians. This virtual disregard for the most horrendous tragedy ever to befall the Jewish people was, to a significant degree, prompted by shame, disapproval and anger, at the behaviour of those who had gone, in the commonly held view, 'like sheep to the slaughter'. Israelis

did not identify with the victims of the Holocaust, only with the small minority that had fought back (Don Yehiya 1993).<sup>1</sup>

The Eichmann trial began a shift in Israelis attitude towards the Holocaust. Instead of seeing the victims of the Holocaust as weak Diaspora Jews, the Israelis began to identify with the Diaspora and cast the meaning of the state of Israel in its terms. The Holocaust became, “a collective pathology affecting the entire nation.” A pathology which perceived the country as having, “a one year guarantee that no one is sure will be honoured” (Friedman 1990: 278). This resurgence of the Holocaust symbol tended to reinforce both an Hobbesian image of international politics and consequently an emphasis on the use of force that spread wider than purely right-wing circles.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the early 1970s future dove Amnon Rubinstein argued that the Arab world would become reconciled to the new reality. “Territory”, he argued, provided Israel, “...with a degree of security not known before. Who could assure Israel that any agreement following a withdrawal, would not be violated as were the ceasefire agreements” (Keren 1989: 83). The 1967 victory appeared to demonstrate that military might was the crucial policy instrument, self-reliance had apparently proved its worth and the geo-strategic value of territory was also rated very highly. Israel’s successful use of force in 1967 and Arab rejectionism at Khartoum<sup>3</sup> strengthened this hawkish tendency, as did PLO terrorism (Stone 38; Seliktar 165). When Israelis began to become victims of Palestinian terror in the 1970s, notably at Munich in 1972, they collectively conceived of the Palestinian problem primarily as one of terrorism: a military and strategic problem and did not perceive its political dimension. As Harkabi put it at the time, “where the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, there may be no absolute distinction between politicide and genocide” (Harkabi 1972: 93). Certainly at the time there was good reason to think in those terms, after all the PLO’s declared aim was the destruction of Israel. This was an image that would become central to the mass political culture in Israel, an image reinforced by the tendency among the older generation

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1948 and 1967, twice as much space was given over in Israeli textbooks to anti-Nazi resistance as to accounts of Nazi atrocities. The official Holocaust memorial day was deliberately fixed on the date of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the day itself is referred to as the memorial day for not only for victims of the Holocaust but for *gevurah* [bravery] and fighting heroes.

<sup>2</sup> In a 1988 survey, 31% of Israelis thought that all non-Jews were anti-Semitic and in a 1986 survey, 58% thought criticism of Israel was due to anti-Semitism (Liebman and Cohen: 62-3).

<sup>3</sup> Following the Six Day War, the Arab League held a summit in Khartoum in which it refused to recognise Israel or negotiate with it.

of Israelis to find it difficult to believe that the Arabs of Palestine shared their emotional attachment to the land (Harkabi 1971: 6).

The other factor promoting this tendency was the growing ideological attachment to the land of Israel engendered by the victory of 1967 which had reunited Israel with old Jerusalem, the Jewish quarter, the Wailing Wall, Judea and Samaria - the sites and places whose very names had biblical connotations and ancient memories. These fruits of victory made the Six Day War particularly congenial to the messianic nationalism of religious Zionism. Subsequently, the followers of Rabbi Kook's ideology became dominant in religious Zionist educational institutions and the NRP moved towards the territorial maximalist position of the right in Israel. Many of its members were involved in the settler movement Gush Emunim. The Gush filled the void left by the erosion of the pioneering ideology which had hitherto dominated the religious Zionist movement (Medding 1995). It also replaced a basically pragmatic or even dovish approach to foreign policy with a hawkish approach. This too was a wider phenomenon, such that in 1974 the majority of Israelis recognised Begin's Likud, and not Labour, as the true heir of Zionism (Seliktar: 181).

### Towards Normalisation

*Israel is no longer trying to create a 'new man' to extol the dignity of Labour... or obey the Biblical injunction to be 'a light unto the nations.' The yearning of Israel today are a lot more modest: for a normal life, a modern country, freedom from dangers and levels of consumption that resemble those in the West. These are deep changes for a nation that was born and raised in war (Economist 1994: 2).*

By the 1960s, social prestige had moved away from the agricultural pioneer to the professional. There was a clear erosion of ascetic-collectivism together with an increase in individualism and consumerism. A pattern had emerged which was similar to those generated in other post-industrial societies which was reflected in the emergence of a 'me-now' mentality in Israel. From the 1980s onwards, the mass of the secular population of Israel increasingly identified the good life with American culture and consumerism (JR 10 March 1994: 10-16; 18 May 1995: 12-22). This trend was evident in the food and

restaurant industry, television and in the greater use of English phrases in spoken Hebrew, even in instances when Hebrew words to exist. According to Ha'aretz columnist Gideon Samet. "The new Israeli majority is... a quiet, secular and maybe a little tired majority, that is mostly busy with its own affairs... all this majority wants is the assurance that at long last they will be able to live in quiet. Nobody would have to take it away from its air conditioners, cable television...It does not want the mysticism of land or the sanctity of hills and tombs" (Frankel: 368). Economic well-being and the standard of living have become more important as generators of political interests and cultural and social attitudes than ideology (JR October 6 1994: 18; 2 May 1996: 36-41). Kibbutzim are more concerned with profit and they function less as a true collective (Melman 1992: 181- 206) and even many of the settlers in the territories are increasingly non-ideological and prepared to leave their settlements in return for financial compensation (JC 26 July 1996: 2).

Within the political system, the trend towards normalisation has been marked by greater concern over liberal issues such as the abuse of state power and demand for a liberal constitution (Guttmann 1993). The State Comptroller Miriam Ben Porat, expanded the role of the Government watchdog. The Supreme Court also became increasingly active on political issues, protecting the rule of law from governmental abuse; for example, it required the Israeli government to hand out gas masks in the territories during the Gulf War. All this is symbolic of a greater scrutinising of the government characteristic of a liberal, as opposed to a majoritarian, democracy. Along these lines the press has developed greater independence from political parties. Symbolically, Davar, the Labour party newspaper and the Mapam paper Al HaMishmar were forced to close due to their inability to be run at a profit. This signifies the parallel shift in the Israeli economic culture from collectivist-statism to free market liberalism (Keren 1995: 89). Following the 1984 economic crisis, the reform programme adopted then brought a big cut in the state role and a move away from a protectionist mentality. Subsequently in 1992-3, revenue from sales of government privatisation reached approximately \$5.6 billion (Israel Almanac 1994: 148). The most powerful example of this change was Chaim Ramon's success in capturing control of the Histadrut on a Meretz-Shas-Arab party ticket, thus wresting control of the Histadrut from Labour for the first time in its history. In its own

backyard Labour Zionism has been superseded by a combination of liberal Zionists, quasi Zionists and non Zionists. Health insurance cover was finally separated from membership of the Histadrut, a symbol of the end of the Zionist-socialist state. The new consensus agreed on the need for the further privatisation and deregulation in the Israeli economy (Landau 1993a: Lehman-Wilzig 1992: 42-6). Indeed, with the expanding consumer economy, both political blocks now war for the middle-ground, middle class votes in Israeli society (Arian 1995: 19). One partial consequence of this has been the lowering of defence expenditure in Israel, as the willingness to divert resources to national expenditure at the expense of its standard of living decreased.

As part of this normalisation process, individualism has crept into what had been a highly collectivist political culture. Ezrahi (1997) has traced the slow rise of individualism in a society that started out as an ideological orientated state where the need of the community took precedence over individual choices. He cited the ruling of the Supreme Court in 1994 that for the first time permitted the bereaved families of slain soldiers to break the uniformity of official inscriptions on grave stones in military cemeteries. The army saw a dead soldier as a martyr to the cause and an inspiration to others to serve, while the family saw a dead child with an individual distinctive personality and dreams. There are signs that this process has also affected attitudes towards military service. "There's been a big shift in attitudes among the young," said Itamar Lurie, a Hebrew University psychologist who for six years has surveyed Jerusalem high school students about the army. "Once, the socially desirable response was, 'I want to serve, I want to be a fighter', not any more." In the 1990s Aviv Geffen, Israel's most popular rock star, boasted onstage about his avoidance of military service (WP 5 Aug 96: A1).

The flip side of increased individualism and consumerism has been a decreased attachment to core Zionist positions, though without abandoning the belief that Israel should be the state of the Jewish people. One manifestation of this trend is the increasing suggestion that *aliyah* should be de-emphasised (JP, 14 October 1994: 6, 26 October: 6). In the 1990s, with statehood achieved and most of the world's Jews safe, the mission of Zionism is more or less complete. Jews in Western countries have successfully integrated into their respective pluralistic societies without having to surrender their particular

identity. Jews have ceased to be ashamed of their Jewishness and even display of their Jewishness may be taken as a sign of successful assimilation. This has been brought about by the opening up of national societies and the recognition of the legitimacy of cultural difference within the modern state. Hence, Herzl's original premise of the need to solve the Jewish problem in its physical and psychological manifestations can no longer be said to exist on a large scale. As a result there is no longer perceived to be such a duty to absorb all *aliyah*. Labour Minister for Absorption, Ora Namir, stated that Israel should select immigrants on the basis of their utility like any other state and not simply allow them to make *aliyah* on the basis of their identity (JR 11 August 1994: 18, 3 November 1994: 28). Paradoxically, over half a million Russian immigrants who arrived in Israel since the late 1980s had no desire to be a part of any Zionist mission in any case. Possibly more than any other group of immigrants in Israel's history, the Russians were driven to Israel by the desire to improve their individual material welfare. Indeed for many, Israel was a second choice after America. Certainly, unlike the famous Refuseniks Sharansky and Yosef Begun, these immigrants were not driven to Israel by Zionist ideology or a love of Jewish culture. Indeed most of them knew very little of Jewish culture, if indeed they were Jewish at all!

Another manifestation of the loss of interest has been the increasing numbers of secular Israelis emigrating to the United States and the increasing tolerance of the Israeli elite for their behaviour. Perhaps the most telling statistic in this regard is that by 1988, an estimated 300 000-400 000 Israelis had emigrated to the US compared to around 50 000 moving the other way (Don Yehiya 1991). Whereas in 1976 Rabin referred to emigrants as, 'the dregs of society', in 1991 he reversed his position and in an interview with the LA News stated, "What I said then does not apply today" (JC 7 October 1994: 16). At the least, this demonstrates the way in which individual choice has began to be seen as more compatible with Zionism than previously. But it is also part of a tendency towards post-Zionism which found clearer expression in 1996 when the Attorney General decided that non-Zionist youth groups would be able to obtain government funding, along with their Zionist counterparts for the first time (JP 23 August 1996). More poignantly still, the Oslo II agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority only passed in the Knesset 61-59, with the help of the Arab Parties. One of the most important decisions taken in the

history of the Zionist enterprise had not been agreed upon by a Jewish/Zionist majority in the Knesset. The vote had starkly presented Israeli political culture with the dilemma of whether 'normal democratic' procedures were sufficient and legitimate or whether, on these central questions of Israeli existence, the 'Jewish' character of the state was more important than its democratic character. Israel had chosen the first option. Another factor reinforcing this post-Zionist tendency has been the increased integration and importance of the non-Zionist Arab and ultra-Orthodox minorities in the Israel political system. In 1996 the result of the Prime Ministerial election were decided by the ultra-Orthodox vote for the Zionist Likud Candidate combined with the relatively low Arab turn out to vote for Peres.

The decline of Zionism as a motivating factor in Israeli culture has also been apparent through a return to Jewish tradition and religion. The gap left by secular Zionism is being filled in: 'the new Jew' is being superseded. 17% of Israeli citizens reported that they have come significantly closer to religious faith in the last six years according to a Yediot Achronot poll (Mideast Dispatch 16 May 1997). Even the supposedly anti-religious Meretz group held a traditional Jewish studies evening on the night of the Jewish festival, *Shavuot* (HA 10 June 1997). Within the religious Zionist community there has been a tendency to move towards an ultra-Orthodox lifestyle coupled with a tendency towards adopting the Haredi sector's negative view of secular Zionism. This process has been termed 'Haredisation'. Most of this group continue to see the land of Israel as an important political value, but more from within a traditional Jewish perspective than a Zionist-pioneering perspective, as previously (JR 16 July 1997). They have become known as nationalist-ultra-Orthodoxy: *Hardal* [*Haredi Leumi*].

A similar process has taken place in the intellectual world, where the deconstruction of Zionist myths is dominant (JC 10 March 1995: 35). The founding myth of Tel Chai is no longer taken seriously and even the Masada myth is being challenged (JR 16 June 1994: 42). Joshua Sobol's play 'Ghetto' and Moti Lerner's play 'Hannah Senesh' destroy the mythical character of Zionist heroes and question the correctness of the Zionist response to Nazism, indirectly challenging the contemporary value of Zionism (JC 9 November 1994; MA 9 November 1994). Moreover, those symbols that remain have become

privatised with soccer replacing Zionist ideology as a focus of collective value (Keren 1989: 91). As Tammy Schatz, creator of the 'What is a Hero exhibition' put it, "There is a turn away from the specifically Zionist or national idols of the old generation and towards American spawned cultural heroes like Batman, Ninja turtles, Madonna, and Michael Jackson." (JR 29 December 1994: 17).

In contemporary Israeli literature too, Zionism is no longer portrayed as a guide to life; heroes are no longer stoic pioneering Sabras (Jacobson: 151). David Grossman clearly prioritises the individual over and above 'Zionist ideals' in his own values system and his work<sup>4</sup>. He was one of the only Israelis to predict the Intifada's immanent explosion in his 1987 book The Yellow Wind, which examined life in the territories. Popular contemporary Israeli authors such as A. B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz have also examined sympathetically the Arab perspective on the conflict (Elon: 268-279). In recent years a revisionist history (Benin, Heydemann) of the formative years of the state which in its own way 'deconstructs the Zionist narrative' has gained prominence and, as Israeli Philosophy professor Eliezer Shweid pointed out, "There is a direct connection between what the new historians are doing and what is going on at a cultural level" (JR 29 December 1994 : 14). These historians have sought to undermine the founding myths of the state of Israel. They argued that contrary to Zionist myth the Palestinian Arabs did not flee Palestine voluntarily in 1948, rather Israel was partly responsible for the exodus of the Palestinian Arabs. Secondly, they argue that Israel could have made peace in the early years of the state, as it did have policy choices prior to 1956 and was not in a situation of 'No Choice.' As Calev Ben David has written, "The argument about Israel's past is also very much a debate about its future. Many of the creative artists and historians involved in myth breaking are strong supporters of the peace process and see their work as relevant to it." (JR 29 December 1994: 17).

Indeed, this new critical approach to Zionism and the Israeli past among second and third generation Israelis, has helped develop an increased openness to the legitimacy of the Palestinian identity (Elon 268-279). As an Israeli army colonel noted in 1975:

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion with Israeli author David Grossman at Yakar Institute for Jewish Studies, London, 1994

“One gathers the impression that the younger generation of commanders is immersed in a set of questions regarding our national existence which previous generations viewed as self-evident. The most prominent example is the question concerning our right to the land of Israel and the Palestinian question. This does not stem from their loss of self-confidence, but from the fact that they are in general more sceptical and unwilling to accept even the most basic topics in dogmatic fashion” (Lieberman and Don Yehiya 128).

Amos Elon (268-729) viewed this ideological disarmament, which is at the core of the ethos of normalisation, as a necessary prerequisite to any settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, it was the representatives of this approach, the younger generation of the Labour Party led by Yossi Beilin, Chaim Ramon and the *Mashov* faction which decisively pushed Labour’s policy position on the Palestinian Question and the peace process in a dovish direction (Inbar 1991: 39). It was also *Mashov* that was pushing hardest for other key elements of the normalisation agenda including a separation of religion and state and the separation of the Histadrut from the provision of health care.

### **The Rise of a Dovish Tendency**

Although the preference for a Palestinian state was strongest among those most committed to normalisation on the progressive model, most Israelis only came to accept a Palestinian state reluctantly as an acceptable, rather than a preferred option (Falk; Shamir and Shamir). Israelis who expressed a preference for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state at Israel's side remained stable at around 8% from 1967-94. However, the percentage of Israelis willing to agree to the establishment of the Palestinian state has changed significantly. Until the Intifada, agreement to a Palestinian state fluctuated around 20% with very little variation. Since then, the willingness to accept this option has grown. By 1994 over 37% agreed to this option and 74% thought a Palestinian state in the territories would be eventually set up (Arian 1995: 105). This change resulted from a decreased belief in unilateral military force and the retention of territory as the keys to security, as well as a decreased threat perception. These changes represented a move away from the core attitudes of particularism. In turn, these developments stemmed partly from the experience of war since 1973. Nonetheless, without the growing trend towards the understanding of Israel as a country primarily interested in security and a quiet life, rather

than the fulfilment of Zionist goals, such dovish trends in Israeli political culture would not have developed, as indeed they have not among the most ideologically committed sector of Israeli society: the religious Zionist community.

### *The Impact of War and Peace*

According to Arian's surveys of Israeli public opinion, the relationship between the negotiation choice and the perception of low threat was very high. The lower the perceived threat, the greater the willingness to cede land and grant the Palestinians rights (Arian 1995: 28-9, 193-4). For second and third generation Israelis, anti-Semitism and Nazism were not concrete personal realities. Their cultural baggage, unless exposed to traditional education, was usually poorer in Jewish content than their predecessors. For them, the state of Israel is taken for granted as a reality. Symbolically, by 1986 over 80% of the Israeli public thought there was no chance that the Jewish people would face another Holocaust (Arian 1995: 27). Such an outlook opened the way for greater dovishness based on a lower threat perception of the Arab states' behaviour towards Israel. In this regard, the visit of Sadat to Jerusalem was a watershed. Prior to Sadat's arrival, several key figures still believed that the visit might be some clever trick to catch Israel by surprise in another war and 90% of Israeli's were against surrendering the Sinai. After Sadat's visit, 90% of Israel's were prepared to surrender Sinai in return for peace with Egypt. The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty provided Israelis with the strongest evidence yet that 'the siege' was not a permanent condition (Real Isaac 1981: 207). This tendency was backed up by the growing perception that the Arab secular elite shared Israeli apprehension about Islamic fundamentalist groups and the emergence of an Iranian nuclear arsenal. This concerns represented a common interest that bound them all to the peace process (Peres and Eshed: 218-9, 251; Inbar 1996).

In this vein there has been an interesting reversal of interpretation of the Bar Kochba Myth. For most Israelis, but especially for the right, Bar Kochba's ultimately unsuccessful revolt against Rome was a symbol of Jewish heroism and of the heroic idealist military spirit required in the conduct of foreign policy. Prior to 1973, as was noted previously,

Israel put an emphasis on the military aspect of foreign policy at the expense of any diplomatic element of policy. But it was Begin who had the supposed remains of Bar Kochba reburied in a ceremony befitting a national hero. However, Yehoshafat Harkabi in his influential book, The Bar Kochba Syndrome (1981) branded Bar Kochba as an irresponsible, unrealistic leader who bears a responsibility for the decimation of Jewish life in Palestine which resulted from the crushing of his revolt. Drawing from this lesson, Harkabi argued that the actions of the Israeli government can serve to moderate the foreign policy behaviour of its enemies. Indeed, Labour figures such as party leader Ehud Barak, Chief-of-Staff 1990-94 and a close confidant of Rabin, have begun to laud the political realism of Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai, who opposed the revolt and cut a deal with the Romans which allowed Judaism and the Jewish people to survive. They now admire political and diplomatic skill of Ben Zakkai in dealing with great powers over the futile military heroism of Bar Kochba (Lanzman).

Equally important to the dovish trend has been the Israeli experience of war since 1973. The 1967 victory appeared to be a victory for the deterrence strategy. The idea that military might was the crucial policy instrument was reinforced, self-reliance had apparently proved its worth and the geo-strategic value of territory was also rated very highly. It was expected that the Arab world would become reconciled to the new reality imposed by Israeli force. The Yom Kippur War shattered these and other long held beliefs about security (JR 7 October 1993; 13). After the war the illusion that Israel was invincible, that military power deterred and that geography, in the form of strategic depth provided sure fire security were shattered. The Yom Kippur War began the process whereby security came to be seen as containing a political dimension. For all their geo-strategic advantages, Israel's new borders had not prevented the outbreak of hostilities. Israeli deterrence strategy had proved to be of limited value, based as it was on the mistaken assumption that the enemy would not open hostilities as it knew it could not win a military encounter. What the Israeli 'concept' failed to recognise was that military victory and political victory were not one and the same thing. Sadat knew he could not win on the battlefield but still had a rational strategy to extract a political victory from the opening of hostilities, which he succeeded in achieving. The Yom Kippur War thus demonstrated to the Israelis the need for greater concern for political aspects to security

policy (Perlmutter; Klieman 1990; Wald). Chaim Zadok, a Labour MK, noted in January 1974, "Peace will not come by our gaining military supremacy. There can be no more crushing military defeat than the one we inflicted in the Six Day War; but it did not bring peace. Peace will be achieved only through an agreement" (Barzilai 1996: 193).<sup>5</sup> The failure of the Lebanon War to achieve its political aims and the inability of the Israeli army to crush the Intifada, reinforced this realisation. Gradually an increasing proportion of the Israeli public were persuaded that military force could not resolve all of Israel's security problems<sup>6</sup>. The ill-fated Lebanese campaign also served as a clear lesson on the limits of Israel military power. The Israeli army had captured Beirut, but could not translate its military superiority into the achievement of its political goals (Falk). Subsequently, the legitimacy of concessions such as a settlement freeze and political dialogue with the enemy increased if only for want of alternatives and, in 1983, the first public meeting between self-defined Zionist and Yasir Arafat occurred (MECS 1983: 284).

The decisive event in this chain was the Intifada. The Intifada, which started in 1987, educated the Israelis about how difficult it was to capitalise on superior military power and territorial control against a civilian uprising (Arian 1995: 24). 55% of Israelis admitted their opinions regarding security changed as a result of the Intifada (Arian 1992: 318). Chief of Staff Dan Shomron stated publicly that the Intifada could not be solved by military means but only through political compromise (JP 22 February 1988: 1) and most Israelis agreed. For, while retaining a short-run belief in the use of force against the uprising, they too were becoming increasingly dovish on the long-term settlement of the conflict (Arian and Shamir 1988a, 1990; Arian and Ventura 1991; Goldberg, Barzilai and Inbar 1991; Arian 1995). This position was reinforced by the experience of the Gulf War, when Israel had proved vulnerable to missile attack despite holding the territories. Consequently, the idea that territory equalled security was further weakened in the public perception (Makovsky: 133).

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<sup>5</sup> According to Peres, the Yom Kippur war should have been Israel's last war because it "made a few hard truths apparent to both Israel and its neighbours: war is futile, and neither the balance of power between warring factions nor the balance of power among international interests is a guarantee of total victory... Total war - on a scale of the 1948 War of Independence - is not feasible...".(Peres 1993: 49-53).

<sup>6</sup> By 1985 only a minority of respondents took the Begin government side in the debate surrounding the Lebanon war. Only 15% supported the actions taken (Arian 1995:76).

Correspondingly, the 'land for peace' formula became more credible to Israelis, in security terms, following the Intifada and the Gulf War. Between 1973 and 1989 the overwhelming majority of Israeli Jews favoured returning nothing or only a small part of the territories (Arian 1995: 95-100) By 1991, only 5% expressed this opinion (Inbar 1995: 6).<sup>7</sup> Since the Intifada the status quo became a less and less acceptable option (Shamir and Shamir: 10). The status quo could no longer be seen as advantageous, as the moral, political, military and economic costs of keeping the territories rose. Previously, territory had been associated with security but following the closure of the territories much of the population had come to equate separation from the territories rather than nominal control of the territories as enhancing security (Frankel, Kimche). By 1994 the public thought that the chances of war were highest in the event that the territories were annexed or if the status quo was pursued, rather than in the event that a political compromise was pursued (Arian 1995:56).

Finally, the impact of all the wars had a cumulative effect on the willingness of Israelis to continue confrontation when a settlement appeared to be an option. The strongest social dynamic restricting the use of force was this general fatigue (Golan 1993). Israeli society showed signs of being increasingly weary and impatient for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Studies showed that war had a psychological toll not only on the Israeli soldiers who participate in battle, but on their families as well. Veteran soldiers are increasingly sensitive to the price of protracted conflict as a result of their experiences in war (Pines; Inbar 1996: 55). This fatigue was first evident in 1973 and became more pronounced after the 1982 war in Lebanon. Following the 1982 invasion, the Labour party included in its manifesto a clause requiring a large consensus before force was to be exercised. The elite came to recognise the cumulative weariness of Israeli society as a factor which needed to be taken into account in their security calculations (Maariv, 16 April 1994; Inbar 1996: 26) Fatigue from policing the territories and confronting hostile civilian populations increased after the Intifada. As one Labour MK put it, "I represent the Israeli who does not want to serve in Gaza; but wants to sit and watch the World Cup" (JP 5 September 1994: 5).

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<sup>7</sup> This tendency was coupled by an erosion in the amount of people arguing that the Jewish right to the land was the primary reason for retaining territory (Arian 1995:30-1).

On the elite level in particular, the major changes in the local, regional and international environment since 1987 had a major impact on attitudes. It was recognised that the experience of the Intifada and the results of the Gulf war had led the Palestinian camp more strongly in the direction of negotiations. With the political support of Arab radicals devalued after Saddam Hussein's defeat and the withdrawal of financial aid from the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia, the PLO was in a weak position. Similar changes throughout the Arab world did not go unnoticed in Israel. These changes at the local and regional level were accompanied by an extremely important change at the global level; the end of the Cold War. This had a dramatic effect on the region as a whole, unlocking one of the main factors had prevented movement towards peace since 1967. Without Soviet military and economic support, confrontational states such as Syria had no short-run option to achieve strategic parity or seriously threaten Israel militarily. Moreover, being seriously in debt, they needed American support which meant entering the peace process. However, the spread of non-conventional weapons and missiles in general gave the Arab States a greater ability to inflict damage on Israel's small and concentrated population centres, meaning that any future war would entail a large number of Israeli civilian casualties. Whereas, prior to the Gulf War the IDF divided Israel up into three fronts, northern, central and southern commands, after the war a fourth front was added to the equation: the home front. This decreased the strategic utility of the use of force from the Israeli perspective and pushed the emphasis further in a political direction. Subsequently, by the early 1990s, both the *mamlachti'im* and conservatives recognised a 'different' Middle East (JR 11 July 1996) which required a greater degree of political-diplomatic initiative and where military force would be of less utility.

Evidence of this increased emphasis on diplomacy in Israeli foreign policy is provided by the initiating role played by the Foreign Ministry in the Norway negotiations. Uri Savir the Director General of the Foreign Ministry was not merely 'explaining' policy but responsible for major decisions<sup>8</sup>. The erosion in the doctrine of self-reliance has also become more apparent. Israel's security concept appeared to be evolving away from

military deterrence and self reliance, towards a multi-lateral security regime that is sensitive to their neighbours' security needs. Examples of this new approach outside the peace process include a more co-operative attitude towards regional arms control and the UN arms registry. Israel realised that it cannot alone deal with the challenge of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and that international co-operation was needed to address this issue (Inbar and Sandler 1995: 53) Hence, in 1991, Israel accepted the missile technology control regime (MTCR). Another example of this approach has been the desire for the greater involvement of third parties in the peace process. Rabin explicitly expressed his desire for "active American participation in the security of Israel" (YA 21 January 1993) and Israel was also interested in the stationing of American troops on the Golan Heights as part of an Israeli-Syrian peace treaty.

### **Religiosity and Particularism**

Despite this trend towards normalisation, society at large remains polarised, with the religiously observant population retaining a greater commitment to the political culture of particularism and its hawkish positions (Arian 1995: 21, 178, 182, 266). 71% of the Orthodox Jews in Israel objected to territorial concessions compared to 38% secular Jews (Liebman 1993). The most extreme opposition to the Oslo Accords came from the religious sector. In the eyes of Gush Emunim, the agreement was illegitimate because it gave up Jewish control over parts of the land of Israel. Due to this, a group of Rabbis including the former Chief Rabbi Goren, and Rabbi Drukman ruled that according to Jewish law soldiers were forbidden to take part in the withdrawal from Jewish settlements and military bases in Judea and Samaria. This represented a challenge to the authority of the Israeli state which, in the eyes of many messianic religious Zionists, lost its legitimacy when it turned against the vision of 'the whole land of Israel' (JP 11 February 1994: 6, 11 August 1995: 10; Horowitz 1996: 180; JP 25 January 1996: 6).

But not all religious opposition to Oslo stemmed from valuing the land of Israel above all else. Traditionally, religious Zionist had admired and co-operated with the secular

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<sup>8</sup> At a conference for Foreign Office professionals held in Israel in April 1995, Uri Savir referred to the changing role of the Israeli foreign ministry away from explaining policy, towards the formation of policy

majority in Israel on the basis of the shared belief in Zionism and a recognition of the importance of building a Jewish presence in the land of Israel. Messianic religious-Zionists tolerated the secularity of mainstream Israeli leaders believing that it was all part of a divine dialectic leading to redemption. The agreement with Arafat called into question secular Zionism's credentials. In religious eyes, Labour represented post-Zionism and a culture of clubs, discos, materialism and drugs. There was a sense in which they felt this Americanisation of Israel was endangering the Jewish as well as the Zionist character of the state. Consequently religious Zionists began to replace respect for the achievements of secular Zionism with scorn for the lack of values of the secular majority in Israel. This represented a move towards the attitude of the ultra-Orthodox towards Israeli society. Most fundamentally, the legitimacy of the Oslo II agreement was challenged as it was only passed with the support of the Arab parties, meaning that a majority of Jews did not favour the move. Already in 1988, 52% of religious Israeli as opposed to 21% of secular Israelis questioned, thought Israel was too democratic (Shindler 1989: 43, 67). This, to them, was the end of Zionism. When this sensibility was crossed with the signing of the Oslo II agreement in the wake of terrorism, within the religious community, newspapers referred to the government as 'the Judenrat' and the police as 'Capos', denoting that they regarded Rabin and Peres as equal to those Jews who collaborated with the Nazis in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust (HA 1 November 1995: 5). Extreme rabbis began to be questioned as to whether Rabin came under the *Halachic* [Jewish legal] category of *Din Rodef*, [someone who it is permissible to kill to prevent him murdering someone he is pursuing], or a *Moser* [informer] whose information threatens the life of the Jewish community (HA 13 November 1995: 6A; Horowitz 1996: 181; NYT 19 November 1995:1).

### **The Political Impact of the Development of Israeli Political Culture**

These developments within Israeli political culture had an impact on Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question, albeit indirectly. They were very influential in determining which political sub-culture governed Israel and thus which of the approaches described in the previous chapter was applied in practise. The impact took

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as a pressure group within the policy process (JC 7 April 1995: 2)

effect through three pathways: the rise of different elites within political parties, elections and coalition negotiations.

## **The Rise of the Tendency Towards Normalisation Among the Policy Making Elite<sup>9</sup>**

### *Changes in Labour*

The Yom Kippur War was the formative event in Yossi Beilin's life. It made him lose faith in the Labour party's founding generation of leaders. His anger at the government's inability to grasp an opportunity for peace with Egypt in 1971 triggered Beilin's involvement in politics. In particular, he rallied against Golda Meir's concept that there was no such thing as the Palestinian people and that there was no opportunity for peace. On becoming a member of the Young Guard in Labour, he argued in favour of a Palestinian state in the West Bank (Beilin 1997: 21-23). Subsequently, due to his marginalised position, he and Chaim Ramon set up the dovish *Mashov* circle within the Labour party in 1981. It sought to break the classic political culture of Israel by proposing three separations: between religion and state and between the Histadrut and Kupat Cholim (the national health care scheme); and between Israel and the Palestinians.

Since the mid 1980s the *Mashov* agenda became increasingly mainstream and influential in the Labour party. At its party conference in 1991, Labour abandoned the red flag and the celebration of May Day. The party platform also backed the creation of a constitution for Israel which would guarantee individual rights and sought to promote a separation of religion and state. All the reforms greatly annoyed the Labour old guard. In particular they were angered by Chaim Ramon's success in reforming Health insurance, a measure which they thought would liquidate the Histadrut. The rise of this group of politicians provides the personal, institutional and ideological link between the trends toward normalisation, liberalisation and increased dovishness towards the Palestinian question.

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<sup>9</sup> The rise of particularism among the policy making elite is not dealt with here both because, it occurred mainly in the period 1967-80 and because it involved, primarily, the rise of politicians whose ideas were formulated in the 1930s and 1940s, that have already been described in the previous chapter.

*Mashov* proposed that peace negotiations be founded on the principle of a two state solution involving the creation of a Palestinian state in the territories. In 1977, the Labour party officially decided that it would only hold negotiations with sovereign states, i.e. Jordan, over the future of the territories, but agreed to accept residents of the territories as part of any future delegation (Inbar 1991: 66). Their influence over Labour's platform, especially its foreign and economic policy grew significantly after 1981. According to its party platform in 1984, Labour announced that it would hold negotiations with bodies that renounced terror and recognised Israel's right to exist, a clear reference to the PLO. In 1986 at the Party Congress, Shimon Peres became the first Israeli Prime Minister in office to refer to the Palestinians as a people (Inbar 1991: 69). One of the first results of the democratisation of the selection of the party list for MKs in 1988, was an increase in the number of doves represented among the higher echelons of the party such that, by the end of the 1980s, many figures within the party had become reconciled to the creation of a Palestinian state, while nearly all others accepted it within the confines of a Jordanian Confederation (Inbar 1991: 195). Indeed, this shift reflected a move which had been occurring within the party since 1977. Thus, whereas after 1967 the Allon Plan was the position of party doves and did not even become Labour's official policy until 1977, after then it gradually became the position of the Hawks (Inbar 1991: 92).

#### *Changes in the Likud: Conservatism, not Radicalism*

The rhetoric of Likud's new leader Binyamin Netanyahu, owed more to the American neo-conservative hawks than it did to Begin's 'Holocaust' Zionism. There was no mention of endemic anti-Semitism. Rather, as Netanyahu wrote, "Israel must resist the... immature conception of the Israeli right that nothing we will say or do will make a difference to an implacably hostile world" (Netanyahu :359, 395). Netanyahu felt that Israel was 'part of the West' (Netanyahu: 121). Dore Gold one of Netanyahu's key advisors (interview) stated that Netanyahu aspired to a conservative outlook and on this basis was seeking connections with the Christian Democrats in Germany; not something it would have been easy seeing Begin or Shamir doing. Indeed, this thinking represents a return to the more cosmopolitan approach of Jabotinsky. Thus, some of the Likud's younger leaders have

expressed rather liberal views about improving the position of the Israeli Arab minority in Israel (JR 8 September 1994: 12).

Moreover, due to the influx of Sephardi Jews into the Likud, there has developed a conflict in the party between those interests associated with political jobs as well as social issues of concern to their constituents, and the ideological demands of the party (Zuckerman) which came to the fore in the 1990s. After the Oslo agreement, Meir Shitreet, a leading figure in the Likud called on the party to drop its complete land of Israel ideology (Economist 1994: 9). In a 1991 Maariv poll of the Likud Central committee, a majority of its members were ultimately prepared to exchange some land for peace. 53% were prepared to withdraw from part of the Golan, 44% were prepared to cede parts of the West Bank and Gaza, 20% said they could accept the existence of a Palestinian state, while a further 34% favoured a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation (WJW 10 October 1991). By 1996, Netanyahu policy adviser David Bar-Ilan stated publicly that a Palestinian state with strictly defined limited sovereignty, including demilitarisation, was something Israel might be able to accept (JP 20 December 1996).

## **Elections and Coalitions**

### *Polarisation and the Palestinian Question*

The polarisation within Israeli political culture has been reflected in the central political division in Israel since 1977. In 1977 for the first time in the history of the state of Israel, the Labour party was in opposition and the Likud formed the government. Israeli commentators referred to it as a *mahapach* [a major turnaround], for it symbolised the end of Labour Zionism's dominance of Israeli politics. The Likud never commanded the same degree of dominance associated with the years of Labour rule. Although it maintained a central position in all governments until 1992, it had to share power with the Labour party or former Labour politicians who did not share its vision or values in all administrations other than those between 1981-84 and 1990-92. This polarisation was symbolised in the 1981 election by the fact that the Likud received 48 seats to Labour's 47, while subsequently Begin was only able to form a coalition government, initially, with a majority of one. This phenomena was also given expression through the increased support

for fringe parties, so that while in 1981 the two largest parties obtained 95 seats, in 1988 it was down to 79 seats.

Increasingly in the 1980s, this polarisation came to be delineated along the question of the territories (Eisenstadt 1992: 109; Arian 1990: 84-7). The political homogeneity of voting groups in Israel increased from the 1970s through 1984 in terms of ethnicity and social class indicators. Since 1984, the correlation of the territories issues with the vote has been very high. Almost two thirds of the respondents in 1981, 1984, and 1992 thought the differences between the two main parties on this issue were big or very big. In 1992, even more than in previous elections, Israelis said that the territories would be an important consideration their vote (Arian 1995: 142-157). This dichotomy reflected the deeper underlying differences identified in the previous chapters. Along Israel's political parties left-right continuum there was high degree of correlation between policy approach and what Arian termed the people apart syndrome (Arian 1995: 178). In his study of Israeli attitudes towards the future of the territories during the 1980s and early 1990s, Arian detecting the existence of this syndrome which contained many elements associated with the particularist tendency within Israeli political culture identified here (Arian 1995: 174). According to his analysis there was a high correlation between adherence to the people apart syndrome, high threat perception, and hawkish attitudes towards the Palestinian question. Correspondingly, those who preferred more conciliatory policy positions regarding the territories had high negative correlation with the people apart syndrome (Arian 1995:181). This correlation worked in unison with attitudes towards the respective values of the whole land of Israel associated with particular Jewish values, and democracy associated with universal human rights, to help delineate left from right in Israeli politics (Arian 1995: 33).

In the Israel of the 1980s and 1990s there were two powerful opposing tendencies, one more militant, one more conciliatory. But there was a third, middle ground group. It is hard to give precise estimates of the size of these groups, but it is more useful to understand Israeli politics by thinking of a 30 - 40 - 30 division. About one third of the population was convinced of the militant position, another third of the conciliatory, with the rest of the population floating in the middle (Arian 1995: 266). Events such as Sadat

coming to Jerusalem, the Intifada, and the Gulf War affected opinion generally across all groups the change of policy decision had an impact on all groups in the same direction. The shift seemed to be along the spectrum of more or less, with few individuals changing previous positions in a radical manner. Events often produced polarisation, but this took place most noticeably at the extremes of the continuum; the bulk of the population moved in tandem according to a more universal calculus (Arian 1995: 3). Between 1981 and 1992 despite the polarisation and power sharing, the right-wing block maintained the upper hand within government policy. Correspondingly, it was their particularistic vision which set the agenda for debate to which other groups reacted. However, gradually, between 1987 and 1993 while there was a short-term tendency towards hawkishness. This was balanced by a long-run tendency towards dovishness, which helped Labour (Arian 1995: 20).

### **The Rise of Particularism**

The rise of particularism brought the Likud led coalition to power in 1977 allowing it to retain control of government and foreign policy until 1984. Even after that date until 1992, the Likud was part of the government either as the dominant factor in a unity government including Labour (1984-90) or at the head of in a right-wing coalition (1990-2). The collapse of the political sub-culture of *mamlachtiut* was the first factor which provided the Likud with the opportunity to attain power. Politically, the fortunes of *mamlachtiut*, were tied up with the Labour party and with the decreased attractiveness of its values, the last bastion of Labour legitimacy lay in its successful foreign policy. After the embarrassment of being 'surprised' by the Yom Kippur War, even this legitimacy dissipated. The Labour party had become associated mainly with the trappings of power and was saddled with an image of corruption. When the Prime Minister's wife was found to have an illegal bank account in 1976, this only confirmed what most Israelis already knew. In contrast, the entry of Herut into the national unity government in 1967 had increased the legitimacy of the previously unacceptable face of Israeli politics. Nonetheless, many of the voters who wanted to punish Labour for its failures switched to the Democratic Movement for Change and not to the Likud. While this grouping stayed in the Likud coalition until its disintegration in 1980, most of its voters returned to the

Labour Party in 1981. The key to Begin's success lay first with the fact that the great majority of Sephardi voters supported the Likud throughout the period and second in the fact that the religious parties, with whom any governing party needed a coalition in order to gain a majority in the Knesset, generally preferred coalition with the Likud, or at least a national unity government, over coalition with Labour.

### *The Sephardim*

By the 1970s the Sephardim, who had come to make up about half of Israel's Jewish population, reached political maturity. By switching their vote from Labour to Likud, they helped bring about the downfall of Labour dominance and throughout the 1980s, their vote was crucial in maintaining the Likud in power. 70% of Sephardim supported the Likud in the 1977, 1981 and 1984 elections (Shindler 1989: 145). This shift of the Sephardi vote to the Likud, which was dramatic in 1973 and continued in 1977 was in part a reaction against the Labour party whom they blamed for creating the social gap and treating them with contempt. Under Labour with its modernising ethos, the traditional Sephardi culture was accorded an inferior status and the aim was to assimilate the Sephardim into the secular Zionist ethos. Subsequently, the Sephardim blamed Labour for creating the social gap and treating them with contempt. Begin appealed successfully to this sense of alienation. Moreover, in practical terms, the Likud offered a means of political and social advancement for Sephardim who had found their way blocked in the Labour Party (Zuckerman; Arian 1986). Nonetheless, the Sephardi vote for the Likud was not simply due to political alienation but also cultural alienation.

Many Sephardim never really identified with the political culture of *mamlachtiut* in the first place. Sephardim were much more traditional and thus particularistic and they resented the way the Labour establishment in the 1950s had ridiculed their culture and actively contrived to deprive of their religious traditions. They identified with the new civil religion, a fact which linked them to Begin, his more traditional outlook (Lewis 1984: 31) and his more hawkish approach to foreign policy. Thus, during the 1970s and early 1980s polls demonstrated that Sephardim were more hawkish than Ashkenazim on the issues of territorial compromise and the restriction of Palestinian rights in the

territories. The polls also demonstrated that Sephardim were more inclined to believe that every Arab hates Jews (Roumani: 424). Sephardim, and not only those who voted Likud, more than Ashkenazim continued to believe that Likud's tougher style of foreign policy is more likely to bring peace (Elazar: 220, Sacher: 128, Roumani: 428).

### *The Religious Parties*

The election results in 1981, 1984 and 1988 gave both Labour and Likud a theoretical possibility of forming a majority coalition government of at least 61 MKs, but left the religious parties holding the balance of power. Although all the religious parties could go with either party, in practise the religious parties had a strong preference for the Likud, or a national unity government (NUG). The Likud's ideological commitment to the settlements and the whole land of Israel was an important factor in the National Religious party's (NRP) preference for the party over Labour. Up to 1977 the NRP had been in every Labour government. But, since the Yom Kippur War the party had come under the increasing control of the Young Guard and the rabbis such as Chaim Drukman. Both these groups were strong supporters of Gush Emunim as indeed was the national religious public and they, and not party old guard leader Yosef Burg, had the determining say in the coalition negotiations. The pro-Likud position was even more strongly echoed by their spin-off Parties, Matzad and Tami. As far as the ultra-Orthodox<sup>10</sup> political parties were concerned, the future of the territories was not the defining issue. In theory they adopted a flexible line, selling their political support to the highest bidder. But in practise they too had a preference for the Likud. To begin with, Labour had stressed its secular credentials and its opposition to increasing the role of religion in state and society (Elazar 1986: 6). In contrast Begin portrayed the image of a traditional Jew. He used traditional Jewish terms like the 'land of Israel' 'God willing' and 'With God's blessing' that made the ultra-Orthodox feel at home (Friedman 1993: 9). Thus despite their generally dovish

<sup>10</sup> Ultra-Orthodoxy began in Eastern Europe as a reaction to the Enlightenment and modernisation, which they saw as a great threat to Judaism. The ultra-Orthodox reaction to this threat was to closet themselves away from the modern world in communities that concentrated on the study of Torah. Although the ultra-Orthodox were extremely factionalised, they were united by strict observance of Jewish Law and by their negative stance towards modernity. Initially, they opposed Zionism, both because it was a 'new' secular phenomena, and because they believed that the Jewish people were forbidden to return to Zion en masse as this would constitute an attempt to bring the Messiah without God's sanction. However, after the creation of the state of Israel such opposition moderated.

inclinations they tended to support Likud over Labour in coalition negotiations (NYT 20 December 1988 A1).

As a consequence of the religious parties preference for Likud, Labour's foreign policy options, as part of the NUG 1984-90 were limited. Without the ability to at least threaten a narrow coalition government including the religious parties, they could not adopt a more forthcoming approach to the peace process. Never was this brought out more clearly than in 1990 when the ultra-Orthodox parties determined not only who would govern Israel, but as a result of that choice, whether or not to agree to an American proposal for direct negotiations over the Palestinian question in Cairo. Then, the spiritual leader of ultra-Orthodoxy, Rabbi Shach preferred coalition with the Likud on the basis that it and its supporters were perceived as being more traditional and 'Jewish' than Labour. Labour with its universalist humanist ideology, was seen as having no interest in tradition whereas, Likud supporters, although they were mainly unobservant of the Torah, were understood to believe in a G-d and value the Jewish tradition (HA 28 March 1990: 1). Rabbi Shach felt that the *Haredim* [ultra-Orthodox Jews] had to take sides with those who they felt were closest to them in the Kulturkampf for the soul of Israel (JP 6 April 1990).<sup>11</sup>

### *Security and Territory*

Another the key reason for the Likud's dominance during the 1980s was that the mainstream electorate did not perceive the need to choose between security, ideology and economic well-being. Until the Intifada most of the public preferred the status quo or annexation to territorial compromise (Arian and Shamir 1986: 10). Throughout the 1980s there was not seen to be a contradiction between settlement activity and the higher standard of living which most Israeli increasingly sought. These tendencies were clearly reflected during the 1981 election campaign when Likud overtook Labour during the

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<sup>11</sup> This outlook was also reflected after the 1993 Knesset vote ratifying the Oslo Accord, when Rabbi Shach criticised the Labour government as, "a government whose intention it is to turn the nation of Israel into just another nation" (Peres 1995:286). Nonetheless, Labour would still have been able to form a narrow Labour government in 1990 if the two MKs from the Ultra Orthodox party, Agudat Yisrael, which opposed Rabbi Shach, would not have abandoned an agreement with Labour at the last moment. They refused to support a Peres government due to their messianism, support for the whole land of Israel and general hawkishness. For an analysis of this pro-Zionist grouping in the Ultra-Orthodox world see (Friedman 1985: 208; Ravitsky 1989: 114).

course of campaigning. Days before the election, Begin launched a successful air-strike on Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor. Labour leader, Shimon Peres', criticism of this act alienated a large segment of the public which favoured such unilateral pre-emptive military strikes as the key to its security (Arian 1988). Also crucial was the manipulation of the economy by the Likud which cut import duties on items such as colour televisions and raised subsidies on basic goods thereby raising the 'feel good factor' among the electorate (Arian 1986: 129; Greilsammer 1986: 88-95).

In terms of Israeli political culture, the Likud was better able to appeal to a general Zionist consensus which valued the use of force over diplomacy as a means of defence. Begin was also able to successfully suggest that one of the main aims of those who favoured Zionist normalisation, i.e. economic improvement, was possible while retaining a commitment to the particularistic Zionist ideological mission. It was only as a medium term result of the Intifada that the left benefited from the tendency towards normalisation, described above, in the 1992 election. By then the belief that commitment to a whole land of Israel ideology came at the expense of peace, security and economic well-being was becoming increasingly ingrained in the flexible centre of Israeli politics.

### **The 1992 election: Towards Normalisation**

Within the Labour led coalition, the Jewish parties, Shas, Meretz and Labour did not relate to the land of Israel as a core value or to the state of Israel as part of a messianic process. Moreover, for the first time in the history of Israel, the Arab parties determined the nature of the Israeli government. For only when Labour (44 seats) and Meretz (12 seats) combined with the Arab parties (5 seats) did the left have the blocking majority necessary to prevent a right-wing coalition. The fact that the Arab vote was crucial in determining the thrust of Israeli policy symbolised well the trend towards normalisation. Thus according to many commentators, the 1992 elections signalled a critical development in Israeli politics, a move as important as the shift from Labour to Likud in 1977. In this vein Leon Hadar commented that Begin's ethnonationalist Second Republic had fallen to be replaced by a Third Republic based on a coalition of "traditional Ashkenazi voters, secular Russian immigrant and disgruntled Sephardi voters who chose the Westernised secular

progressive vision of Zionism" (Hadar 1992: 616). Indeed according to Mordechai Nissan, Rabin's victory symbolised the new Israeli zeitgeist of Americanisation, individualism, consumerism and pragmatism, all at the expense of collectivism and Zionist ideology (Nissan, Lehman-Wilzag 1995). Certainly this is what the religious parties suspected, given that all of them supported Shamir for Prime Minister over Rabin prior to the election (Inbar 1995: 3). Yet this analysis is somewhat exaggerated. The left in Israel obtained 61 seats in the Knesset to the right's 59, which hardly constituted a massive swing towards a new Israel, especially given that just 8 months before the election the Likud was a long way ahead in the polls. Nonetheless, Rabin's election victory did symbolise a trend in Israeli political culture towards the idea of Israel as a normal country, the state of its citizens, and away from the idea of an Israel still on an ideological mission to fulfil the Zionist goal of controlling all of Eretz Israel.

In 1992, economics and personal security were the issues that made at least some former supporters of the Likud amenable to changing their vote (Arian 1995:138). Rabin's campaign slogans related to these core issues and hence tapped into this stream within Israeli political culture. It was this that enabled him to win over the crucial middle ground from Likud to Labour. One of Labour's key election slogans called for a 'reordering of national priorities.' In particular, Labour criticised the Likud for spending vast sums of money on settlements instead of using the funds inside Israel to help under privileged development towns or Russian immigrants. In fact, since 1983 (Falk) a clear majority of Israelis selected the budget for settlement in the territories as the sector which should be cut first in any austerity programme. However, it was not a practical political question until the Likud's refusal to acquiesce to American demands for a freeze in settlement activity in return for \$10 billion in loan guarantees that would have gone towards helping the absorption of Russian immigrants. As a result, Russian immigrants voted 3-1 in favour of Labour over the Likud, with 47% of immigrants voting for Labour and a further 11% for the left wing coalition Meretz (Reich and Wurmser: 141). Initially the Russians had favoured the Likud, perceiving Labour as an ideological remnant of socialism. However, by the elections, the Russians had come to see the Likud as the party of an outdated ideology which was preventing them from leading a life at a higher standard of living in Israel. After all, the vast majority of Russian immigrants came to Israel for a better material life and not

out of any ideological conviction. Thus despite the fact that 46% of Russian immigrants opposed territorial compromise, nearly 60% of Russians voted for parties who favoured it (Reich and Wurmser:141).

Winning the nucleus of Sephardim away from the Likud was crucial to Labour's success in 1992 (Arian 1995:135). Among Sephardi voters in development towns Labour also increased its vote, from 23% to 31% while the Likud's share fell from 35% to 30% (Smooha 1993a: 453). It was the Sephardim who had brought the Likud to power and now they played a crucial part in the Likud's downfall. Labour's argument for a change in national priorities resonated with Sephardim in development towns who felt that they were losing out at the expense of ideological settlements, a feeling compounded by the way in which David Levy was seen to be treated within the Likud hierarchy (Inbar 1995: 5; Frankel 325). Already in 1984, Torgovnik (74) noted that Sephardim who were born in Israel and who were better educated were less inclined to see the Likud as the party best able to handle the economy and hence as less able to govern. Similarly, the same group of Sephardim showed twice the likelihood of identifying with Labour's attitude to the territories than their less educated brethren. This tendency provided the foundation for the Sephardi swing towards post-Zionism and Labour in 1992.

Rabin's security position also resonated with the core consensus among the electorate. Rabin's approach was one which put the security of the state of Israel and its citizens above all other considerations, such as the morality of the left 'not ruling over another people' or the ideology of the right, 'the whole Land of Israel.'<sup>12</sup> The group that shifted to Labour from 1988 to 1992 was much more conciliatory regarding the future of the territories and were other groups of voters (Arian 1995:137). Prior to the 1988 election a significant amount of the electorate remained undecided and Labour party pollsters believed that there was a close correlation between the amount of terrorist attacks during the campaign and support for the right or the left. Significantly, Labour's projected share of the vote was falling in 1988 as the election took place in the wake of terror attacks. By 1992, the public's

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<sup>12</sup> Thus, in 1994 the public was less concerned with symbolic issues of Palestinian national identity than with security issues. Thus 67% supported the issue of Palestinian money and stamps 67% associated with Palestinian sovereignty; whereas only 20% favoured giving the Palestinians control over border crossings 20% (Arian 1995:108).

perception had changed. As one Likud minister put it, "The public doesn't want to be knifed. It cares less about where the border is than the fact that it exists and the Arabs are on the other side" (Makovsky: 89). Subsequently, Rabin's idea of 'separation' as the basis for an Israeli-Palestinian peace carried with it great resonance. Rabin's security orientated campaign tapped into these changing mainstream attitudes by accentuating the difference between, retention of territory and ideology on the one hand, and security on the other. Unlike the Likud, Rabin contrasted his support for security settlements with his opposition to 'ideological settlements'. These, he suggested, endangered Israeli security by causing an unnecessary strain in US-Israeli relations. As Rabin declared "I am unwilling to give up a single inch of Israeli security, but I am willing to give up many inches of settlements and territory, as well as 1 700 000 Arab inhabitants, for the sake of peace. We seek a territorial compromise that will bring peace and security; a lot of security." (JP 1 June 1992). In his television debate with Rabin, Shamir's declared his opposition to a withdrawal from Gaza on the basis it was part of 'the Land of Israel'. Such positions lost the Likud votes they had won in 'yuppie' North Tel Aviv area during the local elections and in 1988 (Makovsky: 86). In contrast, one of Labour's slogans declared, 'For the sake of Israeli security, the Likud must go' (Inbar 1995: 32). While another showed Rabin flanked by five ex-Generals on the Labour list, entitled 'Security is us.' (MECS 1992: 507).

## **Conclusion**

The swing towards universalism thus permitted a more dovish foreign policy to be pursued in the 1990s. Nonetheless, Israel remained a polarised culture caught between the universal-particular dichotomy. One of the key developments in the last 30 years has been that the nature of this dichotomy has changed. Previously, the Zionist mission provided the framework for political discourse. Interests were defined in terms of classical Zionist ideals such as settling the land of Israel, state-building, or being a light unto the nations. Recently, political discourse has been set in a post-Zionist framework. Israeli interests are now generally defined in terms of economic well-being and security. The word Zionism in Israel has taken on a connotation of empty rhetoric. That is not to say that the majority of Israelis, including the elite, no longer think of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, rather it is a

symptom of the fact that that goal has been achieved and that consequently attention has turned to more mundane matters.

This chapter identified the indirect influence of Israeli political culture on Israel's foreign relations. It examined the impact of cultural trends on elections and the process of coalition-building which defined who rules and thus who sets the policy agenda and conducts foreign relations. The second section of this thesis will examine the direct impact of the existential and instrumental values of the Israeli political elite, whilst in government, on relations with the United States over the Palestinian question 1981-96.

## **Chapter 5: 'The Radicalism of Style and Substance' in Israel's Relations with the US over the Palestinian Question 1981-83**

### **Introduction**

This chapter will focus on the impact of the political sub-culture of radicalism through the values of the main policy makers, Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon, on Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question. From the election in 1981 Prime Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon backed by Chief-of-Staff Raful Eitan were the key foreign policy actors until Sharon's resignation as Minister of Defence in February 1983 and Begin's resignation in September of that year. With the resignations of Moshe Dayan and Ezer Weizman from their respective posts as Foreign Minister and Minister of Defence at the end of Begin's first term, Begin lacked any military advice of high standing from within the Cabinet other than from the radical Sharon. As a result, Sharon was able to play on Begin's high regard for the military, his predilection for the use of force, his unilateralism and his hatred of the PLO in order to gain Prime Ministerial support for his ambitious policy design in Lebanon. Consequently, Israeli policy in this period reflected a combination of the values of Labour activism associated with Sharon and the those of neo Revisionism associated with Begin, which added up to the 'radicalism of substance and style'. The key existential value within this approach, which brought Israel into conflict with American policy, was the belief in the whole land of Israel. Similarly, the existential and instrumental belief in the use of military force, in defiance and unilateral action, also played a large role in defining the nature of Israel's relationship with the United States.

### **The Background: Camp David and the Autonomy Talks**

Unlike Judea and Samaria, Sinai was not considered by Begin or the Likud as part of the historic land of Israel. Thus, the withdrawal from Sinai did not impinge on their core values. Indeed, one of the key objectives of negotiations with Egypt was to advance the integration of Judea and Samaria into the state of Israel in the future (Weizman: 151). At Camp David, the US was particularly keen to link any peace treaty with a resolution of

the Palestinian problem including an eventual Israeli withdrawal. But Begin succeeded in preventing this. Nonetheless, Begin still had to deal with the Palestinian question in some way or form. True to his ideology he suggested autonomy for the inhabitants of Judea and Samaria, a version of which was included in the Camp David Accords. According to the Accords, Egypt, Israel and Jordan would lay ground rules for Palestinian elections to a self-governing authority and lay down guidelines for defining the authority's powers. Once the authority was established, a transitional five year period would ensue during which Israel would withdraw to specific security locations and dismantle the military government. Third, not later than three years after the interim period had commenced, Israel, Egypt, Jordan and elected representatives from the territories would enter talks on the final status of the territories.

The Accords left the Likud in a strong position to pursue its territorial goals. Since there was no compulsion for the sides to reach agreement on final status issues after five years of autonomy, Israel could simply refuse Arab demands and continue to control the territories. As Eliyahu Ben Ellisar, the director-general of the Prime Minister's office at the time explained, "we can live very comfortably with the current situation till the end of days. There will be a *de facto* annexation. That is after five years when both sides will disagree, the situation would mean that things stayed the same in Israel's favour" (Quandt: 136). Two months after the ratification of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in March 1979, negotiations between Israel and Egypt over autonomy commenced. But by early 1982 negotiations had collapsed. As a result of Begin's overall approach to autonomy, Foreign Minister Dayan and Defence Minister Weizman resigned from the government, thereby severely weakening its centrist component. While the new Reagan administration did not want the talks to collapse, the priorities of Haig and Reagan lay elsewhere. Unlike for Carter, for Reagan, Middle East peace, was not a policy priority. Consequently, despite the State Department's continued efforts to bring the PLO (Sicherman: 55) and Jordan into the peace process, the new administration did not invest a lot of effort into this. It had a more limited view of the autonomy negotiations between Israel and Egypt, whereby they served as a means to strengthen the Egyptian-Israeli pro-American axis. For Reagan and Haig, the building of a strategic consensus against the Soviet Union in the region was a priority, not peace. This emphasis proved a good environment for the Begin government

to pursue its own agenda over the Palestinian question.

### **Israeli Radicalism and American Neo-Conservatism 1981-83**

Both Begin and Sharon considered unilateralism as a legitimate and correct policy strategy. They expected the US to toe the line and let Israel get on with pursuing its own interest, in the belief that this was ultimately in the American interest too. In this sense, they were both prisoners of their values system. As a senior US official commented, "if he (Begin) did something outrageous and we kept quiet, he would say, 'obviously the Americans don't object or they would have said something.' If we did protest, he would throw a tantrum and complain loudly about American interference in Israel's affairs... Begin was constantly breaking the outer limits of how far he could go in trying Washington patience. But he still operated from the premise that there were limits. Sharon seems to believe that no matter what he does, the United States will have no choice other than to go along" (WP 7 January 1986). Nonetheless, they recognised, at least formally, the need to obtain US support and acceptance for their plans.

The Begin-Sharon concept of US-Israeli relations hinged on tapping into streams of American political culture to sell the idea of American support for Israel. The first idea Begin and Sharon sought to sell was that Israel was the most reliable US ally in the Middle East; a strategic asset in the cold war. In return for unshakeable Israeli support on East - West questions globally and in the region, they expected American 'understanding' regarding Israeli policy in the peace process. They hoped this deal would ensure non-interference by the US in Israel's attempt to gradually incorporate the territories into Israel. This was the Israeli concept of the strategic memorandum of understanding signed in 1981. Begin and Sharon assumed that the United States would be prepared to supply Israel with military hardware, political support and economic assistance, while allowing Israel to basically pursue its foreign policy without interference.

Fortunately for Begin and Sharon, the new American President was receptive to this idea. Thus Ronald Reagan, during his election campaign (WP 15 August 1979) referred to Israel in the following terms: "The fall of Iran has increased Israel's value *as perhaps the*

*only remaining strategic asset* in the region on which the United States can truly rely. It has the democratic will, national cohesion, technical capacity and military fervour to stand firmly as America's trusted ally." President Reagan and Secretary of State Haig looked at the Middle East primarily through East-West lenses. For them, the containment of the Soviet Union in the region took precedence over the need to advance the Peace Process. Haig sought strategic consensus among American allies in the region prior to any peace agreement. He hoped that states such as Saudi Arabia and Israel could form part of an containment strategy prior to peace agreements. From the American point of view, Haig saw Israel as performing a proxy role for US interests in the Third World in a similar manner to the role that the Cubans played for the USSR (Melman and Raviv 1994: 200-2; Novik 1984). Moreover, this cold war perspective led Reagan towards Begin's analysis of the Palestinian question. Thus during the 1980 election campaign, Reagan referred to the PLO as a terrorist organisation, opposed to the West through its ties to the USSR, which did not really represent the Palestinians (Peck: 16-7).

Apart from attempting to build a strategic relationship with the United States, the Begin government tried to build on Labour's success in linking Israel to American values. In Reagan and the neo-conservatives the Likud found an audience which identified with the Likud's tendency towards conservative realism and professed economic liberalism. More importantly, however, was the cultural affiliation. In the neo-conservative image, liberal democracy was a product of a particularly Western culture of which not everyone could easily and quickly become a member. Neo-Conservatives identified Israel as part of the West, part of the civilised Judeo-Christian tradition, in contrast to the backward dictatorial Arab regimes. Israel was regarded as 'us', the Arabs as 'them'. As Reagan put it, "there is no nation like us except Israel" (Golden: 424). Most of all Begin was able to gain a special relationship with the US and in particular President Reagan due to their shared obsession with the Holocaust (Melman and Raviv 1994: 189). Reagan shared the neo-conservative belief that the West had let down the Jewish people during World War II. Consequently, he felt a particularly strong personal and political commitment to the security of Israel. As he explained, "My dedication to the preservation of Israel was strong. The Holocaust I believe, left America with a moral responsibility to ensure that what happened to the Jews never happens again" (Reagan: 410). As a result, Reagan was

particularly susceptible to Begin's Holocaust rhetoric and hence was disinclined to pressure Israel. This tendency, combined with his cold war view of the Middle East, worked to the benefit the Likud, shielding it from the opposition of members of the administration such as Secretary of State for Defence Casper Weinberger (Melman and Raviv 1984: 221).

### **The Radicals, Reagan and Settlement Activity**

In the pre-state period, the Labour movement had used settlements as a means of establishing the borders of the state of Israel, while the Revisionists had been scornful of such tactics. This traditional indifference towards settlement as a tool of foreign policy was reflected in the fact that Herut were not the progenitors of the expansion of settlements during this time, nor did Likud voters make up the body of settlers between 1977 and 1981. In fact, the two major forces behind the expansion of settlements in the years 1977-84 were the messianic religious Zionists of Gush Emunim and their mentor in the government, Minister of Agriculture, Ariel Sharon.

Between 1967 and 1977, under Labour, the population of the occupied territories reached 3200. The vast majority of these settlements were situated along the Jordan Valley or around Jerusalem, in areas deemed crucial to the security of the state of Israel by the Allon Plan. Regions such as Samaria, where there was a high population density of Arabs, were ruled out of bounds to Jewish settlement. Labour's limited settlement activity was predicated upon future territorial compromise whereby the majority of the territory would be returned to Arab control (Efrat: 141). By way of contrast, Minister of Agriculture Sharon and the Head of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) Matti Drobles, adopted the Gush Emunim settlement plan which aimed to settle 750 000 Jews all over the territories. The plan was aimed to prevent territorial compromise and to ensure Jewish sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and Gaza, rather than obtaining additional security for the state of Israel within its 1967 boundaries. Begin signalled the government's intention when in 1977 he visited the illegal settlement Elon Moreh, and declared, "there will be many more Elon Morehs" (Peleg: 113). As a result, forty settlements were set up with Cabinet help by *Amana*, the settlement wing of Gush Emunim. All of these were located

in the central massif of Samaria where the bulk of the Arab population resided (Efrat:141). By 1981 there were an estimated 16 119 settlers in the occupied territories (Sandler: 212). Sharon, who had taken charge of the Settlement agenda 1977-81, had succeeded in virtually tripling the settler population. Subsequently, in 1983 the WZO came up with a new plan over which Sharon had significant influence. The plan aimed to increase the number of settlers by building dormitory towns close to Israel proper, providing cheap housing for non-ideological Israelis. This type of suburban settlement differed from early agricultural and communal settlement. Sharon hoped that the expansion of infrastructure linking these settlements to Israel would further strengthen Israel's grip on the territory. Under this scheme the number of settlers in the occupied territories increased to an estimated 44 146 by 1984 (Efrat: 148).

Although historical right was the driving force behind settlement, traces of the Labour activist security approach were evident in the pattern of settlement. Sharon argued that his preference for the expansion of settlements in Western Samaria was predicated on two security considerations. First, the need to control the strategic high ground in the territories. Second, the need to stop the linking up of Israeli Arabs with Palestinians in the West Bank (Sharon: 356-7). In order to help facilitate this vision, Sharon greatly expanded land expropriation in the West Bank such that between 1977 and 1984 500 000 dunam of land were expropriated by the Israeli government, compared to 35 000 dunam under Labour 1967-77 (Sacher: 97).

United States policy on Israeli settlements in the territories was clear and consistent under the Carter administration. The settlements were considered illegal under international law as well as harmful to the peace process. In contrast, President Reagan asserted that settlements were not illegal and that consequently the West Bank was open to all people - Arab and Israeli alike (Peck: 33; Quandt 1993: 377). The State Department tried to balance this by adding that it did not consider the building of settlements to be helpful to the peace process. But, as distinct from the Carter administration, there was an absence of any comment by the administration about Israel's settlement policy during its first year and a half of office. On being questioned about this, Haig replied that he wanted to emphasise that the policy of the Reagan administration was not to indulge in public

criticism of long standing friends and allies (Peck: 33). Indeed, "according to American officials, Mr Haig was said to feel that, strategic reality made local issues such as problems of Israeli settlements on the West Bank... of secondary importance" (NYT 23 February 1981). Thus, the administration did little to dampen the Begin government's enthusiasm for building settlements and when the final Sinai withdrawal took place in April 1982, Defence Minister Sharon was able to pledge a new scheme to expand West Bank and Gaza settlements, safe in the knowledge that his government did not have to worry seriously about how the United States might react (Peck: 35).

### **The Village Leagues: Autonomy Minus**

On November 8 1981 the Begin government took one step closer to the annexation of the territories. Military order 947 established a civilian administration in the territories in place of the military administration. The civilian administration was an attempt to transform the temporary system of occupation into a permanent one. The new administration was the brainchild of Menachem Milson, a Labour activist and former member of Sharon's Unit 101 (Sacher: 59). He sought to counter the threat of increased support for the PLO in the West Bank. Whereas the Dayan system of administration had been predicated on minimal interference in the affairs of the Arab population, Milson's approach called for greater intervention via a carrot and stick approach which sought to encourage a new rival leadership in the West Bank through the Village Leagues. Subsequently, Sharon and Milson implemented a crackdown against West Bank universities and dismissed most of the mayors elected in the 1976 election. The PLO's national guidance committee was outlawed and the harassment and humiliation of the population increased dramatically (Sandler: 223-8; Peleg: 129). The implementation of Milson's plan was thus a reflection of the instrumental values of Labour activism which saw such forceful means as the key to any political settlement.

Although the administration complained to Israel about some of the excesses involved in carrying out this policy it ultimately defended Israel against criticism in the UN Security Council, thereby enabling Israel to carry out its objectives without interference. Thus, after the riots which followed the Israeli authorities dissolution of the town council of El

Bireh on the West Bank, in which three Palestinians were killed, the administration, while deplored the loss of life, placed part of the blame on the government of Jordan (Peck: 36). On 2 April the UN Security Council voted on a draft resolution which called on Israel to rescind its decision on the El Bireh Council and on the removal of the mayors of Nablus and Ramalah who sympathised with the PLO. The United States exercised its veto against this resolution. Again for Haig, Israel's activity in the territories were secondary to the need to obtain strategic consensus against Soviet infiltration into the region. From this perspective what Israel did or did not do in the territories was not of vital importance to the US. While American indifference to the Village Leagues scheme allowed it to function, it could not ensure its success. The radicals belief in the scheme was a symptom of the leadership's belief in the shallowness and weakness of Palestinian nationalism. To them the Palestinian movement was not a must and could be replaced. When the scheme failed due to lack of Palestinian support (Peleg: 129-133), Begin did not abandon this position. Instead, the radicals attributed its inability to take hold to a lack of power on Israel's part vis-a-vis the PLO. Consequently, the attractiveness of a war in Lebanon as an alternative means to crush the PLO (whose headquarters were in Lebanon) rose substantially.

### **The Invasion of Lebanon: Elite Values, Plans and Objectives**

Since the relocation of the PLO from Jordan to Lebanon in the early 1970s, the population of the north of Israel had been subjected to a near continuous barrage of rocket attacks from PLO forces operating with virtual impunity from Lebanese territory. In 1978, Israel undertook a limited reprisal action called 'Operation Litani' which sought to sweep PLO Katusha launchers out of south Lebanon and thus out of range of Israeli towns and villages in the northern Galilee. The operation was only a limited success and the rocket attacks continued to keep Israeli citizens of towns like Kiryat Shmoneh in their bomb shelters for long periods of time. On 28 July 1981 Israel renewed air strikes on PLO strongholds in southern Lebanon. The PLO responded with a barrage of Katusha rockets that temporarily depopulated the north of Israel. Subsequently, Begin agreed to a ceasefire brokered by the American State Department's Special Envoy, Philip Habib. As it turned out, the terms of the ceasefire contained the seeds of war. First, the terms of the ceasefire

were interpreted differently by both sides. The PLO saw the ceasefire as demanding only a ban on cross-border attacks. Israel interpreted the ban as covering an attack by any PLO faction worldwide. Second, the terms of the agreement, far from removing the PLO threat to Israel, actually increased it because it did not call for the removal of PLO artillery from southern Lebanon. Worse for the radicals, by being party to an agreement with the PLO, they had helped to increase the prestige of the PLO internationally. Subsequently, Begin and Sharon became convinced that Israel had no alternative but to use military force to drive out Palestinian terrorism from Lebanon (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 35-8).

Two invasion plans were put forward. 'Little Pines', called for an Israeli invasion of up to 40 kilometres of Lebanese territory, in order to push Palestinian Katusha rockets out of range of Israeli settlements in the north of the country. 'Big Pines', already favoured by Sharon when he entered Office as Minister of Defence in August 1981, called for a much larger military offensive and entry into Beirut; a policy Dayan and Weizman had opposed (Peleg: 147). The plan (Benziman:231-2) was based, in part, on logistics for such an attack drawn up by the Chief-of-Staff Raful Eitan. As early as 25 June 1982 Sharon defined the aims of 'Big Pines' as: the elimination of the PLO, the removal of the Syrian army from Lebanon and a peace treaty with Lebanon (Silver: 28). Sharon sort to help Israel's Christian allies, the Phalange, set up a new government in Lebanon that would sign a peace treaty with Israel. This was also supposed to lead to the evacuation of Syrian troops from the country (Benziman: 231; Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 42). As Labour activists Sharon and Eitan believed firmly in the power of the daring military offensive to restructure political reality. Such thinking had been apparent in the Likud from the mid 1970s. Limited military operations, it was argued, neither deterred the PLO from attacking Israel nor prevented it from planning and organising attacks. Instead, the Likud called for military force to be deployed against terrorists at all times, and not just in response to attacks; they also argued that Israel's military might should be used in a broad gauge operation designed to put a stop, instantly and for long duration, to the problem of PLO terrorist activity emanating from Lebanon (Barzillai 1996).

But the focus of 'Big Pines' was not simply aimed at preventing terrorist attacks and the Lebanese sphere. Rather the radicals saw an invasion as an opportunity to crush

Palestinian nationalism and ensure Jewish control of Judea and Samaria. In this vein, in early July 1982, Eitan told officers at the front line, "Our war here is a war over Eretz Yisrael, not over Beirut and not for the Christians...The fighting has created a once in a generation opportunity to change conditions in our favour in the struggle over Eretz Yisrael" (Sofer: 229; Barzilai:143). Following Camp David, the Palestinian question had received heightened international attention and the PLO was receiving greater recognition, for example from the EEC in the Venice declaration of 1980. As a result of this process radicals like Sharon saw, "a distinct danger that UN resolution 242 would be modified as demanded by the PLO. Instead of talking about refugees, it would talk about the 'legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Operation peace for the Galilee will remove this menace" (Hart: 445-7). Thus the Operation aimed at crushing the PLO not only militarily, but politically too. Indeed, as a result of the Operation, it was expected that the PLO would fall under Syrian control and lose independence or possibly turn its attention towards turning Jordan into a Palestinian state. Sharon sought to facilitate such a policy turn by promoting the depopulation of the territories in an attempt to create an influx of Palestinians into Jordan that would cause King Hussein's regime to fall (Garfinkle 1992: 102). Taken together these measures would, it was hoped, relieve pressure on Israel to create a Palestinian state in the territories (Peleg: 149; Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 260, 267-8, 300; Naor: 274). Subsequently, this defeat was supposed to trigger a loss of support for the PLO in the territories, facilitating the emergence of a more pliable leadership that would accept the very limited form of autonomy on offer. This would provide Israel with 30 years of supremacy in Judea and Samaria in which it could take the opportunity to establish enough settlements to make annexation a forgone conclusion (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 43).

Furthermore, as Israeli academics Avner Yaniv and Yehoshua Porat have argued, the invasion of Lebanon was actually designed to strengthen the hand of the extremists in the PLO, in an attempt to destroy the PLO as a potential diplomatic partner for Israel. By adhering to the 1981 ceasefire the PLO had enhanced its potential as a possible negotiating partner. Consequently as Porat wrote, "If the PLO has agreed to and maintained a ceasefire it might agree in the future to a more general political settlement and maintain this agreement too" (Peleg: 153). Obviously, the terms of such an agreement

would involve territorial compromise and probably the setting up of a Palestinian state in those territories, both of which contradicted the government's existential and instrumental values. As Joel Marcus a journalist for the Israeli daily Ha'aretz put it, "As Israel does not want the PLO as a partner for talks, the supporters of confrontation with the PLO hold that the logical continuation of the struggle in the occupied territories, is in Lebanon" (Ball and Ball: 120).

But for the radicals it was not only about restructuring the Middle East and annexing the land of Israel, but also about securing Jewish survival and exorcising the ghosts of the Holocaust. Instinctively, Begin conceived of the invasion of Lebanon through the Holocaust symbol. In the summer of 1982 in an address to the Israeli national security College, Begin declared that Lebanon was a 'war of choice' a preventative war against the PLO (Sofer: 202). He equated it with France's failure to engage in a war of choice against Nazi Germany in March 1936 over the German re-militarisation of the Rhineland. Israel, he asserted, should not make the same fatal mistake. As he explained, "It is by no means imperative that war should only be waged only out of want of alternative. There exists no moral precept whereby a nation must or may fight only when it has its back to the sea. Such a war is liable to precipitate a disaster, if not a Holocaust, on the entire nation, causing a terrible loss of life" (Barzilai 1996: 143). The alternative to the war, Begin told the Cabinet, was another Treblinka (Segev 1993: 399).

For Begin, the war was an attempt to destroy an existential threat to Israel and the Jewish people, as well as a kind of opportunity to re-fight the Nazis and win, or at least avenge the victims of the Holocaust by defeating what he saw as their modern day incarnation: the PLO. Thus, during the siege of Beirut, Begin reportedly told President Reagan:

"I feel as a prime minister empowered to instruct a valiant army facing Berlin, where, among innocent civilians, Hitler and his henchmen hide in the bunker deep below the surface. My generation, dear Ron, swore on the altar of God that whoever proclaimed his intent to destroy the Jewish state or the Jewish people, or both, seals his fate, so that what happened from Berlin - with or without inverted commas - will never happen again" (JP 3 August 1982).

The analogy between the Holocaust and the war went still further. Begin claimed that

Israel had a moral obligation to enter Lebanon and protect the Maronite Christians, "I want to tell you", declared Begin, "that we are a Jewish state, with our experiences and under no circumstances are we going to acquiescence in the Syrian attempt to reduce the Christians in Lebanon in the 1980s to the state of the Jews of Europe in the 1940s" (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 25, Yaniv: 29).

There is much evidence to suggest that the real architect of the invasion of Lebanon was Sharon<sup>1</sup>. Yet although Begin lacked a formal military training, the plan resonated well with Begin's value system. The neo-Revisionist preference for the use of military force for existential and instrumental reasons fuelled Begin's enthusiasm for Operation 'Big Pines'. Already in the 1950s, Herut believed that an Israeli initiated war could enable Israel to quash the Arab states and achieve three principal aims: Arab regimes would be toppled and a political alliance formed with minorities, such as the Christian Maronites in Lebanon; Israeli sovereignty would be extended over more of Eretz Israel, and the Arab states would have to consent to peace with Israel (Barzilai 1996: 30). For this policy to succeed, they argued that Israel must be prepared to pay a high price, both in terms of loss of life and in terms of the US reaction (Barzilai 1996: 129).

### **The Role of the United States: Israeli-American Collusion**

*Sharon seemed to have a compulsion to humiliate the United States*

Former US Ambassador to Israel, Sam Lewis, (Puschel:

65)

According to Schiff and Ya'ari (1985: 63), "Washington's most bitter and consistent complaint was that the Begin government had the infuriating habit of pulling surprises." This time however, both Begin and Sharon recognised, at least in a formal sense the need

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<sup>1</sup> During several key stages of the war Sharon managed to direct policy without previous reference to the Prime Minister or Cabinet. The Cabinet opposed 'Big Pines' and Begin appeared initially committed to 'Little Pines' only. In contrast Sharon unswervingly adhered to the big plan. It has been suggested that Sharon deliberately misled the Cabinet and Begin over the launching of the war by suggesting they were only implementing 'Little Pines' (Benziman 232; Melman and Raviv 1994: 219; Naor: 29, 308; Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 37; Silver: 226-231; Sofer 230-232; HA 5 November 1997).

to inform Washington of their intentions in Lebanon. For Israel would need American support as an insurance policy against the fighting spreading to the Golan Heights which would involve Syria and thus possibly Soviet forces. Moreover, Begin was aware of the importance of great power support. Without it in 1956 Israel had to return the Sinai, while with it in 1967 Israel was able to retain the territories. Indeed, just prior to the invasion Begin noted Ben Gurion's dictum that it was essential for any Israeli government to have a great power on its side if it intended to launch a war (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 27).

Nonetheless, the Likud government was not looking to co-ordinate policy with Washington, it merely sought to receive a green light to act unilaterally; American insurance, without American interference. As Sharon explained just prior to the war, "I came to Washington not to get American approval for whatever we decided to do, but to let them know as friends and allies exactly where we stood" (Sharon: 451). Begin made it even clearer to the Americans that their political interference was not wanted. After Sharon had informed the Americans of Israeli intentions, Haig wrote to Begin urging Israel to exercise 'complete restraint'. Begin responded in a manner that epitomised his proud and defiant approach to relations with America, "Mr Secretary", he wrote, "the man has not been born who will ever obtained from me consent to let Jews be killed by a blood thirsty enemy" (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985).

Initially, Sharon hoped that the Memorandum of Understanding would serve as the form whereby Defence Secretary Weinberger and the Pentagon would come to accept Israeli freedom of action in Lebanon, in return for strategic co-operation in Africa (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 64; Schoenbaum: 274; Sharon: 408-414). However, there was strong opposition to such thinking in the American State Department and the Defence Department (Weinberger: 98; Haig: 341). When this tactic failed, Sharon switched his target to winning over Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Sharon tried to tap into Haig's cold war hawkish mindset by arguing that the weakening of the PLO and Syrian forces in Lebanon would be a victory for the United States against Soviet backed forces in the region. According to a member of the National Security Council, Haig already saw things in these terms in May 1981 when he had spoken about the desirability of 'neutralising the PLO' in Lebanon (Melman and Raviv 1994: 216). Haig was also favourably disposed to

using Israel as a strategic surrogate as Sharon suggested. Moreover, like Sharon and Begin, he saw military force as the key instrumental value (Silver: 225; Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 71). Consequently, the Israeli effort to obtain American acquiescence for their plan to invade Lebanon focused around obtaining cover in Washington from Alexander Haig.

Between October 1981 and May 1982, the Israeli government made numerous efforts to clear the way for the invasion primarily by briefing Haig.<sup>2</sup> In late May, Sharon was in Washington when he told Haig using defiant language, "we cannot hold back anymore... War could break out at any minute. We cannot live under the threat of Palestinian terrorism from Beirut. It is a dilemma for us, but we don't see any other way of handling it than going in and cleaning them out." (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 103). Haig replied that he expected Israel to show restraint, to which Sharon responded, "no country has the right to tell another how best to protect its citizens" (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 73). Haig then said that if Israel went in it would have to be quick and in response to an *internationally recognised major provocation*. Sharon was happy with this outcome as it represented the cover he was looking for. Realising he had given the Israeli the impression that they could act with impunity, Reagan made Haig write a letter on 28 May in which he spoke of 'absolute restraint' as a necessity. But it was understood by all in the know that such warnings actually constituted tacit approval for Israeli actions as there was no threat of sanctions against Israel in the event of war (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 75). As Haig told Sharon later, "we understand your aims. We can't tell you not to defend your interest" (Kimche: 145; HA 4 Jan 1998).

Begin and Sharon did not need more than that, they were not concerned with the lack of clarity. Nor did they need the whole administration support as all they wanted was cover. Indeed, it was partly to hedge against the possibility of opposition within the

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<sup>2</sup> In October 1981, Begin had informed Haig of 'Little Pines' to which Haig responded, "if you move, you move alone... Unless there is a major internationally recognised provocation the United States will not support such an action" (Haig: 326-7). In December 1981, Sharon presented 'Big Pines' to a shocked Habib and William Brown, the American charge d'affairs in Israel (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 66-7). In January 1982 the chief of military intelligence, General Saguy, tried to get the US to recognise the PLO ceasefire as pertaining not only to the Israel-Lebanon border, but a worldwide ceasefire applicable to any PLO related group.. Haig accepted a midway definition of the ceasefire whereby it applied to any military action undertaken by PLO forces from a border adjacent to Israel, but not to action undertaken outside the Middle East. Haig added that Israel should do nothing until after it completed its withdrawal from Sinai, in order not to endanger the Israeli-Egyptian peace (Haig: 326-32).

administration that could lead to pressure on Israel, that Begin decided that the invasion should occur well before his scheduled visit to Washington set for 21 June 1982 (Naor: 276). Subsequently on 6 June 1982, after the shooting of the ambassador of Israel in London, which the Israeli government viewed as a violation of the PLO Ceasefire, Israel carried out a retaliatory strike against PLO forces in Lebanon. It did not concern the Israelis that the attack had been carried out by the Abu Nidal group which opposed Arafat's PLO, with whom the ceasefire had been signed. The shooting was merely the necessary pretext for action. It constituted the 'internationally recognised incident' that Haig had stipulated would have to occur before the US would back Israeli action. In response to the Israeli bombardment the Palestinians fired Katusha rockets into the Galilee and then Israel launched an operation known publicly as 'Peace for the Galilee' and privately as 'Big Pines'.

### **The Evacuation of the PLO from Beirut**

For the first three days of the war it seemed as if the extent of the incursion was only forty kilometres, as envisaged in the 'Little Pines' plan. However, by 13 June Israel having gone well beyond the 40 Km confines of 'Little Pines' and reached the outskirts of East Beirut. Here Sharon met up with the Phalange and together they besieged the city. During the early part of the war, Haig provided Israel with the necessary cover in Washington. He defended Israel from those within American policy-making circles who wanted to impose sanctions on the Jewish state. Against their opposition, when Begin came to Washington, Haig was able to secure him an audience with Reagan. Haig's public briefing echoed the Israeli position of seeking to limit the military operation to forty kilometres (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 152). Even when Israeli actions contradicted this, Haig supported the Israeli position which opposed the lifting of the siege of Beirut until the PLO was ejected from the city (Schoenbaum: 284; Quandt: 342; Novik 1984: 49-50; Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 203). In this way, Haig allowed the Israelis to keep up the pressure on the PLO through the siege of Beirut.

From the inception of the siege, the United States had become involved in attempts to mediate PLO evacuation from the city. This was something to which Sharon and Begin

were opposed. Begin was concerned about the prospect of officially negotiating with the PLO as this increased the organisation's international standing. He only accepted the idea for American-PLO proximity talks on condition that the US officials were at least 300 yards apart from PLO representatives! (Shultz: 456, 68). Sharon feared that the existence of a US headed multi-national force in Beirut prior to the evacuation of the PLO, as the Americans suggested and the PLO demanded, would allow the PLO to simply redeploy elsewhere in Lebanon (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 209). In any case, Sharon's instrumental values pushed him towards favouring the use of military force to which diplomacy had to be subordinate. Begin was more prepared for a diplomatic solution, but he was captivated by the idea of destroying, 'Arafat in his bunker' and in any case did not expect diplomacy to yield results (Shultz: 56, 68). Either way, their perception of the American role was minimal. The US was simply there to provide cover for Israeli military activity. They saw no need to co-ordinate actions with the US and were even prepared to misinform the US of Israeli intentions. Thus, while both Haig and US mediator Philip Habib followed Israeli advice and declared to the American people and President Asad of Syria respectively that Israel had no intention of attacking Syria (at the beginning of the invasion), the Israeli army was already in the process of cutting the Beirut-Damascus road (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 152). The Israelis were not that concerned about embarrassing their American allies, to the point at which even Reagan was livid when Israel leaked his offer to put a multi-national force in place before he had informed Congress (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 209).

Begin's and Sharon's sense of belief in their own cause and their simplistic perception of US interest, whereby America should simply allow Israel to bleed the pro-Soviet PLO and Syrians, made them unable to recognise why the United States should want to limit Israeli military operation, despite the fact that these operations were damaging American prestige in the Arab world. When the US did intervene to try and secure a ceasefire, Begin and Sharon felt indignation. Sharon's contempt for American diplomatic efforts was total: he referred publicly to Habib's plan for the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut as a 'fraud' (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 223) and was so angry with Habib that he ruffled him up at one meeting so severely that Habib required medical attention! (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 221). Following a significant increase in Israeli bombing of Beirut, on 1 August 1982 the

United States joined the UN Security Council in calling for a ceasefire. Israel opposed this fearing it would let the PLO off the hook. By then, President Reagan asserted that it was imperative that a ceasefire remain in place otherwise it would endanger Habib attempts to find a diplomatic solution (Ben Zvi 1993:141). By August 3 Habib was able to secure a ceasefire, but when the PLO refused to move Sharon broke the ceasefire. At this point Shultz wrote, "Israel in its official voice was either uninformed or deliberately trying to mislead us" (Shultz: 59). Reagan then wrote to Begin telling him the bombardment was disproportionate (Shultz: 61). A credibility gap between the United States and Israel was growing (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 222). Begin responded with typical defiance. In front of 190 American Jewish leaders he declared that, "no one should preach to us. Jews kneel only before God!" (Ball: 125). Begin virtually told Reagan to mind his own business.

Meanwhile, Sharon continued to believe that the Americans were setting a trap for Israel that would enable the PLO to simply relocate inside Lebanon. But the rest of the Cabinet accepted the Habib's plan with some amendments. Despite this, on 12 August 1980 Sharon, 'contrary to any scrutable logic' (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 225) ordered the air force to mount its most fierce attack yet on Beirut. Reagan then called Begin demanding an immediate ceasefire, referring to Israeli actions as another Holocaust. He informed Begin that, "the ceasefire must be kept, our entire future relationships are at stake if this continues" (Shultz: 71). By then the Cabinet was equally appalled at Sharon actions and had already put a stop to it. Even Foreign Minister Shamir criticised Sharon's Activist logic. Sharon answered his critics by declaring "any decision not to attack is a bad one" (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 226).

Eventually a deal was struck and PLO's withdrawal began on 21 August 1982 two days after US Marines had to begun deploy in Beirut. Bashir Gemayel was then elected President of Lebanon, and another piece of the radical's strategic puzzle fell into place. At that point, Begin drunk a toast to Haig (Shultz: 46). Still, before the evacuation of PLO troops there was one further crisis in America-Israeli negotiations. During the final stages of the PLO evacuation, Sharon noticed that the PLO were evacuated with jeeps contrary to the American brokered agreement. Subsequently, he ordered Israeli units to halt the

evacuation. Morris Draper then suggested to Sharon turning a blind eye to this as the Americans had already removed the RPG rocket launchers from the jeeps. Two American ships offshore had orders to break into the harbour by force if the evacuation was halted. They also had orders to fire back at the IDF if necessary (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 228). For once, Begin backed down in the face of a potentially armed confrontation with the United States. Even Begin then was prepared to be pragmatic on such tactical questions. The same, however, could not be said when the question of the land of Israel came up in connection with the Reagan Plan.

### **The Reagan Plan**

After Haig's enforced resignation, other forces within the administration more hostile to Israel sought to move policy to a more 'even-handed' approach (Novik 1984: 50-1). Subsequently, on 1 September 1982, President Reagan made his only significant speech on the Arab-Israeli peace process. The United States sought to take advantage of the weakened position of the 'pro Soviet' PLO and Syria, to propose its own peace plan. If successful, such a plan would form the basis of a 'Pax Americana' in the Middle East and even if it was not totally successful it would at least demonstrate to the Arabs that America was the only broker available, the only actor capable of pressurising Israel (Shultz: 87-100; Ben Zvi: 142; Novik 1984: 47).

Although Reagan emphasised his commitment to Israel's security, the unity of Jerusalem, no return to the pre-1967 boundaries and his opposition to a Palestinian state, the plan was regarded as disastrous by the Israeli government. To begin with, Reagan called for a settlement freeze. Moreover, in a significant departure from Camp David, the Reagan Plan spoke of a final status solution in which a Jordanian-Palestinian Confederation would come into existence. This implied territorial compromise, an anathema to the Israeli government. Worse still, the Reagan Plan improved the political position of the Palestinians. In contrast to the Israeli government position, Reagan asserted that Palestinian rights were political in character, "more than a question of refugees". Reagan declared that "the Palestinians must take a leading role in determining their own future." Camp David had only stated that they would have a role, not necessarily a leading role

(Sicherman: 68). The American logic sought to bring in a Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating team in order to advance a peace based on territorial compromise, whereas Israel saw the whole point of the Lebanon War as a means to avoid such a peace! In this regard Sharon's complained, "is it the proper time now when we destroyed the PLO and the process of expulsion is proceeding and the PLO threat to the residence of Judea and Samaria is removed to raise new ideas!... The invasion of Lebanon aimed to prevent the imposition of such a plan on Israel" (Wright and Nakleh: 44-46).

This was but one reason for the Israeli government feeling a sense of betrayal. Ambassador Lewis had only informed Begin of the Plan a day before it was publicly announced, leaving him with the sense that he had been bypassed. Begin declared to Cabinet, "we have been betrayed by the Americans, the biggest betrayal since the State was established! They have stabbed us in the back!" (Kimche: 157). Begin then compared the American plan to the plan of Haman (the biblical enemy of the Jewish people who tried to penetrate a genocide against the Jewish people in ancient Persia) (Shultz: 96). In addition, he and Sharon could not understand how the United States did not realise that its interest lay in supporting the Israeli government position. Thus Begin wrote to Reagan explaining that the consequences of his plan would be a PLO-Soviet base in the Middle East (Naor: 328). Begin expressed his indignation at the American attitude: "we handed Lebanon to Washington on a silver patter and it wants to take Judea and Samaria!" (Sacher: 191). He was convinced by the righteousness of his own cause and thus preceded in his reply to the Reagan plan to give the President a history lesson (Reagan: 433-4). "What some call the West Bank, Mr President, is Judea and Samaria. And the simple historical truth will never change." (JP 6 September 1982:1). Begin then informed the Cabinet, "the battle for Eretz Israel has begun" (Schiff and Ya'ari 1985: 337).

In that battle, Begin's defiance and unilateralism again found expression. Begin rejected the Plan outright and informed the Knesset "we have no reason to get on our knees. No one will determine the borders of Eretz Israel for us" (JP 9 September 1982:1). He added, "the creation of settlement in Judea and Samaria and Gaza is an inalienable right" and that "Israel should continue to establish them" (Tessler: 604). This defiance was not only rhetorical but also practical. Hence on 5 September, Israel demonstrated its unilateralism

when the Cabinet approved \$18.3 million worth of aid for settlement activity including the immediate establishment of three new settlement in the territories. For the radicals, settlement activity and not smooth US-Israeli relations were the key to policy success, as Sharon explained, "no-one will stop us from settling the strategic areas of Israel. Israel alone is responsible for its security. We will not rely on anyone else, even our best friend the United States" (MA 6 January 1983).

While Israel and US exchanged pleasantries over the Reagan plan, Sharon once again demonstrated his preference for the direct use of force over the US-Israeli co-ordination by agreeing with Bashir Gemayel to allow the Phalange into East Beirut to finish off the estimated 2000 PLO terrorists who remained, despite the fact that this was expressly forbidden under the terms of the US sponsored evacuation. When Bashir was assassinated, Sharon with Begin's approval, invaded East Beirut and discussed with Chief-of-Staff Eitan the possibility of allowing the Phalange to 'mop up' the situation. On 16-17 September the Phalange massacred 700-800 Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla, in an area under control of Israel. Eventually due to internal pressure, Begin allowed a full inquiry known as the Kahan Commission. This inquiry found Sharon indirectly responsible for the events and he was demoted from minister of defence to minister without portfolio. Nevertheless, Begin's initial response to the news was to compare the blame for the massacre being laid upon Israel to the blood libel against Jews in the Middle Ages. "Goyim kill Goyim and they blame the Jews," he declared (Silver: 236).

### **From the Reagan Plan to the Resignation of Prime Minister Begin**

The American promotion of the Reagan Plan had demonstrated that Israel and US logic in Lebanon were opposed. Although the Americans expected Begin to reject the peace plan, they hoped that if they could get King Hussein to the table as a credible peace partner for Israel, this would place public pressure on the government to at least test his sincerity. In the event that the Likud did not do this, Shultz was at least aware that the Israeli opposition was more than prepared to co-operate (MECS 1982-3: 156; Novik 1984: 47). The Americans were relying on King Hussein to be able to negotiate an agreement with

Israel based on their Plan. They urged him to endorse the Plan formally and publicly and indicate a willingness to negotiate with Israel, even if not authorised to do so by the PLO.

It became apparent that US-Israeli disagreements on the Palestinian question fed into US-Israeli disagreement on the future shape of Lebanon. American credibility in the peace process and Arab acceptance of the Reagan plan depended on America being able to secure a relatively rapid Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. King Hussein had pointed out to the US that if they could not get Israel out of Lebanon, how likely was it that they could get Israel out of the West Bank! (Ben Zvi: 142). Under Habib, the United States was not really interested in a formal peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon nor in the withdrawal of Syrian troops, as Israel desired. Rather Habib sought informal arrangements between Israel and Lebanon to be put in place as quickly as possible in order to get the peace process back on track (Kimche: 163).

As a result of these differences, Sharon's distrust of the Americans grew still further and he tried to bypass American mediation (Kimche: 165). Begin and Sharon tried to slow down the US-sponsored negotiations for a peace treaty between Israel and Lebanon (until April 1983) as they feared a linkage whereby Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon would increase American pressure on Israel to deal with the Palestinian question and stop building settlements (Ben Zvi: 143). Thus Sharon added two procedural conditions that even Israel's top negotiator, David Kimche, who was highly critical of Habib, thought would scupper any chance of a peace agreement. Sharon's tactic was to insist on Minister to Minister public talks in the capitals, Beirut and Jerusalem. It was as if Sharon and Begin did not want an agreement (Kimche: 163). The delaying tactics managed to hold back the start of the peace talks until January 1983. In order to increase pressure on Israel to withdraw and freeze settlements, the Reagan administration held up technology transfers and military equipment. The limited sanctions were unsuccessful, as the Begin government was able to use Congress to reverse the administration's attempt to pressurise it. In any case the Reagan Plan fell apart when the King Hussein-Arafat dialogue collapsed in April 1983, due to Arafat caving in to pressure from PLO radicals.

## **Conclusion**

On the surface, Israel had achieved most of the aims that Begin and Sharon set out to achieve in Lebanon. The PLO had been expelled from the country, a Lebanese Christian had been installed as President of Lebanon and had signed an agreement with Israel. The Syrian presence in Lebanon had been greatly weakened and then in May 1983, a mutiny took place within the ranks of Fatah the largest and most powerful PLO faction in an area controlled by Syrians. Division and political weakness within the PLO seemed also to have been achieved. Ultimately however, although successful in the short-run, the inadequacies of the operation soon became apparent. The Lebanese President Bashir Gemayel was assassinated. The agreement between Lebanon and Israel fell apart as Syria regained its pre-eminent position in Lebanon. The Americans refused to sit back and just support Israel and in the process moved closer, in the Reagan Plan, to the Arab position or at least the Labour position in Israel. The paradox of the Likud policy in Lebanon was that, rather than destroying the chances for a negotiated settlement based on territorial compromise, the war invoked moderation in the West Bank in the short-run, not for Sharon's version of autonomy, but for a renewed Jordanian role. This was precisely the sort of moderation Likud leaders most feared and Jordan and the leader of the Labour Party, Shimon Peres, most sought. Most importantly, in the long-run, although the PLO had been militarily weakened, politically the Palestinian national cause gained, rather than lost, momentum. The results were seen in the Intifada. Israel may have succeeded in weakening the PLO but it failed in imposing the Village Leagues on the West Bank and once the Palestinians in the territories became disillusioned with the outside leadership of the PLO, Israel was left to face the genuine national sentiment of the Palestinians in the Intifada.

Clearly the *character* of Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question in this period were dominated by Holocaust imagery, defiant rhetoric and Israeli unilateral acts of pique, all of which have their origins within the particularistic stream of Israeli political culture represented by Begin and Sharon. However, it would be logical to suggest that the *substance* of Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question in this period should have rested in the final analysis, with the American superpower. Consequently, Israeli political culture could then only be said to play a

subordinate role in explaining the relationship and Israeli policy. It is certainly true that, to a large degree, US-Israeli relations in this period were defined by the extent to which American policy makers saw a good relationship as being in the American interest. When America saw strategic co-operation with Israel as more important than a progress in the peace process, relations were good. Indeed, even when the peace process took a higher priority, when reality dictated the impossibility of progress on the terms acceptable to the US due to the lack of a moderate Arab peace partner for Israel, relations improved.

Yet even here, political culture played a significant role in defining the substance of the relationship in regard to the Palestinian question. The extent to which Israel was able to play on the neo-conservative bias of the administration and its values strengthened the American tendency to see support for Israel as an American interest and moral duty. Moreover, because the Palestinian question was something that Israel had a greater interest in than the United States, and because Israel had greater leverage over the situation on the ground, there was room for Israeli values to define, to a significant degree, the nature of the relationship.

As a result, the Israeli government's belief in unilateralism and its strong self-righteousness were significant factors effecting the substance of the relationship. In addition, the guiding values of Israeli policy towards the Palestinian question, namely the existential value of the whole land of Israel, the instrumental value of military activism, belief in the power of the will and the event mentality, all of which underlay the demonisation of the PLO and the Palestinians, defined the relationship over the Palestinian question to a large degree. Always wary of the need for *hadar*, Begin and Sharon's tendency was to act defiantly and unilaterally whenever and wherever possible. However, Begin was prepared to back down and concede tactical concessions to the United States, for example on the withdrawal of PLO troops from Beirut, despite all his and the government's bombastic rhetoric. Yet this acceptance of the need to make reluctant concessions did not extend to issues which could threaten Israeli control over the territories; Israeli control over Judea, Samaria and Gaza were non-negotiable for Begin and neo-Revisionism; whatever the consequences for Israel's relations with the United States.

## **Chapter 6: Progressive Zionism Frustrated: The National Unity**

### **Government 1984-88**

#### **Introduction**

Owing to the balance between left and right in 1984 neither Likud nor Labour were able to form a working coalition government. Having exhausted any possibility of getting a narrow coalition, Shamir and Peres finally accepted a national unity government (NUG). A broad coalition government was set up including Labour, Likud, the religious parties and the small centrist parties, with only the fringe parties not included. The most novel feature of the coalition was the agreement to rotate the office of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister between Peres and Shamir half way through the life of the Knesset in October 1986. It was also agreed that Rabin would serve as Minister of Defence, directly responsible for the territories, during the whole term of the Government. Major decisions were taken in the inner Cabinet which consisted of five Labour and five Likud ministers. This situation allowed each party to veto any action by the other that ran counter to its vital interests or the limits of the coalition agreement.

This arrangement had important ramifications for foreign policy. The basic policy guidelines of the government ruled out Israeli annexation of additional territory, negotiations with the PLO and the establishment of a separate Palestinian state. Parallel to this it allowed for the establishment of 5-6 new settlements within a year. In addition, the government agreed to implement the decision of the previous government to establish twenty-six new settlements, however the actual building of each new settlement would be decided by the inner Cabinet. The government agreed to continue the peace process along the lines of Camp David. It was further agreed that Israel would call on Jordan to begin peace negotiations and that the Israeli government would consider proposals raised by Jordan in the negotiations (Medzini 1992: 1-3).

The agreement put enormous strain on the coherence of Israeli policy. It allowed Labour to pursue a diplomatic initiative founded on the 'Jordanian option', while permitting the Likud to simultaneously limit the potential for a territorial compromise through continued

settlement. Furthermore, the rotation agreement and the division of Prime Minister and Foreign Minister exacerbated the situation to a point at which two foreign policies often ended up being pursued simultaneously. Not for nothing was there a political crisis between Labour and Likud over the appointment of a new Ambassador to Washington. Both parties recognised how crucial Washington's role was to the fulfilment of their objectives regarding the Palestinian question. Indeed for much of the period Shultz had to act as intermediary between Labour and Likud (HA 31 July 1985). If ever there was a symbol of the polarisation of Israeli political culture, this was it.

As a result of this split, Israel effectively had two competing groups of foreign policy makers acting simultaneously between 1984-88. The Labour group was led by Peres who was aided by 'the Blazers'. The Likud team was controlled by Shamir, who was aided by minister without portfolio Moshe Arens and to a lesser degree by some of 'the young princes' and key aides Eli Rubinstein and Yossi Ben Aharon. Between 1984-6, Peres and the Labour party had the edge so far as foreign policy was concerned by virtue of the fact that Peres was Prime Minister. Similarly, after the rotation Shamir and the Likud had the stronger position. On the ground in the territories Labour's position was helped by the fact that Rabin was Defence Minister for the government's complete term of office. However, Labour's acceptance of the Likud settlement agenda in the coalition agreement, limited significantly Labour's ability to attain the good will it sought in the territories in order to advance its diplomatic initiative. The picture was complicated further by virtue of the fact that even when Peres was just Foreign Minister 1986-88 and Shamir Prime Minister, it was Peres who took the diplomatic initiative working closely with the State Department. Consequently, even though Shamir and the Likud retained an objective power of veto, the analysis will focus more on Peres' diplomatic activities.

### **Peres and the Progressive Strategy 1984-7**

For Peres and the progressives, peace was a primary existential value and the region's politics and threat of fundamentalism meant that time was of the essence in the search for peace. This need to push the peace process forward combined with two other factors to push Peres to constantly take the initiative. First, to Peres the *bitzui* [doer] taking the

initiative represented a classic Zionist value. Second, because Peres was only Prime Minister for the first two years of the coalition government, there was an added sense of urgency surrounding his actions. In contrast to the Likud, Peres aimed to heavily involve the US in his peace strategy. This approach had its roots within two elements of the progressive sub-culture. First, Labour's positive attitude towards land for peace brought them closer to the American vision for peace and hence made it easier for Peres to work with the US, than for the Likud. Indeed, the Peres outlook which deemed peace an Israeli policy priority, positively required American mediation, since only the US had the necessary influence in the Arab world to help bring about the reality that the progressives desired (Peres 1980: 896). Second, unlike the radicals, the progressives were far less sensitive to the value of 'independence', as a symbol of sovereignty and national virility within the context of foreign policy. This made it much easier for Peres to work in tandem with any power including the US.

There were two main axes for Israel-US relations in regard to the Palestinian question between 1984-7 under the direction of Shimon Peres: the diplomatic attempts to move towards opening peace negotiations with Jordan, and the functional attempts with Jordan to build an Israeli-Jordanian condominium on the West Bank. In Peres' scheme, the US was designated a crucial instrumental role on both these tracks. Labour looked to the US to play an instrumental role in four ways. First, it sought to improve its bargaining position by co-ordinating policy with the US. Second, Labour actively sought American mediation with Jordan in order to forward the prospect of peace talks. Thirdly, Peres looked to the US to help lead an international effort to help with the economic rejuvenation of the Middle East, as they had done in Europe with the Marshall Plan after 1945.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Peres wanted the US to help him push forward a peace policy based on land for peace *inside Israel*. This would involve the US in either pressuring the Likud to move forward on the basis of land for peace, or as was deemed more likely, helping Peres to break up the NUG and go for elections on the peace issue, under favourable circumstances, before Peres had to hand over the office of Prime Minister to Shamir.

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<sup>1</sup> Peres wanted the US to lead the international community to make \$20-30 billion available to advance the economy of the region. The seven major economic powers would invest in projects in the moderate Arab states and the territories. The size of the investment would be made in direct proportion to the willingness of the recipients to make concessions for peace (WP 23 April 1986).

### **Shamir and the Likud Strategy**

For the radicals, unlike for Peres, peace was not the most important objective of policy. Far more important was the fulfilment of Zionism which as Shamir saw it involved: ingathering all the Jews to Israel and settling the whole land of Israel in order to ensure its eventual incorporation into the state of Israel. Shamir diplomatic strategy was simply to prevent any erosion in Israel's position which could undermine its control of the territories. For Shamir the territorial status quo was favourable, so there was nothing to be gained by diplomatic activity. Time was on Israel's side. Shamir recognised that the US was the most pivotal international actor in the region, whose support was extremely important to Israel. He accepted that the US position on settlements and territorial compromise opposed the Likud's position and was content for the Likud and the US to 'agree to disagree' (Shamir interview). Consequently, he concentrated his effort not on reversing this position but trying to prevent the US from *actively* damaging the Likud vision for the territories. This was possible so long as the Likud at least appeared willing to compromise for peace. Hence, to maintain credibility as Prime Minister, Shamir adopted the Camp David Accords as the Likud's negotiating stance. Moreover, he was generally careful to cast his opposition to any American proposals in procedural or security terms and unlike Begin and Sharon, his quieter pragmatic style, certainly helped smooth relations with the Americans.

### **The US: Policy and Strategy**

Despite Israeli fears to the contrary, like Reagan, Secretary of State Shultz had a special admiration for Israel. This had been triggered by the bravery and patriotism of an Israeli student of his who had returned home just prior to receiving his degree, to fight in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The student died in the war and later Shultz went to visit the family and was shown round the country, after which he developed a special regard for Israel as a sister democracy under siege (Lewis interview). Subsequently, in 1986 Shultz felt so strongly about Israel's security that he wanted to build institutional arrangements so that "If there is a future Secretary of State who is not positive about Israel, he will not be

able to overcome the bureaucratic relationship between Israel and the United States that we have established" (Puschel: 94-5). Hence an additional codification of the relationship occurred on 21 April 1988 when a further memorandum of agreement on US-Israeli strategic co-operation was signed.

Yet while sympathy for Israel in the administration transcended Israeli party lines, the Reagan administration's most favourable final status outcome to the Palestinian question was almost identical to Labour's official position. Unlike the Likud, Labour had taken a positive approach to the Reagan Plan (Nakleh and Wright: 49; Sicherman: 68).<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, when Peres became Prime Minister in 1984 there was an extremely close relationship between the US and Labour when it came to discussing strategy and tactics in the peace process. As Ambassador Lewis put it, "Peres succeeded in raising the US-Israeli 'unwritten alliance' to unprecedented heights of intimacy (Lewis 1987: 633)". Whereas with Likud leaders though relations were solid, it was more a matter of the US informing Shamir of its policies rather than high level of collaboration. However, while the administration's position on final status issues favoured Labour, its overall foreign policy agenda and its strategy for dealing with the Middle East peace process favoured the Likud.

The failure of King Hussein and Arafat to come to an agreement to allow Jordan to negotiate on the basis of the Reagan Plan signalled a sea change in US-Israeli relations and in the saliency of the role of the Palestinian question in those relations. Following the failure of the dialogue, Shultz saw no point in pressuring Israel when there was no credible Arab partner able and willing to deliver peace. Consequently, a week after King Hussein declined to take up the Reagan Plan, the US agreed to allow Israel to buy American designed components for its Lavi fighter plane, reversing the previous position (MECS 1982-3: 26-7). This change of approach was reinforced by Shultz's experience in negotiating the Israeli-Lebanese agreement and then in seeing its abrogation due to Syrian opposition and the weakness of the Arab moderates. Syrian influence in Lebanon had increased in 1983 and was widely held to have been behind the terrorist attacks on the American marines and the US embassy in Beirut. In March 1984 the Lebanese President

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<sup>2</sup> Labour may have influenced the terms of the Reagan Plan (Golan 1989: 223; Shultz: 68; 89).

Amin Gemayel, visited Damascus, after which he announced the abrogation of the May 17 treaty between Lebanon and Israel, which had been brokered by the Americans.

The weakness of the Arab moderates, manifested in their inability to move forward on peace, and the strength of the Soviet backed Arab radicals, led to a fundamental shift in US policy priorities. The global-strategic aspect of Middle East policy was upgraded, at the expense of the emphasis on the effort to move forward the regional objective: the peace process. Thus the US concentrated on supporting Israel against the Syrians, who they identified as Soviet clients. As its primary objective in Lebanon became the lessening of Syrian influence there, the US came to see Israel as useful ally. This had very positive results for the US-Israeli relationship. Subsequently, Under-Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger supported the re-instatement of the MoU with Israel as a means of trying to get Israeli help in Lebanon against Syria.<sup>3</sup> Eagleburger was one of the most forceful proponents of the realpolitik strategy against Moscow, which included use of Israel as a strategic asset in the Middle East. In an address at that time, Eagleburger noted, "Israel stands as a bastion of Western interests and values in an area perpetually coveted by the Soviet Union... Its military power is seen by the Soviets as standing in the way of their expansionist ambitions in the Middle East. The security of Israel is a vital American interest, and we will not stand idly by in the face of the Soviet threat to that security." Similar remarks were made at the time by President Reagan and other senior administration officials (Puschel: 72, 83).

From this globalist perspective an Arab-Israeli peace agreement, while constituting an objective of American policy, was not as important as containing the Soviet Union in the region. In January 1984 King Hussein tried to convey to the US his renewed interest in the West Bank and his desire to negotiate with Israel over it, by reopening the Jordanian parliament. Hussein's litmus test for progress was the American ability to get the Israel to stop building settlements in the territories. If King Hussein could not stop settlement activity, then he felt his ability to negotiate peace with Israel under American auspices would be undermined, as his own credibility as protector of the West Bank would appear

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<sup>3</sup> The reconciliation had little to do with Israel, the reinstatement of the MoU was a surprise even to Shamir! (Melman and Raviv 1994: 232-49).

hollow. But Reagan was unprepared to do this (Garfinkle 1992: 18-9). With no prospect of peace, Reagan could see no point in pressurising Israel and following King Hussein rejection of the Reagan Plan in March 1984 Shultz stated, "We have to get over this notion that every time things do not go just to everyone's satisfaction in the Middle East it is the United States fault or that it is up to the United States to do something about it" (NYT 20 March 1984). Reagan then went on record, in March 1985 saying that the US did not want to participate in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations as a full partner (Shultz 439). Basically, Shultz had decided (Quandt 1992: 349) that the US should not present its own peace plans but rather wait until the parties themselves came up with an initiative. Even in that event, there was a feeling that the US should only facilitate peace talks, rather than heavily pressure either side or seek to impose its own version of peace. Clearly then, the return to a cold war driven Middle East policy was advantageous to the Likud, as it kept the focus of American concern away from the Palestinian question. So long as there was no Arab partner with whom Israel could deal on terms acceptable to the Israeli public, Shamir was safe. For while Reagan and Shultz were prepared to work with Peres to facilitate peace, they were not prepared to act in a forceful manner pressuring those of its allies who opposed its vision.

### **Progressive Diplomacy and Functionalism 1984-87**

#### **Israel, Jordan and the US : 'Quality of Life' in the Territories**

Peres' progressive neo-functional values system made him look towards functional initiatives as a crucial element to building peace and economic prosperity for Israel. Peres hoped that progress 'on the ground' coupled with the opening of diplomatic negotiations would allow peace to take root, albeit 'not in one jump' (FBIS 1 April 1985). He envisioned a Jordanian-Palestinian Confederation, consisted of two independent states, Israel and Jordan, with the West Bank between them, controlled and run by both of them: a condominium. Neither of them would have sovereignty over the shared territory. Israel's security border would be on the Jordan River, but there would be no international or economic boundary between Israel and Jordan. The Israeli settlements in the West Bank would remain where they were (MECS 1987: 90). The King, in talks with Peres,

had put forward his vision of a confederation with one seat of government, one army, one diplomatic service that fitted neatly with Peres' conception. The King also agreed that the West Bank and Gaza would be demilitarised (HA 18 March 1985; Shultz 452-3). Both viewed a Confederation as a way of preventing an independent Palestinian state that would threaten both Israel and the Hashemites.

Although Peres and King Hussein could not agree on the extent of territorial compromise in any final status arrangement, they did agree on functional measures to increase their joint control of the territories in the interim period. Israel would withdraw from populated areas and municipal authority would be broadened. They agreed that Israel and Jordan would share land and water administration, that there would be Jordanian police in the territories and Israeli police in the settlements and that Israel would allow a Jordanian flag to fly over the holy places in Jerusalem and Hebron (WP 29 April 1986, 24 July; Garfinkle 1992: 122- 3; Melman and Raviv 1989: 161-8). The conceptual link between these agreements and neo-functionalism was evident in one particular meeting with King Hussein, when Peres spoke about the possibility of a canal between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, passing through both Israeli and Jordanian territory. Other than resolving the problem of the drop in the level of the dead sea, Peres argued that it would enable both countries to move their ports inland and free miles of beach for tourism which would bring them substantial economic benefits. He also suggested that it would make Israel and Jordan each other's hostages, with a joint interest in preserving good neighbourly relations (Golan 1989: 314-5; WP 23 April 1986). This was an echo of the Franco-German European Steel and Coal Community if ever there was one.<sup>4</sup>

Peres also sought to co-operate with Jordan to improve 'the quality of life' in the territories. This involved using functional co-operation as a tool for increasing support for Jordan and reducing support for the PLO and terrorism in the territories (Melman and Raviv 1989: 188-200; Garfinkle 1992: 115-6). Thus, Israel discouraged development projects associated with the PLO, while encouraging development projects associated with Jordan. Without a strengthening of Jordan's position in the territories, the PLO would retain a veto at the peace table, and the Jordanians would lack the backing

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<sup>4</sup> However, King Hussein was not at all as enthusiastic as Peres about the idea.

necessary to open peace negotiations with Israel. As former US ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis noted, "When this effort was coupled with a de-facto freeze on new settlements in the West Bank and technical discussions to resolve functional issues along the Jordan boundary, such as water rights, these efforts added up to a persistent campaign to persuade Jordan that a wide ranging process of negotiations, which could then culminate in formal peace talks, was now possible (Lewis 1987: 599).

From February 1985 until February 1986, during the time when the Arafat-King Hussein agreement was in force, while Israel took such initiatives in the territories, Jordan was not that interested. But as the King's frustration with Arafat grew on the diplomatic front, so functional co-operation with Israel on the West Bank expanded. Peres met the King in October 1985, just days after the Israeli bombing of PLO headquarters in Tunis, and agreed to the King's idea of an international conference at the level of high politics and the King agreed in return to step up co-operation with Israel on issues of low politics. Subsequently, Israel lifted all restrictions on money transfers across the Jordan River bridges and initiated joint projects in the fields of agriculture and industry (Bar Zohar 143). Moreover, the King agreed to co-operate in Labour's efforts to develop an Palestinian leadership in the territories that was independent of the PLO. Hence, in co-ordination with Jordan, Israel appointed three pro-Jordanian mayors in the territories (WP 29 September 1986) and 25 PLO-Fatah offices in Jordan were closed. The Israeli and Jordanian police also combined their efforts against the PLO (Melman and Raviv 1989: 168-188). Meanwhile, in August 1986 and again in 1987, Peres met with pro-Jordanian Palestinians on the West Bank.

The US<sup>5</sup> was heavily involved in all aspects of Peres functional initiatives in the territories. For Peres, the US was of great instrumental value given its financial resources and its connections with the Arab world. For example, the US ambassador to Israel, Thomas Pickering, helped broker the Israeli Jordanian agreement vis-a-vis the opening of the Cairo-Amman Bank and having been previously Ambassador in Amman helped Peres develop his contacts with Hussein (Melman and Raviv 1989: 171; Garfinkle 1992: 99,

114). Despite this, these functional initiatives failed to significantly improve the quality of life in the territories or increase support for the Jordanian over the PLO. This became abundantly clear when the Intifada broke out. Part of the reason for the failure of the initiative was that it was outweighed in its impact by an increase in 'Iron Fist' policies. These were adopted by Israel largely in response to increased violence by the PLO in the territories, itself partly a response to the PLO's exclusion from the peace process by Israel and Jordan (Tessler: 671; Lewis: 601). The attitude of the residents of the territories towards Israel was also hardened by continued settlement activity. Ultimately, the initiative failed because it was based on the faulty premise that it was possible to bypass the genuine expression of Palestinian nationalism in the territories. This was something that Israel in general only came to terms with, gradually, after the Intifada.

### **Peres' diplomacy: Jordan and the US**

The main aim of Peres' diplomacy was to get the peace process moving by entering into talks with Jordan. His problem was that he lacked the ability to move forward on the peace process at home due to the Likud's vetoing power in Cabinet and by the fact that the coalition agreement did not allow Peres to pursue a policy based on land for peace. In order to break out of this situation he sought to secretly obtain a significant breakthrough in the peace process with Jordan<sup>6</sup>, for which he needed American help. With the public backing of the US for any breakthrough, the Likud would either have to acquiesce or allow Peres to break up the government and go to the people on the issue of peace with Jordan which was thought to be popular. These were things that Peres, a member of the NUG could not be seen to be doing (NYT 12 October 1986: 22, 13 October 1986: 2; Garfinkle 1992: 130, 134).

As a result of the fundamental difference between Labour and Likud over the direction of the peace process and the American role within it, each party developed its own direct links with the American administration and Congress which bypassed the official lines of

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<sup>5</sup> During this period, Shultz moved beyond support for a straight 'territories for peace' formula to embrace the concept of a 'mixed sovereignty' in the territories very similar to the kind of functional/territorial compromise Peres envisaged (Shultz: 936, 1023).

<sup>6</sup> In contrast to Peres, the Blazers believed that only the PLO could deliver peace (Novik interview).

communications that were available. This was especially necessary in Labour's case given the extent of the American involvement in their peace strategy. Thus, Peres specifically ignored the then Israeli Ambassador in Washington and instead worked through his own advisers, the Blazers (WP 4 June 1987). Subsequently, the "co-ordination of Peres' moves with Washington became routine carried out by highly restricted channels... agreement about diplomatic strategy and tactics reach heights of intimacy not seen in US-Israeli relations for nearly a decade... Reagan and Shultz calibrated the visibility, style and timing of US diplomatic moves to fit Peres' strategy" (Lewis 1987: 598).

In January 1985, Peres sent a message to King Hussein indicating that Israel was prepared to negotiate on the basis of a territorial compromise as set down in UN resolution 242. In sending this message Peres went well beyond the provisions of the coalition agreement. His problem was that King Hussein did not feel strong enough to move forward alone in the peace process through direct public talks with Israel. Instead, following the King's agreement to co-ordinate diplomacy with Arafat, he proposed an international conference including the participation of Syria, the Soviet Union and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The Jordanian position not only ran counter to traditional Likud positions but also to traditional Labour positions on the peace process. Israel had always favoured direct negotiations arguing that conferences implied imposed solutions and as such did not encourage the Arab parties to come to terms with the need to make peace with Israel and accept it as part of the region in the long-run. In addition, both sides of the political divide in Israel recognised that an international conference involving China and the USSR, neither of which had diplomatic relations with Israel, as well as what was seen as the essentially pro-Arab European powers would only be a scene for international pressure against Israel. In taking these decisions Israel had the support of the US. The Reagan administration, being highly sceptical of the Soviet Union, was deeply opposed to allowing it a to gain a meaningful role in the peace process through an international conference. In addition, Reagan's personal commitment to Israel and his abhorrence for the PLO reinforced Kissinger's 1975 agreement with Israel, which committed the US not

to negotiate with the PLO in the absence of that organisation renouncing terrorism and recognising Israel right to exist.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of their agreed position on these modalities, the US and Peres worked together on numerous occasions to try and bring King Hussein into the peace process without the PLO or an international conference. But despite promises of agreement on this basis, by September 1985 King Hussein had backed away (Shultz: 440-51; Bar Zohar: 145). In any case, Peres recognised the need for a greater Palestinian role in the process than he ideally preferred (MECS 1985: 27). On the face of it though, this recognition, coupled with the knowledge that Shultz and especially Reagan, supported the Israeli position, could easily have led the Labour leader to the conclusion that Israel had no interest in pursuing the peace process vigorously at that particular juncture. However, in order to push the process forward, Peres moderated his position on Palestinian involvement in the peace process. From the progressive perspective, tactical concessions on the question of a Palestinian role in the peace process were acceptable even though they carry with them certain risks for Israel's interests which Peres himself had previously recognised. Peres felt it was possible to make certain practical concessions while retaining his basic position on the final status arrangements. His problem was not just finding a large enough role for the Palestinians to allow King Hussein to enter negotiations but also to keep the PLO and the idea of a Palestinian state far enough in the background so as not to lose public support in Israel, where both ideas were considered by the vast majority of the public as taboo. In any case, Peres opposed direct talks with the PLO as this would shift the discussions towards Palestinian statehood in the territories. This he opposed not only from a narrow Israeli perspective, but also in principle, as a danger to regional peace and stability which was to be built on the post-nationalist Monet model. Without public support on the opening of peace negotiations with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, the Peres strategy of calling an election on the peace issue would fail. Indeed, as if to prepare the ground for an increase Palestinian role in the peace process, in April 1986 at a Labour Party conference, Peres announced his recognition of the Palestinians as a people. However, he

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<sup>7</sup> Because the Palestinian National Council (PNC) had not formally endorsed these resolutions, the US refused to open a US-PLO dialogue (Quandt: 348-52; Tessler: 651-6). The PLO still had not renounced violence and refused to endorse direct negotiations with Israel. The PLO also continued to talk of

was careful not to refer to Palestinian 'legitimate rights', a phrase which was commonly understood as referring to a Palestinian right to statehood. Instead he expressed his penchant for the expression of Palestinian rights to self-determination within a Jordanian setting. The new flexibility in the Peres position became evident in a series of vigorous attempts to start negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. These attempts became known as the Murphy Rendezvous, after Richard Murphy, the American diplomat assigned by Shultz's to achieve this goal.

### *The Murphy Rendezvous 1985-6*

Between February 1985 and February 1986 diplomacy focused on a way to find Palestinians acceptable to Israel to form part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for formal peace negotiations. As far as King Hussein saw it, a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would initially consist of Palestinians chosen by/associated with the PLO but not the PLO leadership itself. This delegation would meet with American officials. The PLO would then meet the US conditions for a US-PLO dialogue. After this, a Jordanian-PLO delegation would attend negotiations at a substantive international conference. This formula became known as "out at the beginning and in at the end" (Bar Zohar). The American approach was to give the PLO a choice. Either Arafat could find some way for indicating his willingness to recognise Israel and renounce terrorism or he could designate pro-Arafat, but non-PLO, Palestinians to represent his interest in preliminary exchanges (MECS 1985: 25). The State Department was relatively optimistic about the possibility of the former choice, while Shultz and especially Reagan not only saw little prospect of this happening but were antagonistic to the PLO in any case. Aware of Peres' and the President's sensitivity to the issue, Shultz announced that the US would not agree to any American meeting with declared members of the PLO. Hence the US concentrated on the latter formula for Palestinian representation. The US also remained strongly opposed to a substantive international conference and hence demanded direct negotiations between Israel and any Arab delegation as a prerequisite for progress (Golan 1989: 303-5; Shultz: 438-447).

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confederation as referring to the existence of an independent Palestinian state prior to any confederative arrangement, a notion Israel and the US opposed (MECS 1985: 21-4).

On the Israeli side too, there was complete opposition to a substantive international conference. Publicly, Peres expressed concern that even the idea that Palestinian members of a joint delegation would be chosen by the PLO was dangerous as it could lead to a US-PLO dialogue behind Israel's back (Medzini 1992: 166-7). Privately, he was prepared to work on the idea in co-ordination with the US. Peres conveyed his position to Shultz and suggested that the US send an emissary to the region to advance the idea of a meeting; which he did. At the end of May, Shultz himself came back from the region with a list of Palestinians from which members of the joint delegation could be selected by Israel. All of the names nominated by the PLO, however, were members of the PLO parliament, known as the Palestinian National Council (PNC). Whereas the US distinguished between the PLO and the PNC, so that non-terrorist elements in the PNC were deemed acceptable interlocutors, publicly both Peres and Shamir argued that the PNC, as the PLO's highest representative organ was indistinguishable from the PLO. Consequently, in public, at the beginning of June, the Israeli government as a whole concentrated on preventing a US meeting with a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation (MECS 1985: 73)<sup>8</sup>. However, privately both Peres and Rabin told the US that they would not *necessarily* rule out *all* members of the PNC on the basis of their membership in that body alone, should future names submitted to Israel be acceptable in other regards (JP 10, 12 May 1985).

Weeks later, King Hussein handed the Americans another list of seven Palestinians, chosen by the Jordanians from the names of 22 PNC members, chosen by the PLO and from which they wanted the US to select four names. The new list contained two less well known people from the territories who were close to Fatah, Hanan Siniora and Abu Rahme. Peres accepted them, despite their PLO leanings, as suitable candidates for the joint delegation (Tessler: 660; Melman and Raviv 1989: 164-5). The third name, Sheik Saya was rejected because he was chairman of PNC<sup>9</sup>. Another two names were PLO hard-liners both involved in terrorism and hence unacceptable to Israel and the US. In any case,

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<sup>8</sup> The slow progress towards a political approach in the PLO, was a threat to the Likud. Although Palestinian terrorism was deeply abhorred by the Israeli right, it strengthened their position amongst the Israeli electorate. The frequency of meetings between Israeli and officials of the PLO had increased, and the number of Israelis who recognise that Israel would eventually have to deal with the PLO had steadily risen since the Lebanon War (Bar On 1996: 213; YA 21 June 1991). To combat this trend, in August 1986 the Likud passed legislation that made unauthorised meetings with PLO representatives a criminal act.

once Peres accepted the names of the two Palestinians, the PLO withdraw their names (MECS 1985: 26).<sup>10</sup> Peres and the US pressed Jordan to name more acceptable Palestinians for possible peace talks. To try and make matters easier, Peres told Shultz, though not the Likud, that while he was not enthusiastic about a preliminary US-Jordanian-Palestinian meeting, he would not oppose it strongly so long as no PLO members participated (Shultz: 452-3).

In January 1986, Murphy tried and failed to find more candidates for a Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, despite lowering American preconditions for negotiations with the PLO. The American message to the PLO was 'hang back' (Bar Zohar 137) and let some Palestinians begin the talks with Israel. In return they guaranteed, at a later stage, that the PLO would get a foot in the door (MECS 1986: 17; Shultz: 461). While Shamir was unaware of these plans, Peres was fully informed (WP 21, 22, 24 February 1986). At the time, some of Peres aides even hinted to the Jordanians that Peres' "no" to the PLO at present might mean "yes" in the future, if Arafat accepted the American conditions. The Blazers claimed that if the PLO repudiated terrorism and recognised Israel it would cease to be the PLO and could become a partner for negotiations (Bar Zohar: 137-141). Indeed, according to Yitzhak Shamir, Peres aides had been in contact with Arafat's aides, presumably on this subject<sup>11</sup> (HA 1 August 1997). But given the PLO's inability to meet the American conditions for entering the peace process (Rubin 1994: 66-85) there was no pressure on Peres forcing him to amend one of the core operating assumptions of Israeli policy.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Later Peres thought his rejection was a mistake (Bar Zohar).

<sup>10</sup> A pivotal name on the list was Nabil Shaath, Arafat's representative in Cairo and a member of the PNC, on whom the PLO was unprepared to compromise. The Americans vacillated on his inclusion (Quandt 1992: 570) while Israel ruled him out as he had been involved in semi-military activity in Lebanon (Bar Zohar).

<sup>11</sup> Both Peres and Shamir maintained contacts with the PLO during the 1980s (Peres 1995: 303; Heikal 1995: 368; Shindler 1995: 211).

<sup>12</sup> At this stage, the PLO still hoped that the US would 'deliver Israel' and was more interested in opening a dialogue with the US than with dealing directly with Israel (Rubin 1994). In any case, even if the PLO had wanted to move it would have had to overcome Syrian and Soviet opposition to anything other than an international conference that would impose on Israel a full withdrawal on all fronts. Given this international and regional constellation coupled with Jordanian weakness, there was little prospect for a major advance towards peace.

Anyway, Peres was inhibited from taking such a move by internal constraints. The problem on the Israeli side was the nature of the NUG, coupled with Peres (correct) perception that Israeli public opinion would not move forward with the PLO. This was due to a number of Israeli myths surrounding the PLO and the Palestinian question, a fact appreciated by the Americans. The electorate preferred either annexation or the status quo to land for peace (Arian and Shamir 1987: 10). Moreover, support for negotiations with the PLO among Jewish Israelis was very low and even the Israeli doves felt the PLO had not done enough to warrant Israeli acceptance at the time (Bar On 1996: 188). In short, without a drastic gesture from King Hussein there was no legitimacy for a serious move towards territorial compromise (Falk; Lewis 1987: 585) and certainly no legitimacy for a policy that incorporated the PLO into the process. Given the polarisation of the political culture expressed in the Knesset, Peres could not make any bold moves which would lead to the break up of the NUG unless he could be sure of winning public support for his peace policy. Only this would allow him to set up a narrow coalition for peace which excluded the Likud. Thus Peres rejected Ambassador Lewis' suggestion of a Shultz shuttle. He felt that he could not be seen to make concessions on the Palestinian issue under American pressure<sup>13</sup>. The problem as Peres saw it was "Hussein can't get the support of his crowd and I can't get the support of mine" (Shultz: 462).

#### *The London Agreement, April 1987*

Despite this failure, as Matti Golan (1989: 307) noted, "There was only one thing that was completely alien to Shimon Peres political philosophy; a freeze, a standstill. He saw such a situation as more dangerous than any possible move, even an international conference to which he had been originally opposed." With the collapse of the Hussein-Arafat agreement in February 1986, Jordan stopped all political co-ordination with the PLO. To Peres, this opened up the possibility of his more favoured option, Israeli talks with Jordan, excluding the PLO. Without Arafat, Peres accepted that King Hussein would need extra international cover to move forward in the peace process. Consequently, Shultz and their advisors worked out and co-ordinated positions on finessing the issue of an international conference, whereby such a conference might be accepted on condition that it was a

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<sup>13</sup> The Israeli public had been strongly opposed to the Reagan Plan, despite Labour's support for it (Falk).

formality and lacked any real power (Shultz: 452-9, 939; Melman and Raviv 1989: 172). With Peres' encouragement, Wat Cluverius an American diplomat, and Murphy were sent to the region to try and bridge the gap between Israel and Jordan concerning the modalities of a conference. Despite some indications to the contrary during 1986 King Hussein backed off from support for the US-Israeli concept of a conference and stated his support for the Syrian position in favour of a substantial international conference (Quandt 1993: 361). Nonetheless, even after the end of his term as Prime Minister, Peres continued to take the diplomatic initiative.

Indeed, despite the change-over, the US continued both to mediate between Peres and Hussein and to co-ordinate its diplomacy with Peres, in an effort to forge a breakthrough. As a result, late in January 1987, Peres was able to announce details of a ten point agreement with the US dealing with the composition and terms of an international conference (MECS 1987: 97).<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, Peres received Pickering at his home and the Ambassador reported on a talk that Cluverius had held with Hussein, who was showing flexibility (Golan: 325). Shultz then sent Cluverius to London in the event that American mediation might prove useful to the parties when Hussein met Peres and Beilin in London, on 11 April 1987 (Shultz: 937).

In London, both sides agreed on a document setting out the nature of Palestinian representation<sup>15</sup> and the procedural aspects of the international conference. The document defined the aims of the conference: to bring a comprehensive peace to the Middle East, security to its states, and respond to the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people (Peres 1995: 308). According to the agreement, (MECS 1987: 98; MA 1 January 1988; Peres 1995; Garfinkle 1992: 207-8; Quandt 1988; Melman and Raviv 1989) the Palestinian issue would be discussed in the committee of the Jordanian-Palestinian and Israeli delegations whereby the criteria for participation would be based on the parties acceptance of resolutions 242 and 338 and the renunciation of violence and terrorism (MECS 1987: 98). Arafat, Peres argued, would have no choice but to acquiesce (Peres 1995: 306). Still, as a source close to Shamir suggested, the London document allowed

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<sup>14</sup> Amongst other things, the agreement stipulated that Israel would co-ordinate its moves with the US. The question of which Palestinians would participate in the conference was to be agreed upon unanimously.

King Hussein to invite the PLO to participate if it accepted UN resolution 242 and gave up terrorism, adding that a American official had confirmed to him that the PLO would be asked to join on that basis (WP 14 May 1987: A1).

The most important point that Jordan conceded in the negotiations was, as the text of the London document put it, "the international conference will not impose any solution or veto any agreement arrived at between the parties" (MECS 1987: 98). According to Melman and Raviv (1989: 176, 214), American mediation efforts were very much in evidence in London. The details behind the framework for the conference, mentioned above, required mammoth efforts by the American go-betweens and consumed most of the five hours of negotiations (Bar Zohar: 163; Peres 1995: 307). To protect King Hussein it was agreed that the document would be presented as an American paper and that section C, dealing with the limits on to power of the conference, would not be made public until after its opening. According to Peres, this idea had already been agreed in a prior understanding that Israel and Jordan had reached with Richard Murphy and Thomas Pickering. At that stage no one had anticipated that full agreement would emerge. The understanding was that if any substantial, though informal, points of agreement were made the US would take them up and work on them, before presenting them back to the sides as American ideas (Peres 1995: 308).

However, this plan was not only designed to ensure cover for King Hussein, but also, according to Shultz (939), Quandt (362) and Makovsky (75), in order to pressure Shamir to agree to it or, if not, to allow Peres to break up the NUG. Peres recognised the importance of the US not only for means of diplomatic co-ordination or mediation, but also as a salesman to the Israeli public. The public appeared to trust the US as a friend of Israel and thus as an honest broker. Consequently, Peres' entourage felt that the public would accept compromises more readily in response to a US proposal than in response to Arab demands or unilateral Israeli concessions, both of which would appear as a sign of weakness. With an American plan backed by King Hussein, excluding the PLO, Peres could feel reasonably confident that the electorate would view the plan positively; a crucial factor if he was to break up the government and advance towards peace.

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<sup>15</sup> On 27 March 1987 Peres met for the first time publicly with pro-PLO Palestinians (JP 28 March 1987).

While Shultz supported the London agreement he was not prepared to play the role Peres, Hussein and other State Department Officials expected of him. As Shultz put it, "the Foreign Minister of Israel's government of national unity was asking me to sell to Israel's Prime Minister, the head of a rival party, the substance of an agreement made with a foreign head of state - an agreement revealed to me before it had been revealed to the Israeli government itself! Peres was informing me, and wanting me to collaborate with him, before going to the Prime Minister!" (Shultz 939). Shultz therefore told Beilin that Peres had first to show the agreement to Shamir before he did anything. In fact, Peres had done so, but Shamir only received a copy of the text of the agreement to keep, a few days later, when Ambassador Pickering presented Shamir with it and declared, "I come to you not only as the American ambassador but also as a special envoy of the Secretary of State. The Secretary believes that an historic breakthrough has been achieved" (Bar Zohar: 165). In line with Peres suggestion (Peres 1995: 308), Pickering then told Shamir that Shultz wanted to come to the region to bring the parties together in May. Shultz then telephoned Shamir only to be told that he was dead set against it (Shultz: 940).

Throughout the period of Peres' term as Prime Minister, Shamir had remained quiet about Peres' support for an international conference. He never thought that there was the possibility of it occurring (Shamir interview). But discerning a change in the US decision in favour of a limited conference, in February 1987 Shamir visited Washington and declared himself strongly opposed to such an event. On hearing of the London agreement, Shamir (Shultz: 940) sent Moshe Arens as a secret envoy to Washington to explain his opposition. Arens tried to play on the American administrations cold war credentials as a legitimate reason for opposing the London agreement. The heart of Arens objection was that almost all of the parties present at such a conference would take a position diametrically opposed to Israel. Such a gathering was too risky: real, direct negotiations might not take place; the conference could get out of control; it was too slippery a slope that would involve the building up of an international consensus in favour of a complete Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders for Israel<sup>16</sup>. Despite Shultz's efforts to explain to

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<sup>16</sup> Shamir, unlike Arens, did not subscribe to the traditional cold war approach to Moscow (Golan 1992: 23). In 1987, Shamir expressed willingness for the Soviet Union to participate in sponsoring peace talks.

Arens in "excruciating detail" exactly how a conference could be kept under control, Arens would not budge. "The fundamental problem", Arens countered, "was that the Soviet Union, the United States cold war adversary, would always adopt the radical Arab position, and King Hussein would then be unable to take a moderate stance" (Shultz: 942). This approach failed to convince Shultz in principle, but in practise he decided to stay at home and not pressure the Likud or adopt the London agreement as an American plan.

Shultz did continue to try and convince the Likud to accept the agreement, but no pressure was applied. Shultz declared publicly at a meeting of the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, AIPAC, with Peres in the audience that the US was open, though not committed, to an international conference in early May. Reagan wrote to Shamir trying to quell fears regarding PLO participation in the conference, but to no avail. Reagan went as far as praising Peres publicly as a man with a "vision for the future" who recognised the "increasing dangers of the status quo" (JP 17 May 1987). By way of contrast, with Shamir next to him and the whole world watching, Reagan condemned leaders who said "no" to peace as having to give an account to their own people about missing chances for peace. But he added that the Prime Minister has not used the word 'no' (JP 20 May 1987; Rubinstein 1992). This gentle ticking off, served to reassure Shamir, as it meant there would be no American pressure on the Likud to compromise. Reagan and Shultz were not prepared to play the role Peres, Hussein and other State Department Officials expected of them (WP 30 April, 12,18 May 1987). In the absence of a stronger US role, Peres was unable to get any Likud cabinet minister to support the agreement and the plan failed to become Israeli government policy. By the end May, Jordan had disclaimed the London agreement and the opportunity had passed.

### **Shamir, the Intifada and the Shultz Plan**

Despite the London agreement episode, Shamir did not want the Likud to be seen in the US as the reason for the breakdown of the peace process. Consequently, he undertook measures to demonstrate that Israel was serious about peace negotiations, while refusing to base negotiations on the 'land for peace' formula, a position which ensured that even

King Hussein could not enter formal negotiations with him. On Shamir's suggestion, Shultz arranged a secret meeting between Shamir and Hussein. Shamir tried to present the talks to Shultz as holding the kernel of progress, however Hussein, described the meeting as hopeless and added that he could not work with 'that man' (Shultz: 943). Peres then suggested that the up-coming Reagan-Gorbachev summit might substitute for an international conference. Reagan okayed it but added "The first guy who vetoes it kills it" (Shultz: 945). With detailed written American assurances, Shamir agreed to the Plan, though he described the idea as "mission impossible" (Shultz: 942). Indeed, although the Jordanians were stunned by Shamir's acceptance, King Hussein said no. He thought that Shamir would never permit negotiations to go beyond the issue of transitional arrangements for those living in the West Bank and Gaza. The King also thought that Syria would reject this approach and that the Soviet Union, whatever its publicly co-operative stance with the US might be, would support Syria's rejectionist and violent opposition in the end (Shultz: 948; Golan 1989: 332).

In the wake of the Intifada, Shultz decided to launch a new peace initiative in 1988 (Quandt 1993). The problem for the Likud, as one Israeli official noted was, "How can we get him [Shultz] to go home and stay home?" (Shultz: 1023). Shamir did not reject the proposal, instead he concentrated on raising procedural objections to it, while offering to negotiate on the basis of Camp David (Shultz: 1029; MA: 4 March 1988). Nonetheless, Shamir always tried to give a positive impression of his support for the Secretary of State's effort. When Shultz left Israel to go to talk to King Hussein, Shamir asked him to tell the King that he was serious about final status negotiations. "And what does final status mean?", asked Shamir rhetorically, "it means sovereignty." Shultz noted that the last word came out with almost a strangled gulp (Shultz: 1026). Yet even this plan did not envisage an Israeli withdrawal or the cessation of Jewish settlement in the territories. It did not require Israel to abandon the land of Israel and it left open the possibility of future Israeli sovereignty once Israel had strengthened its hold on the area. As Shultz understood it, this was a reference to a careful talk he had had with Shamir earlier about the changing meaning of sovereignty whereby different attributes of sovereignty over territory could be treated in different ways. To Shamir, it just meant Camp David. In any case, Shamir was utterly convinced that the PLO, and the Syrians would not let King Hussein move (MECS

1988: 106). Indeed, apart from Egypt, the reaction in the region was not positive. The PLO banned Palestinians from the territories from meeting Shultz. Hussein was not positive (Quandt: 366) neither was the Soviet Union and Syria was extremely cool to the Shultz proposal. Consequently, Shamir was able to avoid saying no directly to the Shultz plan, leaving the ball in the Arab court.

### **Conclusion**

Peres' progressive value system placed peace as the core political value. Given the external threat of a rise in Islamic fundamentalism and the internal threat posed by the polarisation of the Israeli political system, he was driven to take the main initiatives for peace in the region. Following the neo-functionalism approach, he sought to institute functional co-operation with Jordan. In order to bring about a diplomatic breakthrough Peres looked to the US to help mediate and manipulate an opening with Jordan. However, while the US was prepared to help facilitate an Israel-Jordan agreement, it was not prepared to forcefully manipulate the recalcitrant parties to adhere to any breakthrough. Throughout the period, the progressives pressed for more forceful American involvement along the lines pursued by Kissinger (Lewis 1987: 599; WP 17 August 1986) and were very disappointed with Shultz for not adopting the London agreement in a full blooded manner (Golan 1989: 336).

As the Blazers saw it, Shultz was overly concerned with process, with doing things in the right way. As a result, he failed to secure the product which was the true American interest, that is, a clear advance towards peace. But Reagan and Shultz never saw advancing towards peace as their most crucial objective in the region. To them, cold war balance of power concerns in the region took precedence. As an Israeli diplomat intimately involved in talks with the US noted, "In the eight Reagan years you didn't have the feeling that he was a President who lost any sleep over the lack of a peace process in the Middle East" (Melman and Raviv 1994: 408). Unlike Reagan, key officials in the State Department generally tended to take an essentially regional view of America's interest, as Carter had. According to them, an Arab-Israeli peace was a core American interest. American pressure on the Likud would move the process forward and as such

was worth the expenditure of prestige. Similarly, while Peres understood the cold war dimensions of American policy, he tended to think of the American, and indeed the Israeli, interest in the peace process in regional terms. For Peres, the American commitment to Israel needed to be understood primarily in moral and cultural terms, as opposed to strategic terms (Peres 1995: 85; Peres and Eshed: 218-222). Peres conceived of peace as a goal and an interest in itself, not as a function of the cold war. This was evident both in his diplomacy and in his concept of a European style-regional peace involving a Marshall Plan, which the US viewed with scepticism.

Thus, Reagan was never as keen as Peres, to move forward on the basis of an international conference including Soviet participation (Quandt 1993). In September 1986, Shultz was concerned by a Peres-Mubarak joint declaration which mentioned an international conference with Soviet participation. In the President's opinion, Soviet participation would have led to deadlock (MECS 1986: 69). Even when Shultz was comfortable with Soviet participation, he still refused to commit the US fully to the agreement. There were still too many question marks attached to the London agreement for American prestige to be connected with it. Soviet participation was not fully resolved<sup>17</sup> (MECS 1987: 94; Bar Zohar: 167) and there was the additional uncertainty as to whether Syria and the PLO would scupper the agreement. In the absence of a clear cut Soviet-Arab willingness to make progress, the administration would have been in a relatively weak position to pressure the Likud, even if it had wanted to do so. In similar circumstances in 1982, after the announcement of the Reagan Plan, the Likud had found it

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<sup>17</sup> Under 'old thinking'. Soviet promotion of an international peace conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict was largely a tactic designed to promote Arab unity. However, under Gorbachev the conference gradually changed from one designed to be coercive in nature, to a more flexible approach. The problem was that until 1988 Soviet policy was balanced by the continuation of old thinking within the elite which continued to supply weapons to Syria and support Arab unity. In October 1986, the Soviets wanted an active international conference (Golan: 322). However, during Shultz's meeting with Shevardnadze just after he received word of the London agreement, he apparently attained initial Soviet approval for an international conference whereby the parties negotiated directly and bilaterally and that all the conference could do was to promote that (Shultz: 939). At the same time, after having met with two high-ranking Soviet officials in Rome, Peres leaked information that the Soviets had spoken against any 'coercion' by the superpowers in the context of an international peace conference, or by the conference itself; that Moscow had agreed to the idea of bilateral talks as part of the international conference, and that they had spoken of Palestinian representation at the conference in more general terms than just the PLO (FBIS 10 April 1987: I-3; JP 10 April 1987). However, Soviet public statements did not move in this direction until after 1988 (Golan 1992; JP 11 May 1988: 1; MECS 1988: 112-3). Indeed, the Soviets appeared pleased when, after the London agreement, the PNC formally abrogated Arafat's pact with Hussein (Freedman 1991b: 235).

easy to defy the US, even gaining enough support in Congress to reverse an administration's attempt to restrict aid. Given the fate of the Reagan Plan, which had been destroyed by the forces alluded to above, Shultz was not over keen to commit American prestige again without certain success.

Reinforcing the administration's reluctance to take on the London agreement and pressure the Likud was their special regard for Israel in general. Thus Shultz, in contrast to Peres, held that peace could only be made if the polarised Israeli political culture developed a broad consensus (Golan 1989: 336). Seeing Israel sympathetically, Reagan and Shultz tended to accept the 'procedural/security' concerns of Shamir and the Likud as genuine, especially as these points reinforced their own feelings as to the unreliability of the Arab moderates. Moreover, the fact that in contrast to Begin and Sharon, Shamir and Arens had a pragmatic style and that Arens in particular was skilled at presenting the Likud case in cold war/neo-conservative terms, served to reinforce this tendency. Only when Shamir stated publicly that the exchange of territory for peace was foreign to him, in 1988, did Shultz come to the conclusion that the Likud were using procedure as an excuse (Shultz: 1026). Only then was pressure considered, but it was too late. Rather than structuring a crisis scenario to shock public opinion in Israel, the Americans sought only to influence the Israeli debate so that the up-coming elections would become a referendum on peace (Quandt 1993: 367; MECS 1988: 106). The American intervention did not succeed in helping Labour to win the 1988 election in Israel. In any case on 31 July 1988, King Hussein had publicly relinquished all legal and administrative ties to the West Bank. The Jordanian option had disappeared. Labour had no credible partner for negotiations. Subsequently, as his last act as Secretary of State, Shultz opened a dialogue with Arafat and the PLO. The Likud had won the battle, but begun to lose the war.

## **Chapter 7: The Collapse of the National Unity Government 1988-90**

### **Introduction**

As in 1984, the 1988 election produced a stalemate. The polarisation of the Israeli body politic left the religious parties holding the balance of power. Both Likud and Labour sought to entice them into a narrow coalition, with the Likud having the edge in the talks, but ultimately the stalemate produced a national unity government. However, with many members of the main parties unsatisfied with the coalition the national unity government was unstable. Both sides continued to court the religious parties with a view to a narrow coalition throughout the government's term in office. This domestic political reality had major ramifications. Not only were Labour and Likud actively pursuing different policies simultaneously, but within both parties different approaches were pursued. Within the Likud three different strategies were pursued: Shamir's radical-pragmatic strategy, Arens conservative strategy and the 'constrainers' radical strategy. Within Labour two strategies were pursued: Peres progressive strategy and Rabin's *mamlachi* strategy. As a consequence, the Israeli Ambassador in Washington, Moshe Arad admitted he, "had more problems with Jerusalem than with Israel's opponents" (JR 20 December 1990).

In this period Rabin was the crucial foreign policy actor so far as process was concerned. Both Shamir and the Americans recognised him as the key to sustaining the national unity government. In addition, Rabin, as Minister of Defence, had greatest access to information about potential Palestinian interlocutors from the territories for the negotiations under discussion. In contrast, despite being Labour leader, Peres was Finance Minister which meant he was less directly involved in the day to day running of foreign policy. Moreover, his standing had fallen substantially in Washington following the London Agreement debacle and the loss of the 1988 election. Nonetheless, despite the importance of all these strands of policy on the *process* of US-Israeli relations over the Palestinian question, the Likud was the dominant force as regard the end product of policy. The coalition agreement stipulated that there was to be no rotation of the Prime Minister, and with the Likud also controlling the Foreign Ministry through Moshe Arens,

it had a clear edge over Labour, with the most important and decisive figure being Prime Minister Shamir.

### **Pragmatic Style, Radical Substance: the Shamir Strategy**

Shamir's basic strategy for dealing with the United States with regard to the Palestinian Question did not fundamentally alter during this period. Shamir was not at all enthusiastic about presenting a peace initiative which might set off serious talks and threaten the status quo. He wanted to appear open to peace, while in reality never being prepared to move beyond the Camp David formula which he knew was unacceptable to the Arabs. However, both Rabin and the Americans were demanding that Israel move beyond that formula in order to give them something to 'run with'. Shamir's realised that he needed Rabin's support if he was to retain a broad coalition in order to control his own radicals. Without it, Shamir would have to form a coalition with the far right. Their extremism at the level of instrumental values could cause the situation in the territories to explode. This would destroy the calm in US-Israeli relations that Shamir saw as an important factor in helping to maintain the status quo in the territories thereby limiting the possibility of greater American intervention (HA 31 January 1989: 11).

Shamir and top advisor Ben Aharon were won round to the idea of an Israeli initiative to pre-empt any unwanted US interference. Given American opposition, they wanted to limit the US to playing a bridging role in the peace process *after both parties* had already found some common ground (WINEP 1988: 29). Ben Aharon did not think that the US sponsored peace process would really quell the Intifada (FBIS 3 April 1989: 27). As he explained, "I know it goes against the American nature to imagine that problem has no permanent solution, but there is none for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza" (WJW 21 December 1989: 25). For the radicals the whole American scenario for peace was hopelessly optimistic. They could appear moderate by talking about shared sovereignty and Benelux solutions (WP 26 March 1989: 1; WINEP 1988: 30). But they was not particularly interested in promoting a moderate leadership in the territories and thus was quite happy to see the Palestinian delegates appointed by Egypt or Jordan. As far as Shamir was concerned once the plan had been presented to the Americans, there was

no need to promote it internationally. As Arens asserted, “for Shamir the plan itself was less important than American acceptance of it” (Arens 1995: 60-1). The bottom line for the radicals, as Ben Aharon later admitted, was that the Israeli peace plan of 1989 was merely a “ploy” (JR 20 December 1990: 15).

### **Arens and the Conservative Strategy**

The Likud was divided on the need for a genuine peace initiative. Differences between Shamir and Arens on the peace process had surfaced before during the Murphy Rendezvous (JP 28 February 1985: 2). However, these differences were minor and had no practical significance. In contrast, in this period a consistent and real difference of policy emerged between Arens and the conservatives on the one hand and Shamir and the radicals on the other. The Intifada was a turning point in the conservative attitude towards the Palestinian Question (Arens interview). It was then that the existential value of the whole land of Israel was cast in opposition to prudence. Compromise on territorial maximalism was necessary in order to sustain the compatibility of Zionism, liberalism and democracy and for pragmatic power political reasons. Unlike in the immediate pre-World War II world, one of Jabotinsky’s primary reasons for maximalism no longer existed as it was no longer considered necessary to control the whole land of Israel in order to provide room to save European Jewry. Moreover, in the new, more hostile international environment in which Israel’s position was weakened, Arens recognised that there was no way of stopping the Arab world from acquiring a nuclear capability within a few years. The Arabs were close to achieving a strategic parity with Israel which made war a far less attractive policy option (Arens 1995: 25). There was also increased sympathy for the Palestinians and the increasing moderation of the Soviet Union and the Arab states in the peace process, which affected the position of Israel’s key ally, the United States. As Arens (1995: 278) explained:

*“Just as after the Holocaust certain territorial claims had to be abandoned, so now Israel must maintain a reasonable correlation between concrete objectives and resources. As a nation dedicated to Western values and ideals, we must live by them not only in Israel itself, but also in our dealings with the Palestinian population. We cannot deny them participation in the political process that determines how they are*

*governed. Autonomy will provide limited participation and is therefore a move in the right direction, but can serve as no more than a transition point to full participation which must be granted them sooner or later."*

Until the Intifada, Arens was not primarily concerned with implementing autonomy (Arens interview) whereas after the Intifada a peace initiative became a priority. The seriousness of his desire to push forward diplomatically can be gauged by the fact that in the wake of the Intifada, Arens spoke with over 100 Arab leaders in the territories in an effort to move towards serious peace negotiations. These discussions brought him to the conclusion that in the short-run, Israel and the Palestinians could come to an agreement based on an interim solution even though the two sides were too far apart to advance on issues of final status (Arens 200). In the long-run, the conservatives advocated full withdrawal from Gaza and Israel-Jordanian-Palestinian condominium in the West Bank, involving partial territorial concessions. This pragmatic security orientated emphasis became most apparent in 1990 when as Defence Minister, Arens closed off territories from Israel. This act was of great symbolic significance as it demonstrated that he no longer believed that the myth of 'living together' under autonomy was really workable. Many ideologues in the Likud criticised him for this move for precisely that reason, for his action implied that Israel was better off without most of territories and the Palestinian population that came along with them.

In 1989, Arens' concept of advancing the peace process hinged on the idea of negotiating with elected representatives from the territories, despite the fact that he harboured no illusion that the kind of leadership that would be elected would at least be affiliated with the PLO (FBIS 8 May 1989: 33). Elections were of crucial significance to the conservatives as they were seen as the best means of conferring a Palestinian leadership with the legitimacy necessary for serious negotiations. In addition, Arens banked on the elected leadership from inside the territories being more pragmatic than the PLO in Tunis as they had more of a stake in coexistence with Israel and would feel more of a sense of responsibility towards their constituents day to day concerns (Arens 1995: 120). Arens hoped that Egypt would use its influence to help quell the violence in the territories and organise support among the Palestinians for the elections idea (FBIS 23 January 1989: 29). The introduction of Israel's own peace plan would also help Israel to define the terms

of negotiation rather than have to work within the categories put forward by others which would almost certainly be founded on principles they opposed. Arens also saw the elections as a means of sustaining Israel's credibility with the US (Arens 1995: 25). From the Americans, Arens wanted a co-ordinated position or at least assurances that the Israeli position would not be continually eroded by Arab 'salami tactics' (WJW 10 February 1989: 10). His basic strategy was to negotiate hard with the Americans in order to obtain a process as much to the benefit of Israel as possible, but ultimately to agree to make concessions to move the process forward, so long as Israel's minimum requirements were met.

### **Rabin and the *Mamlachti* Strategy**

During the mid 1980s, while Peres pursued functional co-operation in the territories, more sceptical members of the government like Rabin, were more concerned to be seen to promote the "quality of life" initiative in Washington (Aronson: 313; JP 28-9 January 1985). According to Efraim Sneh, "what changed Rabin's attitude to the Palestinians was the fact that the Intifada moved the centre of political gravity to the occupied territories. Through their struggle, the Palestinians became partners" (Slater: 346). It was only with the Intifada that Rabin fully accepted the existence of a Palestinian partner with whom it might be possible to negotiate a settlement. To begin with, Rabin did not think anything unusual was going on and did not see any political significance in the 'disturbances'. In the second stage, he came to see the Intifada as part of the more general traditional Arab struggle to destroy the state of Israel. Both these assumptions stemmed from a common *mamlachti* statist security assumption, whereby the Palestinians were not regarded as a serious factor in the political-strategic equation. As Minister of Defence, Rabin pursued a policy of beatings in the territories as part of an attritional strategy designed to demonstrate Israeli determination not to yield to force (Inbar 1996a: 18-20). It was only after 3 months that Rabin came to understand the Intifada as popular uprising. Only then he admitted, "I've learned something in the last two and a half months you can't rule by force over one and a half million Palestinians." (JP 24 March 1988: 3). Subsequently, Rabin argued that Israel needed, "a military-political policy that stands on two feet. Any policy that stands on one foot will never lead to a solution" (JP 11 January 1989). For the

first time, Rabin felt the necessity to initiate a peace proposal on the Palestinian front. In January 1989, Rabin supported a meeting between Shmuel Goren the IDF's co-ordinator in the territories and Faisel Husseini a leading PLO moderate from Arafat's Fatah grouping in the territories. Shortly afterwards Rabin floated his own plan to move the process forward. To begin with, he proposed regional elections in the territories to elect Palestinians with whom Israel would negotiate an interim settlement.

The new Rabin strategy towards the Palestinian question hinged on his belief that local Palestinians could break free of the PLO and negotiate a pragmatic agreement with Israel (FBIS 15 March 1989: 39; JP 21 February 1989). He felt that ultimately Palestinians from the territories would be more pragmatic than the PLO because their primary interest was in ending the occupation and not the return of the 1948 refugees to Israel (FBIS 23 January 1989: 29). For Rabin, the Intifada was extremely significant because for the first time since 1948, the 'insiders' had taken control of the Palestinian movement (FBIS 18 May 1989: 23). Consequently, he appealed directly to Palestinians in the territories to come forward and accept his election plan. The Rabin plan anticipated that the Palestinian insiders would gradually develop more and more independence from the PLO in Tunis until the PLO became as irrelevant to Palestinian politics in the territories as the World Zionist Organisation was to Israeli politics (FBIS 16 March 1989: 24). Nonetheless, Rabin recognised that in the interim Palestinians from the territories still required PLO approval to conduct negotiations with Israel and consequently he gave his approval to Rafi Edri a Labour Party member to meet PLO officials in Tunis to try and secure this (Horowitz: 99; Abbas 1995: 54-56). Rabin's strategy was to try and work with Prime Minister Shamir to enter the negotiation process with the Palestinians. Rabin especially sought to work closely with the Americans. Co-ordination of policy with the US was a central strategic aim in of itself, a means to strengthen Israel's bargaining position and a mechanism for helping to ensure that those who were reluctant to move forward on both sides would not block the process. Rabin felt that the US could use its influence in the Arab world to help give the Palestinian 'insiders' the necessary freedom to negotiate (FBIS 25 May 1989: 21; Bar Zohar: 217).

In many ways the conservative and *mamlachti* sub-cultures took a similar approach to

foreign policy and in this period their strategies regarding relations with the US over the Palestinian question were almost identical. Both Arens and Rabin instituted a closure of the territories, supported only limited settlement in blocks, advocated withdrawal from Gaza and looked towards a genuine Palestinian leadership from the territories for negotiations. However, the conservatives still retained a greater sensitivity to the value of the whole land of Israel. Moreover, because of their position in the Likud, they were tied to a bounded political debate in which their liberalism and pragmatism put them at the margins of legitimacy. The *mamlachti* sub-culture, on the other hand, was not tied to the value of the whole land of Israel and from within the Labour Party was able to adopt a far more flexible approach.

### **Peres and the Progressive Strategy**

Without a Jordanian option, Peres came to accept an expanded role for the Palestinians in the peace process. Peres adapted his long range plan to include the possibility of a demilitarised Palestinian political entity in the West Bank with Israel and Jordan responsible for security (HA 23 March 1989: 1).<sup>1</sup> In diplomatic terms, Peres accepted that the Palestinian track now had to precede the Jordanian track. Peres had already accepted an indirect role for the PLO during the Murphy rendezvous negotiations. However, at that time Peres had sought to use the diplomatic process to marginalise Arafat. Now it began to appear as if Peres was becoming reconciled to a growing PLO role in the long-run. During Sweden's attempts, at the end of 1988, to get the PLO to recognise Israel and thus bring about a US-PLO dialogue, Peres told the Swedish Foreign Minister privately, "If you get the PLO to renounce terrorism and recognise Israel, I would respect them." (Gowers and Walker: 294). Indeed, in public Peres only mildly criticised the opening of the US-PLO dialogue as "premature" (MECS 1989: 111, ft 158). Peres wanted proof that PLO actions matched their declarations (FBIS 15 December 1988: 29-32)<sup>2</sup>. In the interim,

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<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, Peres still opposed a Palestinian state, whereas Beilin proposed the idea of an independent demilitarised Palestinian state in 'Gaza First'. The idea was opposed by Peres who favoured just 'autonomy first' for Gaza (Peres 1980: 899; JP 11 December 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Mainstream PLO figures were beginning to make moderate noises. Bassam Abu Sharif, a close adviser to Arafat, made a statement at the emergency Arab summit conference in Algiers in June 1988 supporting direct talks rather than a settlement imposed by an outside power or negotiations subject to international veto (NYT 22 June 1988). This statement contradicted the PLO's continuing insistence on an effective international conference, and although Arafat did not disavow it, he did say it was not an official PLO

Peres (and Rabin) expressed their desire to be briefed on the substance of US-PLO conversations (MECS 1989: 69-70; Medzini 1988-90: 197, 207, 225; FBIS 3 July 1989: 25).

However, for Peres the US was by no means a central indispensable component of policy towards the Palestinian question. Regional political and economic arrangements and not a militarily strong Israel backed by the US, were the cornerstone of peace and security. Given this basis, Peres, unlike Rabin, did not prioritise co-ordination with the US in the peace process for its own sake. Thus, although he recognised America's pre-eminent position as a potential mediator in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, once the Americans failed to deliver on the London Agreement in 1987, Peres looked to other mediators. As a result, in this period, Peres' strategy was no longer focused on the US and instead worked closely with the Egyptians who represented the main channel of communication to the PLO. In any case, the thrust of the progressives' strategy to break out of the constraints imposed by the NUG, involved setting up a narrow dovish government with the support of the religious parties (FBIS 20 March 1989: 37). The US had refused to help Peres in such a venture in 1987 and it continued to oppose such an occurrence. Peres was backed by the most dovish elements within the Labour party such as Uzi Baram, Chaim Ramon and Ezer Weizman, all of whom had opposed the formation of a NUG to begin with as they felt that peace was impossible without talking to the PLO (NYT 17 November 1988: A3; 22 December 1988: A14).

### **Baker and the American Strategy**

Neither James Baker nor George Bush shared Reagan, Shultz's or Haig's special regard for Israel as a sister democracy, a moral responsibility or a strategic asset. Bush's approach to world affairs was based on a state-centred balance of power system. Not sharing Reagan's vision, Bush saw the Israelis more as a strategic irritant than as a strategic asset. He had urged Reagan to take a tougher line against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and was on good terms with the Saudis. Bush selected his close friend

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document. In February 1989, Arafat gave his first press conference specifically for Israeli journalists and in May he declared the Covenant 'Caduc'.

and ally James Baker, formerly Reagan's Chief-of-Staff and Treasury Secretary, as his Secretary of State. According to Quandt and others in the State Department, Baker was essentially a deal maker. Certainly neither Bush nor Baker were cut from the neo-conservative cloth (Quandt 1993: 384). During Baker's first visit to Israel after the Gulf War, the Likud government tried to encourage greater sympathy for their position by taking him on a helicopter flight which demonstrated the strategic importance to Israel of the Golan Heights and West Bank. This effort failed, while Baker's visit to the Israeli Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem, had no recognisable political impact (Arens 1995: 219, Baker: 421). Shamir's top advisor, Ben Aharon, kept a copy of a 1989 Time magazine story on Baker in his desk drawer in which the Secretary of State had described his technique for hunting wild Turkey's. "The trick is in getting them where you want them on your terms. Then you control the situation, not them. You have the options. Pull the trigger or don't." Shamir and Ben Aharon thought they were Baker's prize turkey (Frankel: 289).

Still, even before Bush took office, Shultz and Reagan instituted a major about-turn in US policy by opening a dialogue with the PLO, without consulting Israel. The State Department felt that there was a chance of a useful Israeli-Palestinian dialogue being set up. The US accepted that given the mainstream Israeli opposition to dealing with the PLO, the organisation could not be directly involved in talks. However they also recognised that in order to work with Palestinians 'insiders' from the territories they would at least need Arafat's tacit approval. The channels for this effort were the US-PLO dialogue in Tunis and Egypt (Quandt 1993: 385-8). Rabin's strategy dovetailed very well with American thinking. Although the State Department was sceptical about Shamir's desire to press forward in the peace process, they were persuaded that the possibility of progress existed by, amongst other things, Rabin's attempt to open a dialogue with Palestinians (Baker 116-8).

Subsequently, the American administration worked closely with Rabin to engineer a breakthrough in the peace process. As noted previously, because Labour's positions on the 'land for peace' issue were closer to those of the US, there was always going to be a greater probability of American administrations would work more closely with Labour

than with the Likud. In the case of Rabin, this possibility was further increased, seeing as one of the main goals of his peace policy was to work closely with the US and his own positions on pertinent aspects of the Palestinian question fitted long-standing American preferences. Furthermore, in the short-run Rabin and the American administration shared the same strategic objective. Both wanted to start a dialogue between Israel and Palestinians from the territories which excluded the PLO from the negotiating process<sup>3</sup>. In addition, there was also a meeting of minds between Rabin and the American administration on the tactical level. The US was unprepared to help Peres bring down the NUG to advance peace. They saw the continued existence of the Israeli national unity government as the best means available of bringing Israel into the negotiating process; a narrow Peres led Labour government, it was thought, would not be stable enough to deliver peace. As a result, Baker and the State Department worked especially closely with Rabin during this period (Arens: 75; HA 12 September 1989: 11).

The difference between Shultz and Baker was that Baker was prepared “to play the game”. Shultz had not wanted to intervene in Israeli politics, even to secure a peace deal he favoured. Baker, without concern for the ‘special relationship’ and only concerned with ‘doing the deal’ was prepared to pressure the Likud, albeit it subtly. He hoped to work closely with Rabin to box Shamir into the opening of an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Subsequently, according to a New York Times report “a senior administration official” felt that a serious Israeli proposal would have to define final status issues in a way that went beyond Camp David. To try and induce a positive Israeli response, Baker also told the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee that if the US could not get talks started between Israel and the Palestinians, then the US might have to turn to the PLO (Arens 1995: 55-57). However, at this stage, the new administration did not feel that the Arab-Israeli conflict was ‘ripe’ for resolution (Ben Zvi 1993: 165). Given this perception, Baker was unprepared to put American credibility and his own reputation on the line to kick-start negotiations. US policy continued with the operational concept that the US should not play a major role in the peace process until the protagonists were ready and willing to compromise; only then could the US play a constructive bridging role in

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<sup>3</sup> Apart from anything else the US wanted to exclude Arafat for the time being as he was an unacceptable figure to the American public. However, in the long-run many in Washington felt that the PLO would

the peace negotiations. Thus, despite the change in personnel at the top and their fundamentally different attitude towards Israel, Shamir could still count on his perception that the balance of interest on the Palestinian Question rested with Israel and not the US.

### **The Israeli Plan: The American Reaction**

The government's first draft of its peace plan was a compromise between the Arens and Rabin plans drafted by Eli Rubinstein and Dan Meridor (Frankel 119). The plan was basically a re-run of Camp David with some additional element involving the other Arab states. The fourth point of the proposal attracted most American and international interest. It called for elections in the territories in 'an atmosphere devoid of violence'. The plan went on to assert that the Palestinians elected would negotiate an interim settlement and only after the interim phase was in place would final status negotiations commence (JP 14 April 1989: 8). In May 1989, after many prior discussions with the US, the NUG publicly presented its four point peace plan. The plan spoke of elections among the Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, a deliberately vague phrase. As always the real question was which 'Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza' was Israel going to negotiate with, and who was going to decide the issue? The Americans had already spoken of the Palestinian elections having to be based on a mutually agreed formula. Clearly, this implied modifications to the Israeli plan and the involvement of the US as a mediator with Palestinians, (the PLO) in the negotiations over the election modalities. Baker also asked Israel to find a creative way to allow Palestinians from outside the territories and East Jerusalem Arabs to participate in the elections (Baker: 120-1). Nonetheless, Dennis Ross was one hundred percent embracing of the plan, as it gave the Americans something to work with. It was regarded in Washington as an exercise in 'constructive ambiguity' (FBIS 6 July 1989: 29). The rest of NUG was taken up with attempting to move beyond that ambiguity in a series of crises.

### **The Constrainers Crisis**

Baker's conditions on Palestinian representation were opposed within Likud circles. In

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eventually have to be brought into the talks (JP 21 March 1989: 1, 12; FBIS 23 January 1989: 31).

contrast, Rabin was prepared to allow East Jerusalemites to take part in the elections, so long as they voted outside the municipal boundaries. Rabin argued that the process would set a precedent whereby the Arabs of East Jerusalem could express their political rights in the territories rather than in Jerusalem itself, which would remain in Israel (YA 11 April 1989: 1). Shamir did not stress his opposition to the American suggestions. He hoped that the public presentation of the plan would put the ball in the Arab court, where the Arabs and not Israel would come under American pressure (JP 30 April 1989: 1). However, Shamir then made a speech which the State Department felt made the plan impossible to sell to the Arabs. In a speech to the Likud Knesset faction, Shamir ruled out the participation of East Jerusalemites in elections and declared that Israel would never cede even one inch of territory to the Arabs (MECS 1989: 71, 74). Consequently, Baker (121) felt the US had to do something to restore its credibility as an honest broker in the Arab world and that something turned out to be Baker's infamous AIPAC speech, which is remembered for its full frontal attack on the Likud's 'whole land of Israel' ideology and settlement policy.

In the face of such open signs of hostility to Likud ideology, three Likud ministers, Ariel Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Modai, tried to constrain the terms of reference of the Israeli peace plan to take away the "constructive ambiguity" that the Americans so valued. Sharon argued that Israel's answer to the Intifada should be military and not political and that Israel could crush the riots if they followed the same tactics he had used in Gaza in 1970 (FBIS 7 April 1989: 30). For Sharon, this policy strategy fitted well with his disregard of the importance of the relationship with the United States: a radicalism of both substance and style. However, the other two were not previously, or subsequently, known for their radicalism and correspondingly many commentators in Israel referred to the three ministers as 'the opportunists' rather than as 'the constrainters'. Nonetheless, they did tap into a strong body of opinion in the Likud, obtaining the backing of other radical Likud MKs in a 'Land of Israel Front'. At the Likud Central Committee meeting the constrainters demanded that Shamir attach the following four conditions to his plan: No East Jerusalemites should take part in the elections, the Intifada should be halted before any elections take place, Israel should continue settlement and not surrender any territory whatsoever (MECS 1989: 22). The conservatives, Arens, Olmert and Meridor were

stunned when Shamir consented to these conditions thereby removing the little space the government had to manoeuvre towards genuine negotiations and endangering their credibility in the US (Frankel: 125). But as Likud MK Ben-Ellisar noted, “the constrainers merely helped Shamir to constrain himself!” (Shindler 1995: 256).

Publicly, the US concentrated on trying to paper over this setback by arguing that the position of the Likud party was not identical with the official position of the government. Unofficially, “a senior administration official” upped the pressure on the Israelis by suggesting that if no progress was possible on the election plan, the US might support an international conference: the Likud nightmare (MECS 1989: 22). However, the real problem was not American-Israeli relations but Labour-Likud relations. As a result of the constrainers actions, the hands of Labour Party doves was strengthened as even Rabin questioned the value of continuing in the NUG under the new conditions. Peres was privately sceptical of the Israeli Peace Plan, while Beilin actually voted against the plan (JP 3 April 1989: 1,10). Following the constrainers’ success, the Labour party voted to leave the NUG. But the Americans counselled the Labour Party not to leave the coalition (MECS 1989: 22). Dennis Ross threatened that if Labour bolted the coalition it would be accused of sabotaging the government’s peace initiative (JP 12/7.89: 1). Eventually, in order to protect Israel’s dwindling credibility in Washington, Shamir resolved the crisis by letting the Cabinet adopt a resolution reaffirming the 14 May initiative ‘without additions or changes’ (MECS 1989: 74).<sup>4</sup>

### **The Ten Points Crisis**

The second crisis of the period surrounded the ‘Ten Points’ put forward by Egypt in August. The Ten Points suggested that Arabs from East Jerusalemites should participate in elections, that there should be a settlement freeze, and that negotiations should be explicitly based on the concept of land for peace and an acknowledgement of Palestinian political rights. By the end of August 1989, despite the extreme resolutions passed by the

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<sup>4</sup> Again in early 1990, Sharon called a meeting of the Likud’s central committee to try and get the party to reject Israel going to a Foreign Ministers meeting under conditions which would allow Palestinian deportees and East Jerusalemites to be included in the Palestinian delegation. Once again however, Shamir

Fatah General Congress, Arafat had agreed to use the Ten Points as a basis for negotiations with Israel. However, along with other demands, he insisted that the PLO would only accept the Ten Points unequivocally if Israel did too (MECS 1989: 24,90). Although this did not constitute acceptance in American eyes, it did enough to put the ball back in Israel's court.

Peres and the Blazers were already working closely with Mubarak on their peace strategy. In early August, the Labour Party adopted 12 principles for the election which accepted all Ten Points. Commentators in Israel noted how well the Egyptian plan seemed to fit with the position of the Israeli Labour, this was hardly surprising given that the Points were actually drafted by two of the Blazers, Avi Gill and Nimrod Novik! (Makovskiy: 10). Subsequently while the Israeli Foreign Minister, Arens, went around the US promoting the Israeli Four Point Peace Plan, Peres followed him around the US promoting the Ten Points, which had not even been formally conveyed to the Likud (Arens: 75, 78). Clearly the introduction of the Ten Points fitted with the long-running Peres scenario for breaking up the NUG. Mubarak had little faith that Shamir was genuinely interested in forwarding the peace process (Baker: 441, 427) and consequently Egypt tried to help Peres. During July, Peres had helped set up the Shas leadership for meetings with Mubarak in Cairo, where he tried to get them to back a narrow Peres government(Frankel: 131). Shas was of potentially pivotal importance in any coalition and Peres hoped that it would help persuade the ultra-Orthodox parties to tip the scales on support for the Ten Points, if it came to a vote in Cabinet (JP 20 August 1989: 1,8).

However, the Americans did not support Peres' attempts to break up the NUG (JP 28 September 1989: 4; 13 October 1989: 2). Rather, Rabin and Baker were trying to use the Egyptian connection to the PLO to construct a compromise which would allow a Israeli-Palestinian meeting to take place within the confines of the NUG. Baker worked with Rabin, to the exclusion of Likud figures, in order to pressure Shamir to enter talks with Palestinians. Thus, without informing the Likud (Arens: 75) Baker met Rabin and handed him a document passed to him by Egypt from the PLO outlining its conditions for

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outsmarted Sharon who felt he had the support of the floor on the issue, by making the issue one of confidence in the government and his leadership and thus easily won.

entering talks. Rabin looked for ways to synthesis the PLO position with the maintenance of the NUG. He announced that the Egyptians could select the Palestinian delegation after consulting with whoever they wanted i.e. the PLO. He claimed that Egypt would not insist on mentioning the PLO by name in the invitation and would announce the names of the Palestinian delegation itself. Rabin conceded that the Palestinians could raise the Ten Points in the preliminary meeting with the Israelis and apparently agreed to accept two or three deportees in the Palestinian delegation as the 'outsiders' (MECS 1989: 74, 81). Baker then informed Rabin that the Egyptians had offered to host a meeting between the Palestinians and the Israelis to help iron out differences between the Israeli position and the PLO position laid out in the document (FBIS 21 September 1989: 35; 3 October 1989: 29)<sup>5</sup>. Mubarak, encouraged by his meeting with Rabin, sent out formal invitations to talks that arrived in Israel on October 4.<sup>6</sup>

While Labour and the US were allowing the PLO a role in the process, the Likud was busy trying to find a way to end the US-PLO dialogue through Congress (see chapter 10). As Ben Aharon explained to US ambassador Pickering, "Our logic is completely opposed to yours" (Frankel: 123). Indeed, what concerned Shamir was not so much the Ten Points themselves as the American attitude towards them. The Americans saw the Egyptian proposal as a way to implement the Israeli plan and not a contradiction to it (MECS 1989: 73; Arens 1995: 74). This undermined the purpose of the plan from the radical perspective. Consequently, inside the Israeli cabinet the Likud rejected the invitation and Rabin's compromise suggestions.

Subsequently Arens and Rabin appealed to Baker to continue his efforts and on 8 October Baker's Five Points became public knowledge. Baker's Five Points were essentially conditions for the Israeli-Palestinian meeting to be held in Cairo, which he felt would be facilitated by a meeting of the Egyptian, Israel and US foreign ministers within two weeks. This gave the Likud the means to argue that they had not killed the peace process by rejecting the Egyptian proposal and this undermined Peres' reason for leaving the

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<sup>5</sup> The PLO still wanted 'outsiders' as opposed to deportees in the Palestinian delegation and suggested Edward Said a PNC member with a US passport, and PLO 'outsider' and moderate Nabil Shaath (JP 28 September 1989: 4). Rabin rejected Shaath outright.

government. The Americans agreed to try and find a way to provide the Likud with the assurances it demanded. Subsequently, Beilin blasted the US for intervening in Israeli domestic politics (JP 8 October 1989: 1). However, the Likud was still unhappy with many implications of the Five Points. But in order to put the ball back in the Arab court, they accepted them whilst attaching six assumptions to that acceptance. These assumptions focused on the Likud's previous demands on Palestinian representation and the agenda for talks at Cairo (JP 23 October 1989). Shamir explained privately that if it was not for his fear of the damage to US-Israeli relations he would not have touched the proposal with a ten foot barge pole (HA 23 October 1989: 9).

To try and accommodate the Likud's concerns, the administration demonstrated its opposition to increasing the PLO's public role by opposing the Arab states' attempt to get the PLO's observer status at the UN upgraded from 'observer organisation' to 'observer state'. In addition, Baker offered the Likud some written assurances which he wanted tied up before the Foreign Ministers met (YA 5 January 1990: 1,5; Arens 1995: 93). The assurances gave Israel some concessions. However, Baker agreed only that, "it was not the US aim *in the current effort* to get Israel into a dialogue with the PLO" (MECS 1989: 77). This wording only heightened Israeli fears about being locked into a process that would eventually lead to Israeli-PLO negotiations.

Frustrated with American tolerance of the Likud, the progressives sought direct links with the PLO in contravention of Israeli law. Beilin suggested to Peres that he meet secretly with PLO officials with the help of the Europeans. Peres agreed to allow Beilin and his assistant, Professor Yair Hirshfeld to do so. As a result, Beilin negotiated indirectly through the Dutch Foreign Minister, with leading PLO figures in Holland. A document was produced in which the PLO and Israel agreed to certain conditions for a final settlement and the PLO accepted the Shamir plan for elections in the territories in return for the inclusion of Palestinians from East Jerusalem in the proceedings. However, the PLO withdrew from this agreement (Beilin 1997 38, 53). Subsequently, on 31 December, Ezer Weizman was dismissed by Shamir from the inner Cabinet for talking to the PLO.

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<sup>6</sup> In fact the invitation had already been transmitted by the Egyptians to Labour the night before and Peres had already announced his acceptance of it (Arens: 86).

The press had already reported that Weizman's cohort Avraham Tamir had met PLO officials (Tessler: 730) and it had also been reported that other figures connected to the Labour party, such as Lova Eliav, had been urging the PLO to accept the Five Points (YA 4 December 1990: 2). According to Ahmed Tibi, an advisor to Arafat, Weizman's message to the PLO, helped soften its opposition to the Five Points (Abbas 1995: 83). Weizman was alleged to have reached an agreement with the PLO on the question of the make up of the Palestinian delegation and promised that Labour would try and bring down the government if the Likud rejected the conditions for Palestinian representation. Commentators found it hard to believe that Peres was unaware of these talks (HA 1 January 1990: 1). Subsequently, Peres threatened to withdraw from the government. But Rabin successfully negotiated a solution with Dan Meridor.

#### **The 'Question and Assumption' Crisis and the Collapse of the NUG**

Rabin met Baker in Washington on 18 January and suggested a compromise on the issue of Palestinian representation, whereby the 'outsiders' would be recent deportees and East Jerusalemites would have to have a dual address in the territories; thereby bridging the PLO's and the Likud's requirements (AH 12 January 1990: 1). Rabin had already put the idea to Shamir who had expressed reservations and stated that he wanted further clarifications from the US (FBIS 1 February 1990: 21). To this end Rabin met Baker again. Rabin's remit from the Cabinet was only to listen to Baker. However, he now co-ordinated with Baker the make-up of the Palestinian delegation to the point of discussing the actual names (Baker: 126; Arens: 109). Following the meeting, as agreed, Labour publicly accepted the American terms and Baker called Arens and Shamir to press the Rabin compromise (FBIS 1 February 1990: 21). With Egyptian and thus PLO support seemingly assured, Baker wanted to tie the Likud down before the PLO extremists pressurised Arafat to change his mind, but the Likud stalled (FBIS 12 February 1990: 24. 8 February 1990: 24; Baker: 127). At this, Peres tried again to break up the government offering a leading figure in Shas, Yitzhak Peretz, a Cabinet position in a narrow Labour led coalition (FBIS: 1 February 1990: 25; 16 February 1990: 25; 23 February 1990: 27). However, Rabin continued to work with Baker to drag Shamir into negotiations.

Once again, Rabin put his compromise to the Cabinet adding that Egypt and not the PLO would announce the names of the Palestinian delegation, while Baker again pushed Shamir for a reply (MECS 1990: 105). Arens then suggested that Baker pose the following question to Israel: Is the Government of Israel prepared to consider as candidates for the Palestinian delegation, residents of Judea Samaria and Gaza on a name by name basis? (Arens 1995: 115). Baker agreed to the question but after long negotiations between Salai Meridor and Dennis Ross (Frankel: 128), he added an assumption which stated, 'There will be individuals in the list once it is agreed upon that will fit the categories of deportees and dual addressees- meaning people who are residents of the territories and have an apartment or office in East Jerusalem (JP 27 October 1995: 2). Arens felt that this was the best Israel could do and he told Shamir that he was very much in favour of accepting the formula (Arens 1995: 119), but Shamir was reticent.

So when on 3 March the Likud Ministers met to discuss the Baker question and assumption, Arens proposed accepting it subject to Likud and Labour agreeing to co-ordinate their diplomacy from then on. This would include agreed steps should the delegation declare itself to be PLO and an agreement to discount the participation of East Jerusalemites in the future Palestinian elections (FBIS 5 March 1990: 25). Most of the Likud ministers agreed although Shamir kept silent (FBIS: 1 March 1990: 30). Shamir prevented a Cabinet vote on the subject, sensing the majority of Likud ministers favoured a compromise (Arens: 123). To try and ensnare Shamir, Rabin got the Labour Party to pass a resolution on the unity of Jerusalem and ruling out negotiations with the PLO (MECS 1990: 107). At the inner Cabinet meeting on 11 March, Rabin had been in a conciliatory mood. He agreed with Arens that if the Palestinian delegation at Cairo announced that they represented the PLO, Israel would walk out. He also stated that he opposed East Jerusalem being included in the area of Palestinian autonomy, as well as, East Jerusalemites being candidates in the elections and although he favoured residents of East Jerusalem voting in these elections he was prepared to let the Knesset decide the matter (Arens 1995: 124-5). Shamir knew that the majority of the Likud ministers favoured the Rabin compromise but he threatened to resign if they did not support his decision to go with Nissim's proposal for a narrow government (Shamir interview). And so on 13 March Shamir sacked Peres. Peres then won a vote of no confidence, bringing

down the NUG but it remained unclear as to who would form the new government.

Shamir had acted against the protestations of Meridor and Arens both of whom favoured the continuation of the NUG and felt that a compromise with Rabin was well within reach. Now Arens favoured the Likud swallowing its pride and recreating a NUG by accepting the Shas compromise (favourable to Labour) of going to the Cairo meeting first and then co-ordinating. However, Shamir was adamant and refused. As a result, Olmert, Meridor and Milo wanted Arens to take over the Likud and go to Cairo, but, Sharon stood behind Shamir and Arens refused to pick up the gauntlet (Frankel: 135). The conservatives lost their chance to take over the Likud. Subsequently, with the support of the ultra-Orthodox, Shamir succeeded in forming a narrow government. Thus despite the general shift within Israeli political culture towards normalisation and a dovish stance, the radicals held even more sway over policy in a narrow right-wing coalition headed by Shamir.

### **Conclusion**

On reflection, the former US Ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis felt that American provocation had pushed Shamir over the edge and made him oppose the Baker initiative and break up the NUG (NYT 23 March 1990). Shamir had suggested to Baker that the issue of Jerusalem would become the focus of the Cairo meeting and Baker refused to deny that might occur. This was supposed to have confirmed Shamir's fears and led him to postulate that Baker would "break our [Likud] bones" at the Cairo summit (Arens 1995: 128; HA 9 March 1990: 1) While there is an element of truth in this evaluation, more fundamentally, as Shamir explained to Arens, a dialogue with the Palestinians was simply not essential (Arens 1995: 128). American behaviour simply furnished Shamir with a convenient excuse to reject the US initiative without paying too high a price in terms of the US-Israeli relationship. Thus the Shamir strategy- radical in substance pragmatic in style - achieved its objective. Israel continued to benefit from \$3 billion of American aid a year and settlements continued to be built. Despite the change from a sympathetic neo-conservative administration to an 'even handed' Bush administration, American policy was still held in check by the Israeli political sub-culture of radicalism. Domestically, the particularism of the religious parties prevented Labour's attempt to

counter this dominance. Regionally, with the PLO still equivocating about adopting the path of negotiations without resorting to terrorism and Syria still adopting an essentially rejectionist stance, Shamir was always able to put the ball back in the Arab court, thereby preventing any major opportunities for Baker to seriously pressure the radicals over their ideological commitment to settlements and the whole land of Israel. Without these supports, even the Bush administration did not want to risk its credibility by taking a more activist approach, especially when the pro-Israel lobby in the United States was still firmly behind the Israeli government.

## **Chapter 8: Radical Pragmatism Defeated: 1990-1992**

### **Introduction**

The new government formed by Shamir was the most right-wing and particularist in Israel's history. Initially, it contained Techiya and Tzomet and later Moledet joined. The NRP was also part of the coalition, leaving Shas as the most dovish element in the government. The make up of the new government, allowed Shamir to pursue his preferred foreign policy objectives without pressure from Labour to advance the peace process. During this period, the key Israeli policy makers remained within the Likud. Prime Minister Shamir was the key player, while those close to him such as Ben Aharon, Rubinstein and Meridor continued to exert some influence over the mechanics of policy. The Cabinet was never really the forum for policy making (JP 21 June 1991) while, the importance of Moshe Arens was reduced as he moved from the Foreign Ministry to the Defence Ministry. The influence of Foreign Minister David Levy was limited by Shamir on issues of major importance regarding the peace process. Sharon exerted significant indirect influence over relations because through his position as Housing Minister he exercised great authority over Israel's settlement policy. Since the issue of where the mass of new immigrants from the USSR would settle was a major question in US-Israeli relations, Sharon's actions were important.

### **The Gulf Crisis 1990-91**

The new government's guidelines rejected the compromise put forward by Arens, Baker and Rabin a few months earlier. In actual fact, Shamir attached an extra condition to entering negotiations whereby parallel to the Palestinian track, there had to be negotiations with the Arab states (JP 13 June 1990). Knowing that Syria would reject any American terms for a conference, Shamir's condition was another means of deflecting American pressure for progress. As a consequence of this public rejection of US policy, Baker informed Shamir via the public hearings of Congress, "the White House number is 202 456 1414, when your serious about peace call us" (JP 13 June 1990). In response, given that the US-PLO dialogue was now over, Shamir felt able to gain some credibility

in the US by stating that the Palestinians representatives could consult with the PLO so long as they themselves were not PLO (WJW 19 July 1990: 4). As usual such an approach was designed to delay negotiations and put the ball into the Arab court. The Shamir government was able to do this without any serious consequences for US-Israeli relations due to Arab actions. First, the US suspended its dialogue with the PLO on 20 June, after Arafat had failed to condemn a terrorist attack on Israel by a faction closely associated with him. Second, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, American attention shifted away from Israel and the peace process.

However, in an attempt to break Arab support for the US position, Saddam proposed linking Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait to Israeli withdrawal from the territories. The initial move failed but the US was concerned that any incident in Israel could turn Arab attention away from Kuwait and cause Arab support for the US against Saddam to dissipate. They were concerned by what might happen in the event that Israel retaliated directly against Iraq. Although the radical inclination generally favoured retaliation, on this occasion Shamir was extremely reluctant to retaliate and preferred to rely on coalition forces to destroy SCUD launchers and American Patriot missiles to protect Israeli cities. Shamir was prepared to toe the American line in expectation of a trade off on the Palestinian question. For him the crucial issue was the future of the territories and not Israel's overall deterrence posture. Shamir realised that following the successful conclusion to the Gulf War the Americans would have an unassailable position in the region, which they would want to use to promote the peace process (Shamir 217-224; Melman and Raviv 1994: 392-4). Baker told the Palestinians explicitly that they had to pay for their support of Iraq during the Gulf War and the reverse held true for Israel. Indeed, as a result, Shamir was able to get Baker to agree to all the Likud's minimal procedural conditions on a peace conference including on the issue of Palestinian representation over which the talks had collapsed in 1990.

### **The Madrid Conference 1991-2**

Between March and November 1991, intense negotiations took place between the United States, the Palestinians, the Arab States and Israel over the format and procedure for the

Madrid Conference and the subsequent bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations. Within the Israeli government there were three approaches towards attending the Madrid conference and the subsequent negotiations with the Palestinians. The first approach adopted by Sharon and the parties of the radical right sought to prevent Israeli participation in the talks completely. Following the Gulf War, in the Cabinet Sharon, Rehavam Zeevi and Yuval Neeman tried to prevent the government announcing its support for the 1989 Shamir Plan (JP 4 March 1991:1). They wanted to prevent any diplomatic initiative and emphasised the need to crush the Intifada with military force as the primary objective (Arens: 222). The right-wing of the Likud as well as Techiya and Moledet railed against the conference as a US dictate, a repeat of Munich and a potential Holocaust (NYT 20 September 1991, JP 24 October 1991; JR 3 October 1991: 15). Sharon attempted to disrupt the American sponsored negotiations several times by deliberately timing settlement initiatives to coincide with Baker's visits to the region.

The second approach was represented primarily by the conservatives: David Levy, Moshe Arens, Ehud Olmert, and Dan Meridor, all favoured attendance at the conference as a genuine, if small, step towards peace. The PLO's position had been greatly weakened while the US agreed to assurances for Israel and had created a two track approach that resulted in direct negotiations between Israel and the Arab states for the first time (NYT 8 March 1991:1; JR 24 January 1991: 5; NYT 28 October 1991; FBIS 16 October 1991: 17). The Conservatives were also concerned to stay on good terms with the United States (JR 28 March 1991:20) and were thus relatively willing to make concessions to the Americans on procedural matters. Twice Levy agreed to American compromises on procedure only for Shamir to retract the agreement (JP 12 April 1991:1; NYT 29 April 1991: 9). Levy thought the government should act quickly to overcome procedural obstacles in order to enable greater US-Israeli co-ordination on substantive issues (JP 21 June 1991). He wanted to take advantage of Baker's suggestion that Israel and the US write up an informal memorandum (Arens: 227). Baker had hoped he would be able to make progress with Levy, but events proved that Shamir was the final arbiter of policy (JP 6 July 1990).

The third approach belonged to the radical but pragmatic Shamir. Shamir was not really

interested in the actual concrete moves towards reconciliation with the Palestinians (Arens: 223). The absorption of Israel's recent immigrants, the fulfilment of a crucial Zionist objective, concerned him more than hold ups in the peace process (WJW 9 May 1991:14). A 'close advisor to the Prime Minister', (Ben Aharon?) stated that he would "shed no tears if the process fell apart" (NYT 16 October 1991). However, Shamir recognised the need to stay on good terms with the US and not be blamed should the current initiative fail (JR 28 March 1991:20). He never thought symbolic acts of defiance of any value, instead he made sure that the terms of reference and procedural set up of the conference did not put Israel in the position of coming under immediate pressure to cede territory. He aimed to stay within the confines of the conference, but drag out its procedures to delay issues of substance from coming to the table, in order to allow time for Jewish settlements to dictate a new reality on the ground. As Shamir explained just after he left office, "I would have carried autonomy talks for ten years meanwhile we would have reached half a million Jews in Judea and Samaria" (MA 26 July 1992).

### *Getting to Madrid*

Between the end of the Gulf War and Syria's agreement to go to Madrid in July, US-Israeli negotiations focused on the modalities for the peace conference. Shamir assumed that the US was unlikely to be able to obtain Syrian adherence to their concept of a conference which did not guarantee, in advance, the return of all territory captured by Israel in the Six Day War. Subsequently, his tactics consisted of giving just enough to the Americans to prevent Israel being seen as the cause of the collapse of the peace process, while holding firm on procedural formulas in order to keep up American pressure on the Arab side. The American idea was for a regional conference sponsored by the US and the USSR, based on UN resolution 242 and incorporating a Palestinian negotiating team consisting of seven individuals none of whom were residents of Jerusalem. Shamir agreed that the conference would be based UN resolution 242, but that each party was allowed to maintain their own interpretations. The Likud argued that by returning Sinai it had already complied with the territorial component of the resolution.

On the question of Palestinian representation, Baker accepted Shamir's demand that there

would be a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Baker rejected virtually all the Palestinian demands, including that for an overt PLO role in the process. Israel got its way on the question of Palestinian representation to the point where, Shamir was even able to see the names of the Palestinian negotiation team prior to its announcement (Baker: 497, 504). Baker was prepared to be accommodating to Israel as his main objective was to get the Likud into the negotiating process. This became a virtual certainty after 14 July the Shamir government became aware that the Syrians had agreed to direct negotiations with a UN observer, as Baker had wanted. Subsequently, Shamir set up a committee to work on Israel's negotiating strategy for the up-coming peace negotiations and in early August he accepted the idea of a UN observer. The Syrian surprise was the crucial turning point in Israel's decision to go to a conference (Shamir interview). Shamir realised that if Israel did not now go along with American plans and attend the Conference, it would be publicly blamed by the US for the breakdown, an action that would seriously damage Israel's relations with the US with all the consequences that entailed (Baker 494-6, NYT 23 July 1991:1). Shamir was also surprised by the American tenacity in promoting the conference, it jarred his conception whereby the balance of interest on the issue lay with Israel. American prestige was at an all time high in the region and given that the US had made the peace process a major policy priority it was difficult for the parties in the region to reject the American initiative. Baker's eight shuttles to the region demonstrated that US commitment to advancing the process was great and that he would not be prepared to let the process quietly grind to a halt as it had done before. Hence, Baker's continual threat to Shamir that if he did not compromise, "the dead cat would be on Israel's doorstep" was credible (Baker: 218; 412-7). For the first time since Camp David, the US was able and ready to apply serious pressure against a Likud government that sought to avoid negotiations.

Shamir tried to escape from the predicament. He tried to use Syrian opposition to attendance at the multi-lateral negotiations as a reason for stalling Israeli attendance at Madrid, but he backed down when Baker threatened to blame Israel for the failure of the conference. Similarly, Shamir backed down on his demand that the Palestinians in the delegation would have to publicly disavow the PLO (Baker: 446). Even when a Palestinian delegate broke the conference rules and declared that their delegation

represented the PLO, Israel did not abandon the conference for fear of the American response (NYT 23 October 1991). Shamir publicly questioned the US's ability to be an honest broker, but he saw "no choice" but to attend or face a dead cat on Israel's doorstep (JP 15 November 1991).

### *The Bilateral Negotiations*

For Shamir the opening of the conference in Madrid was important enough for him to feel that he, and not David Levy, should lead the Israeli delegation. In contrast, all other delegations were led by their respective foreign ministers. However, Shamir was mistrustful of Levy and preferred to give control over the key bilateral negotiations to his personal aides from the Prime Ministers office, Yossi Ben Aharon and Eli Rubinstein. In a sense Ben Aharon's uncompromising and negative attitude to the peace process and Rubinstein's commitment to autonomy for the Palestinians represented the maximum and minimum positions for Shamir. The actual speeches and first face to face meetings of the bilateral committees were of symbolic significance, but contained little substance. Shamir's speech, penned by Ben Aharon, contained all the key elements of the particularist perspective. It focused on past Jewish tragedy, especially the Holocaust and referred to the Jews exclusive claim to the land, emphasising that the root of the conflict was existential and not territorial (Frankel: 309). Shamir rejected Meridor's plea to try and outflank the PLO by appealing to the Palestinian moderates (Frankel: 309).

The bilateral negotiations lasted from 10-18 December, but the Israeli-Palestinian track never got beyond corridor diplomacy, as the Palestinian team demanded that Israel negotiate autonomy with it separately and not with the full Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. The Israelis refused to accept this as it constituted a breech of the Madrid rules which related only to a joint delegation. By the third round of the bilaterals this issue had been resolved and the Palestinians presented an outline for interim self-government which was basically a state in the making. The document called for East Jerusalemites to be included in elections and for an immediate settlement freeze. For all these reasons it was unacceptable to the Israelis. The Israeli team was prevented by Shamir from presenting a full plan for autonomy. But even their presentation of two page document was too much

for Techiya and Moledet who withdrew from the government. This coupled with the defection of the other radical right party, Tzomet, back in December, meant that the government lost its majority. Shamir then called an election for June. In the meantime however the negotiations continued. At the fourth round of talks, the Israelis did present their own draft for an interim solution known as ISGA (Interim Self-Government Arrangement). Unlike the Palestinian draft, it concentrated on negotiating function by function the responsibilities of a future Palestinian administration. At the fifth round of negotiations, the last before the Israeli elections, Israel proposed Palestinian municipal elections and 'early empowerment' which would give the Palestinians immediate control of 19 hospitals in the territories (MECS 1992: 124). This was rejected by the Palestinians. None of these Israeli proposals threatened in any way Israeli control of the territories. From Shamir's perspective they helped deflect the negotiations away from Palestinian demands by framing the negotiations within an autonomy setting.

#### *Israel, the US and the Bilaterals*

Israel sought to obtain commitments from the Americans to strengthen its negotiating position through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Israelis tried to tie the Americans down to Israeli positions opposing a Palestinian state and land for peace. However, the US insisted that if Israel put such positions in the MoU then the US would be forced to put its long standing opposition to those Likud positions in the MoU too. The US would not enter the process as a public ally of Israel, but rather as the honest broker, subsequently Israel had to settle for a letter of assurance along with all the other parties to the conference. Even that was a disappointment to Israel, at one point Israel demanded 45 changes to it (Baker: 498; YA 6 October 1991:2, 11 October 1991:1). The 17 Point letter reiterated America's commitment to Israeli security and recognised that the pre-67 borders were 'indefensible'. But these points were calculated more to fit Labour's minimal territorial agenda rather than the Likud's position.

The best thing from the Likud point of view was American agreement not take part in any bilateral negotiations without both parties agreement. The right's 'whole land of Israel' ideology always dictated that it sought as minimal role as possible for the US in

substantive negotiations over the territories. They had always argued against an international conference, fearing that the superpowers would intervene and impose or at least apply pressure for an unfavourable solution. On the Palestinian track they were especially concerned about US intervention given that during the 1981 autonomy talks the American conception of autonomy had been closer to the Arab outline than to the Israeli outline (JP 28 November 1991).

When the invitations for the bilaterals were about to go out Shamir, in meetings with Bush and Baker in Washington, argued for conditioning the start of bilateral negotiations on the holding the talks in the Middle East. When Baker informed Shamir that the US would be sending out the invitations for the bilaterals irrespective of whether or not there was an agreement on venue, Israeli concern surfaced. The Israelis felt their fears were confirmed when the invitation was accompanied by American suggestions for talking points including the idea of trading land for peace on the Golan. To counter perceived American designs for a mediatory role, Shamir took the opportunity to try and slow down negotiations. Hence, the Israeli team turned up late for the negotiations in Washington, thereby registering their determination not to be pushed around by the Americans without doing serious damage to their overall credibility. However, the Americans had no intention of intervening. When the Israelis refused a Jordanian-Palestinian request for American mediation, the Americans remained aloof. They saw the negotiations as essentially 'getting to know you' sessions and did not expect much progress until after the Israeli elections. This American role, as facilitator rather than mediator, fitted perfectly with Shamir's overall strategy on the Palestinian question. Framed in this manner, the conference did not spell the end of the dream embracing the whole land of Israel. However, while the Americans were accommodating on procedure, they were prepared to confront Shamir over substance: settlements.

### **Loan Guarantees and Settlements**

In his memoirs, Shamir (149-150) stated that what stood out for him about the Reagan administration was its attitude on settlements:

"From 1977 to 1984...230 settlements were established... A new map of the land of Israel had already been created, and though disapprovingly mentioned in various US administration statements, those settlements were never placed in the forefront of US Middle Eastern policy, never in those days described as or considered illegal or awarded the intense and negative attention they received first from President Carter and afterwards from President Bush. Fortunately, President Reagan was free from any such fixation."

Reagan and Shultz stuck to the line that settlements were merely 'unhelpful' to the peace process, not illegal, and certainly not worth pressuring Israel about under the circumstances. As a result, between 1981-88, the number of Jewish settlers in the territories grew from 16 000 to 70 000 (Tessler: 671).

For the Shamir government 1990-92, the value of retaining the whole land of Israel was more important than obtaining the funds to absorb Soviet immigrants and more important than doing significant damage to the US-Israeli special relationship with all that entailed. Concessions could be made on procedural elements within the peace process as this need not harm Israel's position on the ground, but continued settlement in Zionist history had proven itself a crucial determinant of Israel's ability to hold on to territory. Shamir's strategy relied on expanding the number of settlers in the territories so as to make any territorial compromise an impossibility. All his activity in the peace process needs to be understood in this light. Therefore, settlements were not negotiable. If Israel stretched out the negotiations over a long period it could continue to strengthen its position on the ground while the talks went around in circles. This was to be Shamir's strategy for the remainder of his time in power. As he told an reporter just after the 1992 elections, "I would have conducted negotiations on autonomy for ten years and in the meantime we would have reached half a million people [in the West Bank]. Without this demographic revolution, there is no reason to hold autonomy talks..." (NYT 27 June 1992: 1). With the formation of the narrow right-wing government, and the surge in immigration from the Soviet Union, conditions became extremely ripe for the implementation of this policy.

From the second half of the 1970s most Jews who had left the Soviet Union on Israeli visas preferred to emigrate to the US. During the 1980s, the drop-out rate of Soviet Jewish immigrants soared to 90%, but absolute numbers remained low. The United States

government recognised these Jews as refugees and the American Jewish establishment welcomed them. On more than one occasion in the late 1980s (Gurevitz 18; Jones 48) Shamir asked the administration privately to prohibit Soviet Jews with Israeli visas from entering America, but US policy only changed in response to the open door policy pursued by Gorbachev after 1987, when Soviet Jewish emigration reached massive levels. Ultimately, neither the American Jewish establishment nor the American government could find the money to underwrite such a large immigration to the United States (Gurevitz 19-22; WP 15 February 1987). So, from 1 October 1989, strict US quotas came into force as a result of which Israel remained the only viable alternative for the vast majority of Soviet Jewish immigrants.

Shamir saw the mass immigration as an opportunity. On 14 January 1990 in a speech before Likud party factions he stated:

"We need space to house all the people. A big immigration requires Israel to be big too...We must have the land of Israel and we have to fight for it, struggle for it...Just when many said that time is working against us, time has brought us this aliyah and has solved everything. In five years we won't be able to recognise the country. Everything will change - the people, the way they live - everything will be bigger, stronger. The Arabs around us are in a state of disarray and panic. They are shrouded by a feeling of defeat, because they see that the Intifada does not help. They cannot stop the natural stream of the Jewish people to their homeland" (Jones 57).

Shamir proclaimed that the Soviet immigrants were to become his government's top priority (Jones 66). Subsequently, between 1990-92, with Sharon as Housing Minister, the population in the territories rose from around 90 000 to around 130 000; with 22 000 housing unit starts in 1991 alone, a quadrupling of the construction the territories the previous year under the NUG (JP 6 April 1992; Frankel 298).

Shamir wanted settlements expanded quietly in a manner that would not annoy the United States. However, Sharon's radical unilateralism precluded such a strategy. As with the Lebanon War Sharon got Cabinet approval for his broad policy and then he took his activities well beyond what the Prime Minister had envisaged in order to try and fulfil the grand design (Frankel: 296). Nonetheless, when Sharon did deliberately challenge the US

and incur its wrath, by demonstrably setting up settlements every time Baker arrived in Israel, Shamir did little to rein in Sharon (Baker: 123). Shamir recognised that the US did not support Israel's settlement policy but he relied on the fact that Bush would not see the issue as crucial to American interests. Shamir was sure that the balance of interest on the issue remained in Israel's favour. As he explained to the Jerusalem Post (23 February 1990):

“There are things we do not agree on with the US government. For example settlements. ...It is an old thing. There was also no agreement with the Reagan administration. But it has not harmed the advancement of friendly ties between both countries. The principle in our relations with the US is that there is friendship, common interests and joint strategic co-operation, despite difference of opinion. So there are differences of opinion, okay.”

This was Shamir's first and most crucial error. For Bush the settlement question was not something the two countries could simply agree to disagree on. Bush saw the issue of a settlement freeze as the touchstone of US credibility in the Arab world. Moreover, once Israel requested loan guarantees, in order to help absorb the new immigrants, the US felt it had a right to make sure that Israel did not increase its settlement activity in contravention of US policy (Baker: 548). The issue became a personal one for Bush as he felt Shamir had deliberately misled him as to Israel's settlement policy following their first encounter in Washington in April 1989. At that meeting, Shamir had tried to present settlements as a purely domestic matter and was surprised at the power with which Bush raised the issue. In the end Shamir told Bush, “Don't worry, they won't be a problem”; by which he meant they were not an issue which should be of great concern to US interests. However, Bush understood this as a commitment to restrain settlement activity and felt betrayed when two weeks later a new settlement was established. For Bush settlements had become the litmus test of whether the Israeli leader was taking him and the United States seriously (MECS 1989: 27). Hence he was livid when Shamir told US ambassador to Israel, Bill Brown, that “settlements are not an earth shattering matter for the President” (Baker: 123; Melman and Raviv 1994: 410).

But the Bush administration would not drop the subject of settlements. In June 1989, in

his AIPAC speech, Baker called on Israel to, “Lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel and stop settlement activity” (MECS 1989: 21). But it was only after Peres first spoke to the US about a possible \$400 million loan guarantee to cover the cost of absorbing the new immigrants that the administration obtained a lever with which to extract a settlement freeze. Baker told Congress that Israel should only get the loan guarantee if it gave assurances that there would be a freeze on all settlement activity, otherwise, he argued, US funds would free other money in the Israeli budget for settlement activity; this was the so called fungibility issue (JP 2 March 1990). Eventually Levy and Baker agreed that Israel would obtain the loan guarantee without a settlement freeze. In return, Israel was obliged to not to use the money directly for settlement activity, not to provide special incentives for immigrants to move beyond the green line and was also supposed to supply the administration with information about its settlement activity. However, Shamir retracted Levy’s agreement because the document referred to the green line which included the Israeli suburbs of East Jerusalem (Baker 544, Frankel: 298). In any case, the Americans held up delivery of the loan guarantee after the Cabinet voted to build 15 000 homes mainly in East Jerusalem (JR 17 March 1991; JP 31 October 1990). In February 1991 Baker was about to approve the guarantees when he became aware that Sharon was planning to build a further 12 000 new homes for settlers. Shamir’s office informed the Americans that the Cabinet had not approved those plans and the guarantee was granted. However, three weeks later Sharon told reporters that the real figure was 13 500 and that he already had authorisation to go ahead so no cabinet agreement had been necessary. Moreover, in contrast with the agreement forged in the Levy letter, Ben Aharon refused to provide the Americans with the relevant data on settlement construction, leaving the Americans to use spy satellite pictures to keep tabs on Israeli activities (Frankel: 299).

The administration then tried to make it clear to the Israelis that it would not allow the fiasco of the \$400 million loan guarantee to repeat itself. In May, Baker told Congress that settlements were the biggest obstacle to peace and encouraged congressional attempts to reduce aid to Israel by the amount of the Israeli budget spent in the territories (JP 22 May 1991, 21 June 1991). Meanwhile, Bush asked a group of American Jewish leaders to convey his call for a settlement freeze to Shamir (JP 3 July 1991). Shamir’s reply was that

the territories belonged to Israel; there would be no settlement freeze (Baker: 446). At this time, the administration was concentrating on the peace conference and feared that focusing on the settlement question would only provide an excuse for either side to stay away (JP 17 April 1991; WJW 13 June 1991:10). Consequently, it wanted the Israeli government to delay its request for the guarantees from September 1991 by 120 days until after the opening of the Peace Conference.

It was clear to the conservative Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval, that given the standing of President Bush following the Gulf War, Israel would have to choose between settlements and loan guarantees (JP 23 June 1991). However, the Shamir government rejected suggestions of compromise. The key figures in AIPAC, the embassy in Washington and the Prime Ministers Office, all felt that they could defeat the administration through their power in Congress. Yoram Ettinger, a Likud loyalist who reported direct to the Prime Minister's Office from the Washington Embassy informed Shamir in a cable on 4 September, that the administration had only a very limited ability to control the agenda. Ettinger's attitude was symptomatic of the radical style of foreign policy based on a belief in the power of the Zionist will. The radicals tended to think they could and should act with a great degree of autonomy regarding the United States based on the belief that Israel was of more use to the United States than the other way around. This approach was reinforced by the successes achieved during the Reagan years (MECS 1991: 32; Frankel: 299-302; Schiff 1987/8). Hence, Shamir and his top advisor Ben Aharon were strongly inclined to accept Ettinger's advice. Indeed, the Shamir government was so confident of success that it included the first instalment of \$2 billion dollars in the budget for the year ahead. Subsequently, Israel formally submitted its request for the \$10 billion in loan guarantees on 6 September. The Israeli-AIPAC strategy was to drum up grass roots support among Israel's supporters among the US public and then drum up legislative support in Congress behind the Israeli demand. All the activity was set to culminate in Washington on 12 September when pro-Israel lobbyists were set to descend on the Capitol in support of loan guarantees.

With Congress seemingly behind the Israeli position, President Bush went straight to the American people in a television address. Shamir's initial response was to minimise the

importance of Bush's speech. He still felt Israel would get the guarantees (WJW 13 February 1992: 13) and was angry at Cabinet ministers for raising the temperature by referring to Bush as an anti-Semite. Shamir calmly told the press that the history of US-Israeli relations is a history of such ups and downs (Melman and Raviv 1994 427). But this was more than just an aberration, the mood in Congress had changed as Senators were not prepared to challenge Bush's request for a 120 day delay before granting the guarantees. Subsequently, Israel's supporters in Congress agreed to delay consideration of the loan guarantees. The White House had won (JP: 3 October 1991).

The Israeli government and the US administration then resumed negotiations on the loan guarantees after the opening of the Madrid Conference, in January 1992. But by then a major change had taken place in that the pro-Israel lobby was no longer available as a tool to pressure the Bush administration. Shamir thought that there could be a compromise whereby Israel would not have to agree to a settlement freeze, but merely to allowing the US some control mechanism over the money granted (JP 26-7 January 1992; FBIS 3 February 1992:26; WJW 13 February 1992). Indeed, once negotiations got under way, various compromises were put forward (JP 2,10,24,25,27 February 1992; WP 16,19 March 1992). However the bottom line was the administration required a settlement freeze which was completely unacceptable to a government founded on radical particularism. Thus, by the middle of March either Bush and Shamir had rejected all the compromises put forward. However, with the Likud ahead in the polls and Bush in need of Jewish money and votes in an election year, Shamir felt confident he could always get the guarantees after the Israeli election when the administration would be in a weaker position (Shamir interview). Again Shamir made a major tactical error, as Baker allegedly put it, "F--k the Jews they don't vote for us anyway" (New York Post 6 March 1992).

The Bush administration's success in not granting the loan guarantees without a settlement freeze, was a major defeat for the Shamir strategy which had been so successful beforehand. Shamir had made a major error in underestimating the importance of the settlement issue to the Bush administration, while overestimating Israel's ability to get Congress to overrule the presidency. The price the Shamir government paid was not simply its failure to attain the loan guarantees but a major breakdown in the Likud's

relationship with the United States. For Shamir, although usually a pragmatist on instrumental considerations, settlement activity went to the core of his and the radicals values system. The consequences of this approach became apparent in the run up to the Israeli election.

Thus, whereas previously under Shultz in 1987 and again under Baker in March 1990, the US had refused to actively take sides in Israeli domestic politics even when the outcome affected the peace process significantly, this time the administration appeared to try and undermine the Likud position in the forthcoming Israeli elections by intimating that the US-Israeli special relationship was under threat if the Likud remained in power (WP 9 February 1992). It was in this spirit that leaks alleging the sale by Israel of American military technology to China were made at the same time as Arens visited Washington (WP 18 March 1992: 4). Moreover, a week before the Israeli elections, Baker publicly accepted Rabin's campaign distinction between political and security settlements (WJW 14 June 1992: 17). Israeli Labour party figures recognised the importance of the issue and privately urged the administration and Congress not to grant the loan guarantees without a settlement freeze (JP 21 March 1992). Indeed, the crisis did help Labour to win the election and once Rabin came into office, the administration granted him the loan guarantees without insisting on a complete settlement freeze.

## **Conclusion**

Under Shamir, the Likud's foreign policy was radical in substance but pragmatic in style. However, over the loan guarantee/settlements issue Shamir had been forced to adopt the full radical approach because a settlement freeze would have destroyed the key to Israeli control over the whole land of Israel in the long-run. Shamir had thought that ultimately the balance of interest on the settlement question lay with Israel. American administrations' always had other priorities, domestic or global, in which relations with Israel were important enough to reduce the importance of settlements to a minor irritant. However, with the passing of the Reagan administration with its special sympathy for Israel and with the end of the cold war, the balance of interest had begun to shift. After the Gulf war, with the PLO and Syria on board and American credibility at an all time

high, the convening of a regional peace conference became a core priority for the administration. Baker had been prepared in principle to pressure Israel between 1988-90 but the problem had been with the circumstances. After the Gulf War, circumstances were favourable and as a result Shamir and the radicals' control over the relationship finally ran out. Ambassador Shoval recognised the damage being done to the Likud and tried to place the 'special relationship' on new justifications relevant in the post cold war era. Thus he spoke of the role Israel could play in combating the fundamentalist Islamic threat to the West and the moral dimension to the relationship between democracies. However, ultimately, it was clear that in the post-cold war era, the relationship depended on the peace index; that is on how much in American eyes, Israel was serious about the peace process and on this the Likud score was very low (NYT 23 February 1992; JP 27 March 1993).

## Chapter 9

### Progressivism, *Mamlachtiut* and the Oslo Breakthrough: 1992-96

#### Introduction: Personalities, Political Culture and Policy-Making

Within the Labour government there were two policy approaches: Rabin's *mamlachtiut*, and the progressivism of Beilin. At the most general level, both policy-making groups had similar existential values that distinguished it from the previous Likud government. Policy was underpinned by the conviction that Israel was a normal state and not therefore on a messianic crusade to fulfil the particular destiny of the Jewish people by gaining control over the whole land of Israel. The government was committed to maintaining Israel both as a democracy and as the state of the Jewish people and did not subscribe to the view that land was an existential value. This affected Israeli policy in two ways. First, unlike the Likud, the government supported the territorial compromise in the territories and sought to negotiate peace on this basis between 1992-96. Second, because the Labour government took this position, relations with the US improved. Partly as a result, the new government sought to increase the American's role in the peace process, whereas the Likud had generally sought to minimise that role.

Policy making revolved around Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and their advisors, in particular Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin. Rabin solicited advice from military figures, such as Chiefs-of-Staff Ehud Barak and Amnon Shahak, who were very much in the *mamlachtiut* tradition regarding foreign policy. Rabin also retained Eli Rubinstein from the Shamir government to head the talks with the Palestinians, since he was known to be the Israeli with the best knowledge of all the autonomy negotiations. Nonetheless, Rabin tended to work alone, thus he ignored the reservations of Barak about Oslo I, while Rubinstein was not even aware of the channel until after the event. As a consequence of this tendency and the reliance of the government on the progressive and Arab Parties, the dovish tendency in the government was strengthened. Peres' advisors, the Blazers, dominated the intellectual side of foreign policy, as one of them noted, "It was almost scary, we had no counterweight" (Makovskiy: 100-2). From June 1992 until the expulsion of the Hamas activists, Rabin and the

*mamlachtiut* ethos dominated policy. Rabin put himself in charge of the bilateral tracks of the Madrid process and dominated the conduct of relations with the US, leaving Peres to concentrate on the multi-lateral talks. However, the expulsion of the Hamas activists and the ensuing crisis brought Peres back into the loop regarding the Israeli-Palestinian talks and it also signalled the beginning of the Oslo process, which was initiated by Yossi Beilin. Subsequently, Peres and the Blazers exercised a greater influence on policy although the final word always rested with Rabin. Gradually, the adherents of *mamlachtiut* were pulled incrementally towards the approach of the progressives, as their own approach failed to yield the expected results.

### **Mamlachtiut and the Rabin Strategy**

#### *The Need for Peace*

Rabin had adhered to the image of *ein brairah* for much of his political career, but for adherents of *mamlachtiut*, *ein brairah* was a contingent, rather than an existential, reality. In the 1990s Rabin came to believe that a new world was emerging, one that moved Israel beyond the era of *ein brairah* to a period in which the threat to the existence of Israel had been greatly reduced (Inbar 1996: 46). As he explained to the Knesset on taking office in 1992:

“It is no longer true that we are necessarily a people that dwell alone. And it is no longer true that the whole world is against us. We must overcome our sense of isolation that has kept us in thrall for half a century. We must join the international movement toward peace, reconciliation, and co-operation that is spreading over the entire globe these days - lest we be the last to remain, all alone, in the station.” (JP 14 July 1992).

Similarly, just prior to the Oslo Accord Rabin explained to the National Defence College:

“We are obliged to revise our thought processes, those embedded in years of enmity and hatred. We must think differently and see things differently... This is the time for change, to look around us, to dialogue, to fit in, to be more forthcoming, to make peace.” (Klieman 1994: 106)

Rabin had seen a peace initiative on the Palestinian track as a priority since the Intifada. The Gulf War reinforced this priority. It demonstrated that the Palestinian issue still

resonated in the Arab world and that it could be used as a rallying cry by Iran or Iraq to focus a military confrontation against Israel. Such a confrontation would be fought with non-conventional weapons, making it a war Israel could hardly afford to win, let alone lose. In this light, a deal with the Palestinians would serve to ease Israel's position in the region. In turn this would facilitate Israel's entrance into the American led grouping of moderate Arab states. Together this group would weaken the influence of the Iran and the other radicals in the Middle East, reducing their ability to present a strategic threat to Israel. Moreover, with the end of the cold war, the broader peace process itself became of great significance in tying the US to Israeli security. The primary American interest in the region had switched from the containment of the Soviet Union to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region. Although Israeli leaders continued to talk about strategic co-operation with the US against Islamic fundamentalism, with the absence of the Soviet Union, Israel could no longer argue so convincingly that it was a strategic asset to the US in the region. In recognition of this, Rabin strongly believed that in order to retain US support, Israel had to be seen by America to be sincere in its search for peace (Puschel; Inbar 1996: 12-3; NYT 3 August 1992: 8) As he explained, "The more the US can say it is bringing peace to the area-assisted by Israel acting in its own interest, the more Israel will serve the mutual interest in creating stability and leaving less room for extremists" (NYT 15 June 1992: A19).

In addition, Rabin actively sought to co-ordinate his diplomatic moves with Washington. Rabin's *mamlachti* outlook favoured the application of a judicious mixture of political compromise and superior military power, whereby military power provided the foundations for both a firm deterrence strategy and a means of applying political pressure in the negotiations process. The US role in this strategy was to enhance Israel's ability to compromise by ensuring the maintenance of Israel's military qualitative edge and helping Israel to attain the type of compromise it desired through the co-ordination of policy. Thus, in return for American backing of Israeli vital interests in negotiations with the Arabs, Rabin was quite prepared to make concession to the US on non vital interests.

As far as Rabin was concerned, those vital interests with regard to any Israeli-Palestinian peace were based on maintaining Israel as a secure democratic Jewish state. Following the

territorialist logic of his mentor, Allon, Rabin advocated a territorial and political separation between Israel and the Palestinians. Rabin sought to achieve this goal while simultaneously ensuring that Israel retained territorial control in three areas of the West Bank: in the Jordan valley for security reasons; in East Jerusalem with the nationalistic aim of solidifying a united Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty; and in a small proportion of the West Bank, containing the majority of Israeli settlers (though not settlements) and a minimal number of Palestinians, with the aim of annexing these areas to the state of Israel; thereby ensuring the demographic reality of the state of Israel as the state of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

### **Loan Guarantees and Settlements**

Rabin saw a partial settlement freeze as in Israel's interest, in order to facilitate a territorial compromise. Thus, by the time he met Baker, on 19 July, the construction of 7000 housing units in the territories was frozen and government incentives for settlement were ended. A month later after meeting with Bush in the US, Rabin gave the US a commitment not to create or approve any new settlements. Rabin retained the right to thicken 'security settlements' to create a positive demographic balance in those areas of the territories that Israel would seek to annex in the final status arrangements. Thus during 1994 nearly 5000 housing units were under construction within settlements in the territories, the vast majority in 'Greater Jerusalem', with some other construction in areas such as the Jordan valley which were to be included in Israel under the Allon Plan (NYT 29 September 1994: A11, 26 January 1995: 8, 28 January 1995: 3). Unlike Likud settlement activity, Labour's was predicated on pursuing rather than preventing a territorial partition.

On 5 October Congress granted the loan guarantees, with the proviso that any money spent by the government on settlements in the territories would be deducted from the guarantees (Baker: 557). Rabin accepted US conditionality vis loan guarantees in return for the co-ordination of Israeli and American policy and compensation. This time Israel

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<sup>1</sup> According to an academic plan for settlements in the Final Status talks (Alpher 1995), known to be favoured by Rabin, 70% of the settlers would be incorporated into the state of Israel, however Israel would

received \$200 million worth of military equipment. Such moves served to deepen the US-Israeli relationship, a major strategic objective for *mamlachtiut* (JP 24 July 1992:1; 14 August 1992: 1). In actual fact, the Clinton administration sought to minimise the impact of 'conditionality' on Israel. Following the Oslo Accord, Warren Christopher agreed to look into ways of deducting as much as possible of the \$437 million penalty for settlement activity. Thus Rabin succeeded in building in settlements where he deemed it in the interests of Israel and received 'compensation' and political support from the US for not building settlements in areas he was prepared to hand over to the Palestinians.

### **The Israeli-Palestinian Bilateral Talks in Washington**

During the election campaign Rabin had promised to negotiate an interim autonomy accord with the Palestinians in nine months. On entering office he decided to concentrate on the Syrian track (Kimche interview) for two reasons. First Rabin's *mamlachti* instrumental values dictated that peace with Syria was of greater importance than peace with the Palestinians since the Syrian state was a greater strategic threat, one that could threaten Israeli's existence in conventional terms in a way that the Palestinians, without an army or a state, could not. Second, the US wanted to concentrate on the Syrian track to seeing it as the key to regional stability (NYT 2 September 1992: 6). As soon as Clinton took office Rabin had called for a meeting with the President to discuss co-ordination on the bilateral tracks of the peace process (JP 3 January 1993:1) and by March it appeared that they had agreed on a 'Syria First' strategy (JP 29 January 1993:1; 7 February 1993:1; 18 February 1993:1; 16 March 1993:1 27 April 1993:1; Heikal 1996: 444). Since Rabin believed that Israel should only make full peace agreements, 'one at a time', once he decided to concentrate on the Syrian track, he did not feel the need for drastic progress on the Palestinian front (Makovsky: 114). Although Rabin's actions did not rule out progress, the fact that interim negotiation proceeded on the basis that, 'all options should remain open regarding the final status', and not on the explicit basis of 'land for peace' as Rabin believed in principle, suggests that he was not prioritising the Palestinian negotiating track in the short-term.

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retain less than 10% of the territories themselves.

On the other hand, ultimately Rabin thought that peace rested on two legs: the Syrian and the Palestinian (Rabinovitch 1998: 122). Hence he was prepared to encourage the negotiation of an interim agreement with the Palestinians at the same time as seeking full peace with the Syrians. An Interim autonomy accord would provide Israel with the time to create facts on the ground around Jerusalem and also gave Israel a chance to test the security implications of Palestinian control before any final decisions were made. The staged process also had the advantage of being easier to sell to the Israeli public especially in the event of simultaneous territorial concession to the Syrians on the Golan.

To try and facilitate progress, between September and December 1992 Rabin introduced a number of concessions on Palestinian self-government including allowing a Palestinian administrative Council to enact a number of by-laws and expanding the nature of self government on offer to include some aspects of territorial control over land development and water resources. However, the Palestinians refused to negotiate an interim accord on the basis that 'all option would remain open in the final status talks.' Instead they concentrated on trying to bring final status issues such as Jerusalem and settlements into the talks, as well as focusing on issues of human rights abuses. They wanted to create the foundations for a mini-state in the interim period. Much to the disappointment of the Palestinians, the Americans generally stayed aloof from these disagreements. Then in the middle of December 1992 with the talks bogged down, Rabin deported 415 Hamas activists to Lebanon sparking a crisis in the peace negotiations.

#### *The Hamas Deportations and US-Israeli Co-ordination*

The deportation of Hamas activists led the peace negotiations to stall. Washington declared it a "terrible mistake" and backed UN Resolution 799 which 'strongly condemned' Israel. The Palestinians demanded the immediate return of all the deportees before negotiations could recommence with Israel. Although initially reluctant to compromise, Rabin entered into negotiations with the new Clinton administration in an effort to prevent UN sanctions and to get the Palestinians back into talks. Ultimately, the *mamlachti* political emphasis preferred a deal with the US to unilateral military acts. Thus the negotiations with the US over the deportees represented an opportunity for Rabin to

co-ordinate policy. As Rabin's negotiator during the crisis, Health Minister Efraim Sneh noted, "the co-ordination with the United States is a strategic asset in its own right" (JP 5 February 1993). The US-Israeli agreement stipulated that all the deportees would be allowed to return home, though not immediately. The return of a limited number of Palestinians deported since 1967 was also adopted as a good will gesture (JP 14 April 1993: 1). Rabin also announced that Israel had no plans for further deportations except under exceptional circumstances and as a sweetener to the Palestinians, agreed that Faisel Husseini, the leading Fatah figure in the territories, be allowed to join the Palestinian negotiating team (NYT 6 February 1993: 4). In return for these concessions, the US agreed to pressure the Palestinians to return to the talks and not to pressure Israel for further concessions. The Palestinians complained bitterly that they had not even been consulted on the deportees deal (JP 2,4,8 26, 28 February 1993; 5 March 1993: 1). Subsequently, on the 28 April the Tenth Round of Israeli-Palestinian talks resumed in Washington.

As ever, Rabin used the situation to make concessions on the issue at hand in return for compensation from the United States. This time Israel's compensation came in the form of the creation of a bilateral science and technology commission. More importantly, Rabin had expanded US-Israeli co-ordination from the crisis itself to the peace process in general. Both Peres and Rabin called for greater US involvement in the process (JP 24 February 1993:1) and on the American side both Sam Lewis the State Department Head of Policy Planning and Martin Indyk the new Ambassador to Israel favoured such a strategy. As a result the US announced that it was to become a 'full partner' in the bilateral talks. Subsequently, both Rubinstein and Peres went to Washington to consult with the new administration on how to proceed.

### **The Clinton Administration**

The Clinton administration saw an unprecedented opportunity to move towards a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The key to this objective was held to be an Israeli-Syrian agreement. Such an agreement, coupled with the dual containment of Iran and Iraq, would ensure that an American backed grouping of moderate Arab powers and

Israel would create a favourable balance of power against radical forces, thereby underwriting regional stability. The administration was staffed by pro-Israel figures such as Martin Indyk and Sam Lewis who favoured the co-ordination of policy with the Rabin government (JP 29 January 1993). Since 1982, at least, the Americans had recognised Rabin as the most pro-American Israeli leader and the one who shared relatively closely their vision of a final status agreement and their assessment of the region in general. Shultz had seen him as a force to be utilised in 1982 and Baker had worked closely with him in 1989. Now he had the domestic power base to act, the strategy of co-ordination reached a high point. Rabin's demonstrable will to advance the peace process allowed the United States to simultaneously pursue its ties with the Arab world and thus help build a Pax Americana in the region, without having to face domestic opposition from the pro-Israel lobby as in the past. Unlike Begin, Rabin was content to allow American arms sales to Arab states so long as Israel received strategic compensation. The administration could thus remain both on the good side of the domestically powerful pro-Israel lobby and advance its regional objectives. In recognition of these benefits and the risk of losing them if Labour were to lose the next election in Israel, the Clinton administration often accommodated Israeli demands, actions, and interests when even when they clashed with established American positions. The administration was more than content to adopt a strategy of reassurance, rather than pressure, towards the Rabin government (NYT 16 March 1993: 8; 12 September 1993; WP 18 May 1995: A27).

#### *The 'Full Partner' Talks*

Israel injected further concessions into a draft Declarations of Principles (DoP) which allowed the Palestinians a larger degree of legislative autonomy. Once again the Palestinians rejected these proposals for the same reasons as earlier (JP 13 May 1993). Subsequently, after consultations with Rabin (JP 13 May 1993:1) the US put forward, for the first time, its own draft of a tripartite statement on the areas of agreement between the parties. At this juncture the difference between the Labour coalition and the previous government as to the role of the US on the Palestinian track became apparent. Shamir and the Likud were always strongly opposed to the US introducing its own position papers in negotiations with the Palestinians, given that consistent American policy positions since

1967 ran contrary to the Likud's basic outlook on the Final Status issues. In contrast, Rabin who felt it was possible to reach a final status agreement with the Palestinians, recognised the utility of an American role in the process (JP 15 June 1993:1). Yet for Rabin, unlike for the Likud or the progressives, the exact nature of the American role was determined at least as much by an interest in strengthening the US-Israeli relationship as by a calculation as to the compatibility of American and Israeli final status positions. On the one hand, he opposed the presentation of unilateral American proposals such as the Reagan Plan, on the other hand he was prepared to see the Americans go beyond merely acting as a neutral arbiter in the manner of a UN representative. Thus, Rabin was content to see the US present its own bridging proposal for a DoP at the end of the ninth round of talks precisely because he had been able to co-ordinate with Americans officials and had seen the draft 36 hours in advance of it being presented to the parties (JP 20 May 1993: 1; 21 May 1993: 5; NYT 9 July 1993: A3). Indeed, as a result of that meeting, the US draft DoP was altered to exclude a reference to the draft agreement being based on the concept of land for peace, a fact which led the Palestinians to dismiss the American draft as a quasi Israeli document (JP 28 May 1993: 1). During round ten of the talks, the Americans worked on a second draft DoP after consulting both sides (JP 27 June 1993). Again, much to the chagrin of Hanan Ashrawi (Ashrawi: 250) the US draft was in line with Israeli preferences for the interim stage. Rabin was prepared to sign the American DoP but the Palestinians did not response positively to the US draft (WP 22 July 1993: A32; 4 August 1993: A12).

Part of the reason for the failure of the Washington talks lay with Tunis. Arafat had ordered the Palestinian team in Washington to reject the Israeli proposal for 'early empowerment'. Such obstructive tactics were designed to prevent progress in Washington in order to promote a direct PLO-Israel deal at Oslo. By the beginning of August, the Oslo track was imposing itself on the official talks in Washington. Arafat forced the Washington team to present a Palestinian DoP proposing 'Gaza and Jericho First' which, in contrast to all previous Palestinian proposals, agreed that Jerusalem would only be negotiated in the final status arrangements. Arafat was demonstrating to Rabin that only the PLO in Tunis could deliver the deal Israel wanted and only then by negotiating directly with the Organisation in Oslo (Corbin: 146-7).

### **Beilin, Progressive Zionism and the Oslo Track**

The majority of the government coalition, including 30 out of 44 Labour MKs, the Shas leader Deri, Meretz and the Arab Parties, thought the address for negotiations was the PLO and wanted to reverse the legislation banning contacts between Israelis and PLO officials. In 1991, Rabin had opposed Beilin's introduction of a law to repeal the law fearing it might lead the US to reopen its dialogue with that organisation. However, in 1992 Rabin was reliant on the dovish Meretz Party for his majority and as part of their coalition agreement, Meretz got Rabin to allow the law to be repealed, which it was at the end of the year. While the progressive nature of the coalition helped to facilitate the possibility of talks with the PLO, it was the progressives within the Labour Party that took the diplomatic initiative, especially Yossi Beilin. As a close associate of his explained, "Oslo was the fulfilment of ten years of his thinking. He always believed, even at the time of the London agreement, that the only partner for negotiations was the PLO. He would tell Peres at every instance why it would not work with the others" (Makovskiy: 98).

To the progressives, peace and security, the core existential values of normalisation, hinged on the issue of recognition, which meant negotiations with the national leadership of the Palestinians, the PLO. Until the mid-1980s, the Labour progressives had not met PLO officials as they still felt that to do so was heresy, given the common view of the PLO and Palestinians in Israel (Beilin 1997: 26). Once the PLO began to move towards a pragmatic position of accepting a two state solution, Beilin felt that a political breakthrough was possible (Beilin 1997: 27). He was not traumatised by the Holocaust and the 1930s (JP 8 January 1997). Nor was he haunted by the PLO Charter that called for the destruction of Israel, (the words of a modern day *Mein Kampf* in Begin's mind).<sup>2</sup> Rather he was concerned with the organisations practical minimal demands in any negotiations with Israel. However, once, the law banning Israelis from direct contacts with PLO officials was passed in 1986, Beilin was unable to meet directly with PLO

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<sup>2</sup> As Director-General of the Foreign Ministry, in 1987 Beilin stopped the use of the PLO covenant, which called for the destruction of Israel, in Israeli information campaigns.

officials until the repeal of the law in December 1992, when the Oslo process began. Consequently, during the 1980s Beilin's developed sub-political dialogue with Palestinians within the territories who were genuine political leaders linked with the PLO, who were also pragmatic enough for Israel to be able to do business with including Sari Nusseibah and later Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini. Beilin's contacts with Palestinians associated with the PLO took place on three other fronts. First, Beilin and members of *Mashov* went to Egypt on a couple of occasions and met with Mubarak's close advisers, who had close contacts with the PLO. Indeed on one occasion Nabil Shaath who Peres and Rabin had continuously refused to negotiate with, was also present at the talks. It was in these talks Beilin first proposed the idea of Gaza attaining independence as the Palestinian state first, with other parts of the West Bank to follow later (Beilin 1997:56-7). Another important channel for contact with the PLO, albeit indirectly, was set up by the Dutch Foreign Minister Max Van Der Stull who was also a useful link to fellow progressives in the European community. With his help, Beilin was able to set up a think-tank which sought to explore the possibilities for economic and political co-operation between Israel, the Palestinians and its Arab neighbours on the model of European reconstruction after the Second World War (Beilin 1997: 38, 53). Beilin himself stated that the papers he put forward through these channels with various Palestinians and the discussions and proposals of a Palestinian state within Labour Party circles at party conferences from 1990 onwards, formed the foundations for the Oslo process (Beilin 1997: 59).

Noticeable by its absence from this list is the US. The progressives had been disappointed by the American's failure to help them to overcome Shamir's opposition to the London Document in 1987 and by the American support for a Likud led NUG in 1989-90. Again at the end of 1992, Beilin was at odds with mainstream thought in the State Department which wanted Israel to focus on talks with Syria, as opposed to the Palestinian track. Beilin had suggested to a member of the American peace team, that the best that the US could do would be to reopen the US-PLO dialogue. However, the State Department team felt that it would be better to continue with the Madrid conference format (Beilin 1997: 75). Since within the progressive worldview, the Palestinian problem was seen as the core of the conflict, to be resolved by direct talks, relations with the US were seen as merely a

secondary factor. As the US would not help facilitate a deal with the PLO, Beilin looked to other mediators to help expedite matters; Norway.

Subsequently, two Israeli academics, Yair Hirshfeld and Ron Pundak, who worked for Beilin's Research Institute (funded in part by EU money made available through Beilin's contacts with Van Der Stull) met Abu Ala, a PLO official, in Norway. During the meetings Abu Ala suggested the concept of Gaza First which he acknowledged as an idea he had heard advocated by Shimon Peres. The two men reported their meeting to Beilin who in turn provided Peres with minutes of the meetings. In February Peres briefed Rabin on the existence of the academic channel in Oslo. Not expecting Peres or Rabin to agree to direct talk with PLO in Tunis, Beilin hoped to use the Oslo talks as a back channel for resolving problem that would then filter back into the main Israeli-Palestinian talks going on in Washington (Beilin 1997: 72). In the first stage of negotiations, the Israeli academics and the PLO representatives sought to negotiate a DoP, culminating in a document that became known as "Sarpsborg III" at the end of March. The draft agreement strongly reflected the Israeli team's belief in the centrality of economic integration to a resolution of the conflict, as well as, their liberal political credentials. Once Rabin upgraded the talks in May with the arrival of 'Blazer', Uri Savir, the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and later, lawyer and Rabin confidant Joel Singer, most of the Israelis energy was taken up with tightening up on security requirements (Makovsky: 32-3).

Finally in the middle of August with Peres himself in Oslo on the telephone to Tunis, the crucial concessions were made by both sides. The final agreement itself granted territorial autonomy in Gaza and Jericho first, with early empowerment on functional issue throughout the rest of the West Bank. More significantly the DoP explicitly recognised the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" a phrase the Israelis had always deliberately avoided because of the specific connotation it had regarding the existence of a Palestinian state. During negotiations in Oslo, Savir had expounded on the basis, as he saw it, for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. He spoke of the need for economic interdependence, of his private concern for human rights abuses in the West Bank and of the possibility of a Palestinian state being consistent with the requirements of

Israeli security (Makovsky: 97). Summing up the meaning of the Oslo Accord for its negotiators, Savir, in his speech at the signing ceremony in Oslo, declared,

“We Israelis have no desire to dominate the lives and fate of the Palestinians. Therefore with this agreement we are fulfilling not only political interest, but also (resolving) a moral predicament of our people. We would like our meeting to be a moral high ground; an encounter of peace, democracy and economic prosperity.” (Corbin: 169).

Yet for Savir, Beilin and the whole progressive Zionist ethos, it was the accord on ‘mutual recognition’, signed afterwards, that was the most important aspect of the agreement. It was this, in their eyes, that transformed the conflict from an existential one to a political one (Makovsky: 70). According to the agreement the PLO accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338, Israel’s right to live in peace and security, renounced terror and assumed responsibility for all PLO factions to comply with this, rendered inoperative and invalid those elements of the Covenant inconsistent with the right of Israel to exist, while simultaneously agreeing to obtain PNC approval for these changes in the future. In return, Israel recognised the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Through this act, more than any other, it was obvious that the whole Oslo project was very much founded on the values and ways of thinking of Beilin and the Blazers. Nonetheless, it is clear that without the support of both the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and the Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Oslo track would never have moved beyond an academic discussion. Consequently, it is important to understand why both these politicians, especially Prime Minister Rabin, came to accept and support the Oslo track.

Peres began to come round to the view that the Palestinians and perhaps the PLO were the address for negotiations, after King Hussein’s announcement of 31 July 1988. The only question was whether they could deliver peace. Peres was finally convinced that Israel had to negotiate directly by the PLO when faced with the alternative of Islamic fundamentalism, the arch enemy. As he explained in reference to the PLO, "I do not love them (PLO) but in view of the fact that Hamas is the alternative, I have become romantic!" (Beilin 1997:124). By May 1993, Peres came to the conclusion that the Washington talks were fatally flawed, not only because of the absence of the PLO, but

also because the interim agreement was founded on the principle that all options were to remain open regarding the final status. Peres felt that this raised Palestinian suspicions of Israeli territorial ambitions preventing progress in the talks (NYT 17 July 1993: 2). Subsequently he threw himself firmly into the Oslo process.

Despite the change in tactics, Peres still believed that only a Jordanian-Palestinian accord could ensure peace and stability (Peres 1995: 352) and economic integration remained as central as ever to peace. To Peres, “the fate of Gaza should be like that of Singapore from poverty to prosperity in one sustained leap” (Peres 1995: 350). He saw the DoP as a potential catalyst for “a mini Marshall Plan” for Gaza (Peres 1995: 326) and in the Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst and Abu Ala he had interlocutors who shared this vision (Makovsky: 15; Corbin: 27). Peres continued to understand the peace process as part of a rational dialectic whereby, “The movements of Jewish national renaissance and the Arab renaissance met -and clashed- at the same place and time...The military confrontation required trained armies, fortified borders, constant vigilance and suspicion. But times are now changing. Our condition in the 1990s is very different from that which prevailed in the 1950s. The world in which these two movements were born and grew, no longer exists. They both now have to seek new and uncharted solutions to their problems... Economic advancement requires a very different set of circumstances: open borders, markets that straddle political demarcation, goodwill, good products and constant competition” (Peres 1995: 320).

### **Rabin, Mamlachtiut and the Acceptance of Oslo**

The progressives were clearly the driving force behind Oslo and the deal itself was negotiated by them, at certain stages behind Rabin’s back (JP 5 July 1994: 1). Nonetheless, without the support of Rabin, the whole project would have remained theoretical. On taking power, Rabin vetoed Peres’ requests to open a dialogue with the PLO as premature (Corbin: 27, Makovsky: 17). Although his government promised to repeal the law banning contact with PLO officials, Rabin delayed the measure until Bush left office to prevent the administration from using it as an excuse to reopen its dialogue with the PLO. Even then Rabin absented himself from the proceedings in the Knesset the

day the measure was passed. Rabin allowed the Oslo channel to continue so long as it remained academic and did not undermine the American sponsored talks in Washington (Beilin 1997:89). He only became interested in the Oslo talks at the time of the Hamas deportation crisis. Then he felt very uncomfortable that he had caused the collapse of the talks just as a new American President had come into office. Therefore, he got Peres to use the Oslo channel to help restart the official talks in Washington which would help improve Israel's standing in Washington (Beilin 1997:91). Again during June, Rabin sought to use the Oslo channel to advance the negotiations held under American auspices, this time by trying to get the Palestinians to agree to accept the American bridging document (Beilin 1997:109). Despite the focus on co-operating with the Americans through the official talks in Washington, Rabin began to change his mind on the role of the PLO in negotiations. According to Chaim Ramon, the fact that even after Faisel Husseini joined the Palestinian team in Washington there was no progress in talks, was crucial for Rabin. It was evident to him that the hope he had nurtured since the Intifada, of an independent pragmatic West Bank Palestinian leadership, had not come into existence. Rather than showing a pragmatic interest in early empowerment, the Washington Palestinians concentrated on issues such as human rights and Jerusalem; they were clearly not independent of Tunis. This was the assessment of Major General Uri Saguy in May 1993. Rabin had given a similar assessment to Christopher and Dennis Ross when he met them earlier in the year (Makovsky: 38-41; Rabinovitch 1998: 123).

Yet the admission of the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian talks in Washington does not necessarily constitute a reason to open talks with the PLO. As late as the beginning of August, Rabin dismissed the Oslo channel in talks with Warren Christopher with a wave of his hand. Rabin thought there could only be movement on one track at a time and at that stage, with intensive American mediation, the Syrian track appeared to be moving (Beilin 1997: 132). Since Rabin saw the Syrian track as the strategic key to Israeli security in statist terms, he prioritised it. However, in August 1993 Rabin was disappointed with Asad's response to his secret proposal sent via Christopher (Rabinovitch 1998:115). While the Syrian track was exhibiting some potential Rabin refused to consider an interim accord with the PLO which included the West Bank town of Jericho; Gaza First was acceptable, but not Jericho (Rabinovitch 1998: 138). But when

the American negotiating team decided to take a holiday instead of pursuing the Syrian-Israeli track, a gap was created for Oslo in the mind of Rabin. Yet, Rabin could have waited for progress on the Syrian track, unless an agreement with the Palestinians, in of itself, was considered important.

With the concept of the independent leadership gone, Rabin faced the stark choice of ongoing conflict, and a rise in support for Hamas or dealing with the PLO. Previously, Rabin had regarded the PLO as a pawn in the global superpower confrontation, used by the Soviet Union to undermine American diplomatic efforts in the Middle East (FBIS 5 September 1975: 11). Now however, the cold war was over. One of his main rationale for supporting Oslo was his belief that Arafat ensconced in Gaza could deal with Hamas terrorism more effectively than Israel, as he would not be encumbered by the Israeli Supreme Court (Makovsky: 53, 113). Arafat in Gaza, it was argued, would come to represent primarily the Palestinians in the territories and not the Diaspora Palestinians, thereby making a deal possible in Rabin's eyes. By transforming the PLO into the PA (Palestinian Authority) Rabin hoped that the PLO would wither away into a kind of World Zionist Organisation (WZO) as he had envisaged back in 1989, only now Arafat and not Faisel Husseini would represent the Palestinian 'insiders' (Makovsky: 110). What convinced Rabin that this was possible was the DoP itself. Crucially, at Oslo the PLO agreed to make several concession that the team in Washington did not. They agreed to the outlines of the deal Rabin wanted from the insiders. They allowed Israel overall control of security in the Interim Period and they also agreed to exclude the settlements and Jerusalem<sup>3</sup> from Palestinian control in the interim deal. This allowed Rabin to sustain the belief that in the final status negotiations, Israel would not have to withdraw to the exact pre-1967 borders or divide Jerusalem (JP 6 October 1993: 11; Makovsky 65,78). Under these circumstances Rabin was prepared to switch tactics, accept the PLO and the possibility of a Palestinian state as a potential arrangement, under certain circumscribed conditions, in the final status talks.

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<sup>3</sup> Arafat agreed that Jerusalem would not be a base for the Palestinian Authority, though in return Peres agreed to sign a separate secret agreement in which he committed the government not to close Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem (Makovsky: 71; Corbin 156).

The *mamlachti* theoretician who first outlined the abstract logic that Rabin eventually followed in practise was the former head of Israeli Military Intelligence, Yehoshafat Harkabi. In the 1970s Harkabi had written books exposing the basic Arab and Palestinian refusal to recognise Israel's right to exist. In the 1980s he began to argue that the position of the Arab states and the Palestinian people had changed. Harkabi distinguished between the concept of a goal and that of policy. The former is what one aspires to, without necessarily knowing how it will be brought about while the latter is a set of actions designed to achieve what is considered possible and attainable. A distinction which he argued was fundamental to human life. For many years the Arab position on the Arab Israeli conflict was unique in that both grand design and policy focused on the destruction of Israel. This was seen not merely as an abstract aspiration but as a practical role in the realm of international politics which left no opening for a political settlement. Indeed, both Harkabi and Rabin saw the 1974 decision of the Palestinian National Council which expressed a willingness to settle for a Palestinian mini-state, as tactical; strategic gradualism, a stage on the way to the destruction of the state of Israel (Harkabi 1988: 5). After all, it was accompanied by a demand for the restitution of all Palestinian rights including the right of return and of self-determination on the *entire territory of Palestine*. It also ruled out any plan whose price was recognition, peace, secure boundaries and the concession of national rights to the Zionists. Subsequent to this Rabin had got the Americans in 1975 to agree not to negotiate with the PLO until it changed these positions. Yet as Chief-of-Staff immediately following the Six Day War, Rabin and other exponents of *mamlachtiut* had been comfortable with the idea of a Palestinian state in the territories (Pedazur 1995: 278). What they opposed was the PLO, which represented Palestinian interests of the 'outsiders'. The 'outsiders' core interest was the destruction of the state of Israel or at least a right of return for all Palestinian refugees to Israel. This represented a serious threat to the continued existence of Israel as a state with a Jewish majority. Yet following the *mamlachti* conception of *ein brairah* as contingent and not existential, Harkabi argued that the best that was achievable in an international dispute was to bring ones adversary to differentiate between their ideal and their policies. By the end of the 1980s, Harkabi saw the PLO as following in the footsteps of Sadat and accepting this distinction. Crucially, he calculated that they were willing not only to agreed to peace and the principle of normalisation, but also the creation of facts that could forestall the

possibility of turning the clock back to the era when the destruction of Israel was considered a political objective (Harkabi 1988: 28-42). In 1993 Rabin effectively accepted Harkabi's assessment, when the PLO took such a step by agreeing to Israeli conditions for the Interim Period.

Rabin's adoption of the distinction between PLO ideals and policy meant that the Oslo Accord was a realistic policy option in a way it was never likely to have been for Israeli leaders like Begin and Sharon. To Rabin, "The claim that the whole world is against Israel was blown away on the winds of peace" (SWB 5 Oct 1994). In contrast to the particularists the Holocaust had proved that the only way Jews could survive in the post-Holocaust world was by relying on the sword. They could not and should not trust anyone. No matter how strong Israel became, they always spoke and behaved like victims who had to be defensive and reactive, not shapers of their own destiny. Opponents of the Accord saw the European and Jewish experience in the 1930s and the Holocaust as defining the international environment for Israel as fundamentally one of siege in which the changes seen by Harkabi and Rabin in the Palestinian position were unreal, just for show. For them Oslo was a disaster comparable to appeasement in the 1930s. They compared Rabin to Chamberlain and Petain, and castigated him for signing an agreement "with the greatest murderer of Jews since Hitler" (JP 1 September 1993: 1; Heikal: 457; NYT 14 September 1993: A16). On the other hand, according to Israeli political theorist Yaron Ezrahi, What Rabin, who is the first Israeli-born Prime Minister of Israel and the embodiment of the Israeli citizen-soldier, has done is draw just the opposite lesson from the Holocaust experience. The lesson is that having power allows you to move in the direction of compromise. Power allows you to reshape your own future, not just hunker down" (NYT 10 September 1993: A1). This represented a significant amendment or change of emphasis to the classical *mamlachti* interpretation of the Holocaust as enunciated by Ben Gurion. The important thing about the Holocaust had been the need for Jewish sovereignty and power. But now, with that power, Israel had the ability, given the change in circumstances, to reshape its future. These changed circumstances were something classical *mamlachtiut* accepted as a possibility but which it had not seen in practise during its heyday 1948-67. Now however Rabin had seen circumstances change, changes he was able to see because he did not accept that Israel was forever destined to

dwell alone. Rabin pursued this line of thought in representing Israel at the fiftieth memorial ceremony commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1993. There he declared: "Wherever we go, the memory of the Holocaust goes with us..." but in spite of the Holocaust he argued "we still believe people can change". Moreover, he deemed the highest lesson of the Holocaust to be "No more violence, no more wars" (Klieman 1994: 106). As if to emphasize this Rabin suggested that the famous phrase spoken by Zionist hero Joseph Trumpeldor, after he fell in the battle of Tel Chai, "it is good to die for our country," should be changed to "it is good to live for our country" (AH 14 March 1995).

Rabin also gave vent to another implicit side of *mamlachtiut* which had got lost over the years. Back in the 1950s, Ben Gurion had been able to understand and even sympathise with the Palestinian *fedayeen* who attacked Israel, nonetheless in the 1970s and 1980s Harkabi (1971, 1988) noted the dominant Israel attitude had been to dismiss Palestinian suffering as a direct outcome of their own extremism. Only the younger generation of Israeli liberal doves and the post-Zionist new historians sympathised with Palestinian suffering as a result, albeit unintended, of Zionism. However, following the Hebron massacre, Rabin, using language he had never used before in public, echoed the call of Israeli's new historians, accepted a degree of blame on Israel for the conflict. He told the Knesset, "For twenty-seven years the Palestinians...have risen in the morning and cultivated a burning hatred for us as Israelis and as Jews. Every morning they awake to a difficult life and it is partly our fault... It cannot be denied, the continued rule of a foreign people who does not want us has a price... the price of constant confrontation between them and us" (Frankel: 377). According to Yaron Ezrahi, such sentiments and the Oslo Accord themselves represented, "a triumph of Palestinians and Israelis... over their own histories" (NYT 10 September 1993: A1).

Indeed, Ezrahi was right to point to the wider foundations of the accord. For without the public legitimacy for negotiations with the hitherto demonised enemy, the PLO, Oslo would probably have remained just an academic discussion. Unlike in 1985-6 when Peres had been held back from progress in part by the Israeli public's refusal to countenance negotiations with the PLO, in 1993 Rabin was able to act. The public's attitude towards

the PLO and the Palestinians was no longer a block on Labour diplomacy. Rabin's private polls told him a majority of Israelis would favour not only territorial compromise but direct talks with PLO if it renounced the Charter calling for Israel's destruction. Between 1978-85, support for negotiations with the PLO among Jewish Israelis fluctuated between 13 to 22%. Following the Intifada, in 1988-9, polls suggested that if the PLO recognised Israel and ceased terrorist activities then those who favoured negotiations with it rose from 43% in April 1987 to 50% in March 1989 (Arian 1996: 106). In September 1993, 62% of the public supported Oslo (JP 13 September 1993: 1). However, for the public, this acceptance had less to do with triumphing over history and more to do with a recognition of Israel's inability to triumph over the present. There had been no change in Israeli Jews preference for negotiations with the PLO and the creation of a Palestinian state: they did not want it. But due to the changed circumstances described in Chapter 4, they were more willing to accept it (Shamir and Shamir 1993: 47).

### **Implementation: A New Israeli Security Concept**

Negotiations between Israel and the PLO on the terms of implementing the DoP turned out to be a more protracted affair than envisaged by the signatories. The primary reason for the delay in coming to an agreement was the difficulty in resolving PLO demands for a semblance of sovereignty and Israeli demands for security (JP 25 November 1994: 1). Israeli security demands were pursued more vigorously than before due to the change in the Israeli negotiating team, from Peres' 'Blazers' to a group of army officers close to the *mamlachti* approach, under the tutelage of the Primer Minister. Amnon Shahak the Chief-of-Staff became the chief negotiator, Lieutenant General Uzi Dayan was Head of the security sub-committee and Danny Rothschild, former military commander of the West Bank, was put in charge of the talks with the PLO in Washington.

It was only when Peres re-entered the negotiating loop in December that agreement was reached in the security sphere, with the Palestinians agreeing to joint patrols, in return for which the Israeli team dropped the right to hot pursuit into the areas controlled by the PLO (JP 12 December 1993: 1). Again, even after the extensive shuttling of Rabin's envoy Jacques Neriah to Tunis, it was Peres who finally reached agreement with Arafat

on the issue of border controls (JP 10 February 1994) and on the timetable for redeployment (Heikal: 478-491). It was only after direct Arafat-Peres talks on 21-22 April, when Israel agreed to the Palestinians obtaining some of the symbols of statehood, such as passports, postage stamps and a separate international dialling code, that, in return, the Palestinians gave way on Israeli security demands (Heikal: 513). The full economic agreement, outlined during the Oslo agreement by Beilin's associates and Abu Ala, was agreed in Paris on 29 April. On 4 May in Cairo the overall Gaza-Jericho agreement was signed and on 13 May the redeployment commenced<sup>4</sup>. In August, 1995 Peres also led the Israeli team that came to an agreement on the Further Transfer of Powers to the Palestinian Authority, which transferred civilian authority to the PA in eight spheres throughout the West Bank. External security arrangements and responsibility for the security of settlements was retained by Israel, but internal security arrangements were handed over to a 900 strong Palestinian police force. The real key to the post-Oslo agreements lay in Israeli-Palestinian security co-operation, institutionalised in the joint Israeli security co-ordination and co-operation committee.

Here, in practice then, was the beginning of the institutionalisation of a new set of instrumental values drawn from a progressive view of the world rather than a pure *mamlachti* perspective. In this regard, it was not coincidental that Peres and not Rabin's *mamlachti* negotiators made some of the key concessions, especially forgoing the right for the IDF to enter Gaza or Jericho in hot pursuit, for this concession represents a significant alteration in Israel's security concept. Self reliance was replaced by a mixture of political concessions, independent military force, security co-operation with Arafat's forces and Israel's ability to pressure the Palestinians economically through the closure of the territories from Israel.<sup>5</sup> This change in instrumental values at the expense of the IDF's independent capability is what led former Chief-of-Staff and exponent of *mamlachtiut* Ehud Barak to express serious reservations about the agreement (Makovsky: 57). Nonetheless, Rabin and the adherents of *mamlachtiut* acquiesced voluntarily in this new

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<sup>4</sup> For details of this and all the Israel-Palestinian agreements, see *The Middle East peace process: An Overview* Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, May 1996.

<sup>5</sup> More broadly, Rabin also supported US aid to Arab states like Jordan, as a means of strengthening those states interest in peace with Israel (JP 31 May 1995:1). Even more symbolic of the new multi-lateral Israeli approach to security was the fact that, following the Hebron massacre, the Israelis agreed to an international presence in the territories.

security concept. The change in external reality, i.e. a moderation in implacable Arab enmity made such a change possible, but it did not predetermine this change. Rather, once those changes had taken place, the old *mamlachti* instrumental values based on the perception of an on-going siege, was unable to resolve the issues arising out of the new political reality engendered by the Madrid process and then Oslo. The instrumental values of *mamlachtiut* appeared incapable of leading its adherents towards the normalisation of Israel's international position, as hoped and expected. As a result, the old instrumental values were sidelined. Only the alternative view of the nature of international society held by the progressives had the vision whose central values led it to initiate and carry through this change. This process of change in political culture was reflected in the fact that it was Peres and the Blazers that took all the initiatives.

Yet the final word always rested with Rabin. Thus, although Rabin and the *mamlachti* generals lacked the necessary *core* values to create this new reality, once the agreement had been reached, Rabin and the army officers who had been sceptical towards it, were able to accept it and adapt to the new reality relatively easily. Part of the reason for the flexibility of most of Rabin's informal advisors, who were also military men, was that they tended to view the territories in primarily instrumental terms;<sup>6</sup> that is they measured the value of the territories against the degree by which the retention of the land aided the security of the state of Israel within its pre-1967 borders. Since it was clear that their own instrumental values had failed, they were prepared to go along with those of the progressives at least so long as they continued to produce the necessary results. Rabin and the top brass accepted the Oslo process on the basis that it could be stopped at any time should Israel come to believe, after empirical analysis, that the new reality on the ground was not enhancing Israeli security. In this vein, Rabin continually emphasised that the agreement with the PLO was a test, whereby future political progress would be dependent on Arafat's ability to control terrorism (JP 5 September 1994: 5). For Rabin, Arafat's ability to control terrorism was the touchstone of his abandonment in practise of the PLO's maximalist objectives. The step by step structure of the interim accords predicated Israeli concessions on Arafat's record against terrorism. In contrast, the progressives

tended to argue that the process was irreversible. They argued that hastening the peace process would have a positive effect on the struggle against terrorism (HA 1 December 1994), because ultimately, Israeli security depended on recognition and economic integration, not statist military security concerns.

From Rabin's point of view, the agreements laid the building blocks for separation and the prevention of Israel turning, by dint of demography, into a binational state (MM 25 September 1995). The agreement also left open the possibility of Israel retaining areas of the West Bank in final status negotiations and indeed Rabin publicly declared that he wanted to incorporate certain blocks of settlements and Jerusalem into the state of Israel, while keeping the Jordan valley as Israel's 'security border' (SWB 26 September 1995; JR 2 November 1995: 16). In return, Rabin accepted that the elected Palestinian Council should have both legislative and executive powers. Previously a legislative assembly had always been opposed by Israel as it represented a considerable step toward a Palestinian state, a key progressive position.<sup>7</sup>

### **Israel, The United States and the Oslo Agreements**

Prior to Oslo some progressives wanted the US to pressurise the 'overly hawkish' Rabin to modify his position (FBIS 26 February 1993; JP 23 October 1992:1; 18 May 1993:1; 2 July 1993:1; NYT 23 May 1993: 4).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, regarding the incorporation of Faisel Husseini into the Palestinian negotiating team in February 1993, Peres suggested to Christopher that he suggest to Rabin to bring Husseini in. Peres felt Rabin was more likely to accept such a concession if it came from the United States and not from himself (Makovskiy: 75). Yet, it was Norway and not the United States which turned out to be the most effective mediator between Israel and the Palestinians. Even after the DoP was signed in Washington, Israel and the PLO continued to use the Norwegian channel to resolve disputes over mutual recognition (Heikal: 464). For Peres and the Blazers, the US role in the Palestinian track was not crucial to Israeli interests, but merely useful in so far

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<sup>6</sup> As Ben Aharon commented with regard to the Army top brass, "There is not one Likudnik among them". The only Rabin advisor to strongly oppose the accord was Eli Rubinstein, precisely because he did not view the territories in purely instrumental terms (Makovskiy: 101-2).

<sup>7</sup> Differences between the progressive and *mamlachti* approaches to final status issues remained over Jerusalem and the Jordanian role (Makovskiy: 123; HA 5 August 1996: B5).

as it helped bring about acceptance of a bilateral accord and helped to underwrite the economic substructure of peace. When they felt that the US sponsored talks were not going to produce results they did not hesitate to use other countries as mediators.<sup>8</sup> Peres and Beilin had been severely disappointed by the Americans lack of forcefulness since the 1987 London agreement. Consequently, they feared US involvement might torpedo progress and hence they sought not to involve the US too closely in the talks. Thus, although the United States had been told about the Oslo talks by various Israelis, it had not been updated by the Israeli government in any formal manner (Beilin 1997:138). Beilin deliberately avoided telling the Americans that the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, was leading the negotiations for Israel at Oslo; instead allowing Christopher to believe that the talks were primarily an academic exercise, even at quite a late stage in the negotiations (Beilin 1997:104, 113). Indeed, Peres expressly asked the Norwegian to stop briefing the United States about the talks once they were upgraded to a serious level in May 1993 (Larson). Although Peres and the Blazers had become sceptical of the US ability to broker a successful agreement in Washington, they nonetheless felt compelled to keep the US informed for fear of raising American ire and thus potentially endangering any agreement (Corbin: 162; Abbas: 127). Both Ed Djerian and Dan Kurtzer of the State Department were aware of the negotiations, while Christopher was handed drafts of the Sarpsborg document in February and March and was briefed again by Peres in July (Corbin: 65). Subsequently, after the agreement had been reached Peres went with the Norwegian Foreign Minister Holst to break the news to an extremely surprised Dennis Ross and Warren Christopher (Peres 1995: 351).

Peres was concerned that the Americans would not be prepared to back the agreement due to their clear preference for progress on the Syrian track. Moreover, he was still scared by his experience with Shultz over the London Agreement in 1987. Indeed, some members of the US team were rather annoyed with the way the secret deal was made (Rabinovitch 1998: 146). However, ultimately they realised that it was an important achievement on the

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<sup>8</sup> Occasionally, even after Oslo, Beilin and the doves argued for more vigorous US intervention to get the talks back on track, including US pressure *on both sides* (JP 1,10, 17 March 1994: 1-2).

<sup>9</sup> Aside from the Norwegians, it was the Egyptians who provided the most important back channel of communication between Israel and the PLO (Corbin: 27, 56; Peres 1995: 322). Peres also looked to the French to mediate in the peace process 1992-3, however, Rabin vetoed the idea (Satloff 1992; Ashrawi 1993: 238-9).

way to a regional peace. Thus, Christopher was delighted with the breakthrough. Since 1983, the US had nearly always taken the position that it was primarily up to the parties themselves to provide the initiative for progress before their intervention could help and here was a fruit of that concept. The Americans had thought for a long time that the PLO would eventually have to be brought into the process, but since the failure of the Reagan Plan, they had seen it as a decision which only Israel could make. However, as in 1987, the US refused to present the DoP as its own proposal. Everyone on the Israeli and Palestinian side had thought that any agreements reached in Oslo would filter into the official talks in Washington. Indeed, at the tenth round of talks the idea of implementing full autonomy in 'Gaza and Jericho First', which first surfaced in Oslo, came to the table in Washington (Ashrawi: 250-252). Ultimately it was expected that any agreement reached in Oslo would be handed over to the United States and which would then send Warren Christopher to the region to present it formally to the parties. The parties would then sign the agreement in Washington after Arafat and Rabin told them to agree to the 'American bridging document' without any changes (Makovsky 83, 115). As in 1987, Peres suggested this idea, in order to make the agreement more acceptable to both domestic constituencies (Peres 1995: 339, 351; Corbin: 176-7; Makovsky: 49,75). Only in 1993, at least as far as the Israeli public was concerned, there was no need for such subterfuge. In any case, Warren Christopher dismissed the idea because secrecy would be impossible to maintain.

However the US did agree to Peres' request that it use its political and economic leadership to help create a Marshall Plan for the Middle East which would help underwrite peace. Subsequently the US organised a Donors Conference at which \$2 billion was promised to the Palestinian Authority including \$500 million from the US. The US also encouraged Peres' New Middle East of economic co-operation in other ways. They promoted a scheme to encourage private investment in the territories known as 'Builders for Peace' and sought to end the Arab boycott through the Middle East-North Africa Economic Summit in Casablanca and through the co-sponsoring of the follow up Amman Conference in 1995<sup>10</sup> (NYT 30 September 1993: A1; JP 21 January 1994: 6;

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<sup>10</sup> The US also helped by pressurising the Gulf and North African states to recognise Israel and open diplomatic relations (Makovsky: 78).

Israeline 27 February 1995).

Whereas the progressives feared that the US might damage Oslo, The *mamlachti'im* were more concerned that Oslo might damage the US-Israeli relationship. Rabin did not want to involve the US too deeply in the Oslo track for fear that Oslo would fail and as a result the US-Israeli relationship would suffer (Makovsky: 65). Moreover even after Peres had initialled the DoP in Oslo, Rabin only adopted it on condition that the Americans agreed to support it (Rabinovitch 1998: 144). Indeed, Rabin only agreed to attend the signing ceremony in Washington with Arafat, against the advice of his advisors, after President Clinton had asked him personally (NYT 13 September 1993: 11). Following the Oslo accord, Rabin returned to a policy of close co-ordination with Washington. As one well informed American Jewish leader observed, “This administration is the most ‘in sync’ with the Israeli government”, there being, “constant temperature taking, reassurance and co-ordination” (JP 7 February 1994: 7)<sup>11</sup>. For Rabin, one advantage of co-ordination was the influence it gave Israel over US policy. There was consistent US pressure on Rabin to push forward on the Palestinian and Syrian fronts simultaneously (Heikal: 485; JP 3 December 1993:1. 5 March 1994: 1; 5 September 1994: 5; 16 December 1994: 2; Rabinovitch 1998: 164). However, Rabin argued that the Israeli public could only deal with one track at a time and that the Palestinian track should be given priority. Consequently, after a Rabin-Clinton meeting, Israel and the US agreed that an agreement with Syria should be the third priority in their strategy for peace after the implementation of the DoP and an accord with Jordan (JP 19 November 1993: 1). In addition, because the Rabin government was basically pursuing a joint peace strategy with the Clinton administration, the administration consistently supported the Rabin government against complaints by the Palestinians, even though it was concerned about the humanitarian and political impact of the closures (NYT 6 February 1995: 8; JP 12 February 1995: 1). President Clinton loudly condemned acts of terror against Israelis, put pressure on Arafat to do more against Hamas terrorists and was understanding about delays in Israeli troop withdrawals in the wake of terrorist attacks (WP 27 January 1995: A21). Indeed, despite numerous requests by Arafat, the US did not intervene in the PLO-Israel talks without

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<sup>11</sup> For an example of the informal and intimate nature of American-Israeli discussions see Rabinovitch (1998: 123).

Israeli approval; neither Rabin nor Christopher wanted to rekindle in Arafat's mind the idea that the US would deliver Israeli concessions (JP 15 November 1993: 1; NYT 11 December 1993: 6; 22 January 1994: 13). Even after the Hebron massacre, the US, to Rabin's satisfaction, refused to involve itself in the negotiations (Heikal: 496-505; JP 10 March 1994: 2).<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, true to form, following the Oslo agreement Rabin got Clinton to agree to compensate Israel for the risk it was taking for peace in the form of F15 advanced bombers capable of reaching Teheran and Baghdad, coupled with the Israeli acquisition of a supercomputer previously blocked by the Pentagon (Makovsky: 121). Similarly, with regard to Oslo II signed two years later, Rabin agreed to a large scale signing ceremony in Washington despite his fear that this would anger Israelis after the wake of a spate of terror attacks. In return for Israeli concessions, in the wake of these attacks the US compensated Israel with the granting of higher quality supercomputers, permission to use the loan guarantees to cover the regular deficit and a promise to reduce the penalties on the guarantees for Israeli building over the Green Line in Jerusalem (JP 24 August 1995: 1; MM 29 September 1995).

### **Israel-US Relations in the Wake of the Rabin Assassination**

In many ways the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin represented the success of his vision of Israel. The large number of world dignitaries present and the speeches made by Mubarak and King Hussein reinforced the image of Israel as an accepted and respected member of the international community, a normal state and not a nation that dwells alone. The American response to the assassination highlighted the strength and depth of relations between the two countries. The White House flag stood at half mast and President Clinton led a delegation of over 70 dignitaries, including former presidents and high ranking members of congress, to the funeral. President Clinton reassured the Israeli people that America would not forsake them and his epitaph *shalom haver* [Goodbye my friend] touched

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<sup>12</sup> The Americans only took a mediatory role when Israel and the Palestinians asked for it. For example, regarding the most difficult issues in bilateral negotiations for Oslo II, namely, the extent of Israeli withdrawal from Hebron and control over water resources in the West Bank. A trilateral committee was set

Israelis instantly becoming a symbol of the special relationship (WP 7 November 1995: A15). Peres' address to Congress on his visit to the US in December 1995 strengthened this image further. The Clinton administration continued to co-ordinate policy with Israel, blaming Hamas for the closure of the territories, focusing on terrorism against Israel rather than the Arab emphasis on the need for further concessions from Israel at the Cairo summit (JP 15 March 1996: 1), as well as, supporting initially Israel's bombardment of Lebanon, 'Operation Grapes of Wrath' (JP 28 April 1996: 1). The US continued to 'compensate' Israel for the costs of peace, providing \$100 million and technology to enhance security against terrorist infiltration (JP 14 March 1996). The two states also signed a statement of intent to provide Israel with defence against missile attack and to cooperate against the terrorist threat emanating from Iran thereby providing Israel with a useful role in the new 'Pax Americana' (MM 29 April 1996).

The new Prime Minister, Peres, had a different motive for pursuing an American-Israeli alliance. Just prior to the 1996 Israeli elections, Peres wanted to issue a joint communiqué with Clinton, which would form the basis of a US-Israeli formal alliance and thereby help Peres election chances (MM 12 March 1996). Once again, with the electorate evenly divided in Israel, Peres wanted US public support to help him win the election. Although he did not get the communiqué, he did effectively get an endorsement from President Clinton the day before the election and in any case much of US policy from 1995 onwards was based on the premise that the US had to help Labour get re-elected in order to sustain support for the peace process (MEI 20 October 1995: 6; JP 28 June 1996:1). Despite Clinton's open support, the Peres strategy failed again as Netanyahu won the election by the narrowest of margins.

### **Conclusion**

Israeli policy 1992-96 was driven by the ethos of normalisation. The progressive approach took the important initiatives creating the Oslo process. Self reliance was replaced by a mixture of political concessions, independent military force, security co-

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up to deal with the water issue. (JP 21 August 1995:2; NYT 22 September 1995: A1; MM 25 September 1995).

operation with Arafat's forces and Israel's ability to pressure the Palestinians economically through the closure of the territories from Israel. The adherence of the *mamlachti'im* to this new style of foreign policy demonstrated that international and regional circumstances had changed to the point where they were comfortable enough to allow this approach to reach fruition. The change in external reality, i.e. a moderation in implacable Arab enmity made such a change possible, but it did not predetermine this change. Rather, as the instrumental values of *mamlachtiut* appeared incapable of leading its adherents towards normalisation, the old instrumental values were sidelined. Only the alternative view of the nature of international society held by the progressives had the vision whose central values led it to initiate this change. As a result, the American-Israeli inter-governmental relationship reached new heights. However, while the governments reached new levels of intimacy the relationship between Israel and its traditional supporters in the US reached a new low.

## **Chapter 10: The ‘Special Relationship’: Beyond the Executive**

### **Introduction**

Israel and the United States are often said to be participants in a ‘special relationship’. Like other states who have a close relationship with the US, Israel has maintained strong ties with various US administrations and the military industrial complex. Still, one of the key factors distinguishing the relationship from normal state to state relations are the strong and politically fruitful relations which the government of Israel maintains beyond these governmental bounds. The core of this relationship is with the organised American Jewish community, but it also incorporates Gentile groups and Congressmen that come together to make up the pro-Israel lobby. It is in regard to these groups that this chapter will refer to a special relationship between Israel and the United States.

This chapter will argue that the traditional Zionist negative attitudes to Diaspora Jewry, was an influential factor in determining the character, nature and extent of relations within the special relationship. However, the determining factor was the extent to which Labour and Likud’s approaches to the Palestinian question was compatible with the approach of the American executive. Because the Likud’s attachment to the land of Israel put it at odds with the American executive, it made greater use of the special relationship. Moreover, this chapter will argue that between 1981-92, when the Likud was the dominant power in Israel, the conflict between Israel and its American supporters over issues related to the peace process was primarily underpinned by a conflict over the meaning of Zionism and its implications as to the correct locus for the political loyalties of American Jews. In contrast, this chapter will argue that between 1992-96, when Labour was in power, the conflict was not so much one that divided Israel from its American supporters, as a conflict that cut across both the Israeli and US pro-Israel body politiques. It was a conflict between, on the one hand, an Israeli government with a basically optimistic, progressive worldview, a government that did not believe that non-Jews are basically hostile and which tended to value the idea of Israel becoming a “normal” country, against, on the other hand, those in the Likud and among Israel’s supporters in the US, with a pessimistic, conservative worldview, that tended to have a more particularistic sense of Jewish identity, a strong perception of the Gentile world as

basically antagonistic and a sense of Israel as a 'special' country.

### **Zionism and the Diaspora**

The early Zionists, unlike the majority of their eastern European brethren who chose to emigrate to America to escape the Pogroms at the turn of the century, consciously chose to reject a Diaspora existence. Instead they emigrated to Palestine to set up an autonomous society. This idea was encompassed in one of the central motifs of Zionism, the concept of *shlilat hagalut-* [the negation of the Diaspora]. This concept contained two dimensions; getting the Jews out of the Diaspora and getting the Diaspora (mentality) out of the Jews. 'Getting the Jews out of the Diaspora' meant simply that Zionists believed that all Jews should abandon the Diaspora and immigrate to Israel. In other words, far from accepting the permanence of American Jewish political affiliation, by seeking to dissolve the Diaspora, Zionism sought to make all Jews citizens of the state of Israel. 'Getting the Diaspora (mentality) out of the Jews', referred to the idea whereby Zionism was conceived as a revolt against the quietistic bourgeois existence of the Jews in the Diaspora. The Zionist image of the Diaspora Jew was of a weak and pliant soul, reliant for security and well-being on the good will of host society, unwilling to proudly fight to protect Jewish rights, and hence living out an undignified existence. One of the key elements of the Diaspora mentality that the Zionists sought to change was the style of Jewish politics. In place of the diplomatic tradition of Diaspora Jewry, with its reliance on the intercession of 'court Jews' on behalf of the community, a process known as *shtadlanut*, the Zionists advocated self reliance, political independence and military power.

On the other hand, for the vast majority of American Jews "Zionism" meant political and philanthropic support for Israel and was certainly not a commitment to make *aliyah* [immigrate to Israel] or an assertion of primary political loyalty to the state of Israel. Rather, support for Israel was seen by American Jews as an expression of their Americaness as much as their Jewishness. In essence, American Zionism sought to express communal solidarity whilst simultaneously avoiding charges of dual loyalty from their fellow Americans. This outlook was articulated clearly by one of the founders of

American Zionism Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis(1984: 520). He declared that just as, “Every Irish American who contributed towards advancing Home Rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice he made. Every American Jew who supported Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will be a better man and a better American for doing so.”

Despite the Israelis negative image of Diaspora Jewry, Israel came to terms with its pragmatic need for the financial and political support of American Jewry. Subsequently, the Israeli government sought to institutionalise the relationship, which was not only a source of financial support in of itself, but was also the key to increasing the level of economic and political support from the US government. In this regard, two initiatives were taken. First, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee -AIPAC- was founded to lobby Congress and to help maintain public sympathy for Israel. Second, in order to maximise support for Israel, Ben Gurion created a partnership with mainstream American Jewry which had traditionally been unenthusiastic about Zionism. In fact, he made what amounted to a ‘concordat’ with the largest Jewish organisation in the US, the non-Zionist American Jewish Committee. In the agreement, Ben Gurion received American Jewish agreement not to intervene in Israeli politics, and in return for broad American Jewish support, the government of Israel agreed not to interfere in American Jewish politics. It also recognised and accepted, as Ben Gurion put it that, “American Jews have only one political attachment and that is to the United States of America. They owe no political allegiance to Israel.”(Gruen 211). This statement was demanded by American Jewry, to protect their position and status in America which could be threatened if their support for Israel was construed as dual loyalty.

Although, formally the state of Israel accepted that it would not intervene in American Jewish politics, in practice successive governments of Israel continued take positions that put them at odds with the mainstream American Zionism. The government of Israel tended to involve itself in American politics in order to increase Israeli influence in Washington, without that much regard for American Jewish interests. Thus, the Begin government pursued ties with Jerry Falwell and the Christian fundamentalist Right, despite the fact that most Jews in America perceived the Moral Majority as a threat to

their position in the US. Since Israeli Zionists had no principled reason for ensuring the continued comfort of Jewry in the United States, they were not that bothered by such problems. In any case, Israeli leaders generally understood the interests of world Jewry as equivalent to the interests of the state of Israel as interpreted by its government and consequently, they expected American Jews to put Israel's interest above their own domestic interests<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, American Jewish public criticism of Israeli foreign policy was deemed against the rules by all Israeli leaders. American Jews who did criticise Israel were seen typically as "faint hearted Jews" (Tivnan: 175-6) worried about their vulnerable position in gentle society, who criticised Israel, "out of concern for their own skin" (Golan 1993: 36). Israeli Zionism retained this tendency to ignore the reality of American Jewry's position in the US and instead equated it with the position of the archetypal Diaspora Jew. To see it any other way would be to undermine one of the root axioms of Zionism namely that a normal Jewish existence was impossible in the Diaspora.

### **The Special Relationship and the Peace Process**

I.L. Kenen, the founder of AIPAC used to say that the organisation existed to, "Lobby Congress to tell the President to overrule the State Department" (Ball: 116). Yet until the Six Day War the special relationship had not really been strong enough to confront an administration determined to confront Israel as Eisenhower had when he demanded Israel's withdrawal from Sinai in 1957. Following the Six Day War Israel's position in Washington was substantially strengthened. As a result, Israel began to utilise the special relationship more successfully to counter-balance administration attempts to extract concessions from it as part of the peace process. For example, in 1975 the Labour government under Rabin was able to counteract the Ford administration's threat to 'reassess' relations with Israel through the use of its friends in Congress (Ben Zvi 1993: 49-102).

The consistent position of the US since 1967 has been in favour of a 'land for peace'

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<sup>1</sup> The most extreme example of this occurred when Jonathan Pollard, an American Jew working for the US government, was caught spying for Israel.

formula. In addition, from the mid 1970s onwards a number of important figures in the State Department were inclined to try and bring the PLO into the peace process. This was potentially a problem for both parties in light of Israel's increasing reliance on American military aid and political support since 1967. But it was particularly a problem for the Likud which was ideologically committed to 'the whole land of Israel' and which recognised the imperative of avoiding a choice between American support and land. Consequently, whereas Labour was able to co-ordinate its policy with American administrations on the basis of 'land for peace', the Likud was not able to do so. As a result, it came to rely increasingly on the special relationship with the pro-Israel lobby and Congress to counteract the executive bias against it.

### **The Likud, the Special Relationship and the Peace Process**

The Likud used the special relationship to promote its agenda over the Palestinian question in two ways: *hasbara* [spin-doctoring] and lobbying Congress. In its relations with the US, Zionist/Israeli *hasbara* had always played on two strands within Western political culture. First, Israel sought to present itself as deserving of US support because of its uniqueness and its moral affinities with the US. Israel promoted itself as a modern technological country similar to America in that they had common roots, as immigrant societies trying to secure frontiers, as well as, common democratic values (Eban 1993: 596). This line of argument was most prominent prior to 1967. After that it continued to play a role but was gradually superseded by the second line of argument, namely that Israel could be a strategic asset to the West. Likud promoted *hasbara* to a high rank in its foreign policy and not just because the American executive was opposed to its ideological position on the territories. The Likud tradition itself was more inclined to value *hasbara* as a tool of foreign policy. Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionism had emphasised the political significance of public opinion in Liberal democracies for Zionism, the idealist tendency within the Revisionist movement tended to believe that rhetoric was more significant in politics than did Labour. Partly as a consequence of this the Likud was more sensitive to the changing nature of the conflict which militated in favour of increased use of *hasbara*.

After the Vietnam War it was becoming clear that television and media were becoming increasingly important in international politics. With the passing of the 'Zionism is racism' resolution at the UN in 1975, the PLO was gaining increasing legitimacy and recognition throughout the world. After the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in a sense this became one of the main threats to Israel. As Netanyahu saw it, the political threat to Israel from the PLO could be explained as follows, "Slowly imperceptibly, the initial horror [of the terror attacks] recedes and in its place comes a readiness to accept the terrorists point of view...Before we know it the hijackers and killers have spokesmen and commentators of their own and the terrorists have been transformed into merely another type of political activist that had to be considered and even given equal time." (Netanyahu 1993: 383). In response to this threat, "the Israeli Foreign Ministry commissioned roughly one hundred freelance articles a year about different aspects of Israeli life and distributed them to 2000 US publications... The Israeli broadcasting service set up by the Foreign Ministry produced radio shows for US audiences... the government also sent 90 second news videos on Israel to local channels as well as, bringing four 400-500 key opinion makers to Israel each year" (Friedman 1990: 441).

Nonetheless, for the Likud the aim of *hasbara* was limited. It was not designed to garner support for the Likud's whole land of Israel philosophy but to counteract the Arab spin on events, maintain a political atmosphere in Washington conducive to understanding Likud policies and thus prevent American pressure for a peace settlement based on land for peace which incorporated the PLO. Having been brought up in the United States, the Israeli Ambassador in Washington, Moshe Arens 1981-3 together with Binyamin Netanyahu, the Deputy Ambassador 1982-4 and later Israeli Ambassador to the UN 1984-88, were particularly skilled at explaining Israel's case in terms that resonated for Americans. Arens understood that the American public in general did not sympathise with Begin and his Revisionist ideology (Tivnan: 175), but that it could understand the conservative hawkish pragmatism of a like minded democracy (Blitzer: 81, 111-2; Melman and Raviv 1994: 215). An AIPAC insider expanded on this logic, "we wanted to broaden Israel's support to the right- with the people who don't care about what's happening on the West Bank but care a lot about the Soviet Union" (Tivnan: 181). Indeed, during the 1980s they were highly successful in harnessing highly influential conservative

and neo-conservative intellectuals and politicians to sympathise with Likud positions, such as Dan Quayle and Jesse Helms (Melman and Raviv 1994: 429; JR 26 June 1995: 36-7). Netanyahu was able to win them over by successfully emphasising the idea of America and Israel as exceptional states, sister democracies that had to act vigorously with decisive military force against a terrorist threat emanating from the implacable anti-American dictatorships (Syria/PLO) surrounding Israel.

### *'Hell No to the PLO!'*

One of the main thrusts of the *hasbara* effort in the 1980s under the Likud was to delegitimise the PLO as a potential negotiating partner. Apart from identifying it as an ally of the Soviet Union (Simon: 37) Israeli *hasbara* presented the PLO as a terrorist organisation which sought to destroy Israel stage by stage. There was also a continual effort to delegitimise the concept of Palestinian nationalism. Under Netanyahu, 'Jordan is Palestine' committees were set up in the United States (Van Leewan, 354-6; Shindler 1995: 222), which argued that Jordan was the real Palestinian state and that there was therefore no need for a second Palestinian state in the territories. In presenting his argument to the American public against such a state Netanyahu used the analogy of Hispanics claiming independence from the United States in the event of their becoming a majority in the South West region of the United States; a second Mexico (Tivnan:150).

These *hasbara* programmes provided the foundations for concrete efforts to weaken moves towards a 'land for peace' deal involving the PLO, through Congress. In 1982, the size of support for Israel in Congress meant that when the Reagan administration tried to link the level of aid to Israel to the Likud government's position on the Reagan plan, Begin and AIPAC were able to defeat the administration and fight off the linkage. Instead of lowering the quantity of aid granted to Israel and transforming that aid from a grant to a loan in December 1982 Congress approved an increase in aid to Israel in the form of a grant. In 1985 the Likud undertook moves to counter Peres' and Shultz's attempts to start negotiations with a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation through the Murphy rendezvous. Recognising the pivotal role of the PLO in this scheme, the Likud and the pro-Israel lobby managed to tighten the terms under which the United States could open a

diplomatic dialogue with the PLO in the International Security and Development Co-operation Act. Subsequently, AIPAC and the Likud also tried to close down the PLO offices in Washington DC and their mission at the UN in New York. More importantly, the Likud was able to use its connections in the pro-Israel lobby and the threat of using those connections as a potent weapon to prevent progress towards the opening of Jordan-Israel peace talks. Thus after Peres had negotiated the London agreement with Hussein, Shamir sent Arens to speak to Shultz to prevent him from going to the region to take up the agreement as its signatories expected. Arens told Shultz that if he came the Likud would accuse the President of interference in the internal affairs of Israel (Golan 1989: 331). This message was backed up by pro-Likud figures in the United States who also lobbied Shultz against the adoption of the London agreement. This may well have been backed up with certain threats regarding the implications of such an act in terms of American domestic politics (Shindler 1994: 231). Subsequently, Shultz refused to play the part assigned to him by the authors of the London agreement and he did not come out to promote the agreement in the Middle East.

The relationship between Shamir and the American administration began to break down with the outbreak of the Intifada in December 1987. Following this, Shultz pushed the Palestinian question up America's diplomatic agenda symbolised in the promotion of his own peace plan. While Shamir himself did not want to be seen to say no to the plan, he did get AIPAC to reverse its initial support for the plan (Shultz: 1032). But it was not until the onset of the Bush administration that the Likud was forced to bring this Congressional strategy to the forefront of policy. The new Bush administration, unlike its predecessor, lacked a special emotional or ideological affinity with Israel. Furthermore, with the end of the cold war in sight, the idea of Israel's usefulness as a 'strategic asset' was not popular in the new administration, especially after the Gulf War in which Israel appeared as more of a strategic liability than an asset to US interests. Confronted by an antagonistic administration which opposed settlement activity and was in active dialogue with the PLO, the Likud looked to the special relationship to redress the balance and constrain the administration without damaging America's long-term political, economic and strategic support for Israel. For example, following the presentation of the Israeli Peace Plan in May 1989 Shamir had made some public comments opposing territorial

compromise. Baker had responded by making a forceful speech to AIPAC in which he called on Likud to drop its whole land of Israel ideology. Subsequently, in an AIPAC and Israeli embassy joint operation (WJW 15 June 1989) 95 Senators publicly expressed support for the Shamir Peace Plan and urged the administration to support it (FBIS 13 June 1989: 31).

The thrust of Likud activity 1989-90 focuses on trying to close the newly opened US-PLO dialogue. The Prime Minister's Solidarity Conference<sup>2</sup> for Diaspora leaders was held in an effort to try and bolster opposition among Israel's supporters in the US against the dialogue and simultaneously marginalised the progressives who favoured talks with the PLO. As a result of the Conference, the Anti Defamation League (ADL) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations (Presidents Conference) began to monitor the PLO's role in terrorism, thereby complementing the efforts of Shamir's advisor on terrorism Yigal Carmon. The Likud also attempted to curtail the administration's dialogue with the PLO through legislation in Congress. Subsequently, a bill sponsored by Republican senator Jesse Helms, who had his own contacts direct with the Likud party operatives, sought to prevent the administration speaking to any PLO official who had been previously involved either directly or indirectly, in terror. The Helms bill was defeated, but Congress did pass the Lieberman-Mack legislation which required the administration to report to Congress every 120 days on whether the PLO was complying with the terms of the dialogue, and also required that the President inform Congress in the event that the administration spoke directly with known terrorists. The Likud faced an even greater clash with the administration when they attempted to involve senators in monitoring PLO compliance (WJW 2 November 1989). However, according to a senior official then in the Israeli embassy in Washington, these efforts were not important in the actual termination of the dialogue in May 1990, after PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat refused to condemn a terrorist attack by one of the Fatah factions of the PLO on a Tel-Aviv beach.

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<sup>2</sup> Although the Conference was organised by Likud MK Ehud Olmert in conjunction with Labour Hawk, Motta Gur, the Likud was the primary force behind the operation to end the PLO dialogue. Labour ministers were briefed by the US on their conversations with the PLO in the hope that this might help advance the 1989 Israeli Peace Plan, whereas the Likud refused to listen to these reports.

### *Loan Guarantees and Settlements*

After the collapse of the NUG and the Gulf War, the new Likud led government asked the US for \$10 billion worth of loan guarantees to help absorb Russian immigrants. The administration wanted to link the guarantees to a settlement freeze or at the least get Israel to delay the request for 120 days until after the Madrid Conference had opened. However, the Israeli government refused both ideas and formally submitted its request for the \$10 billion in loan guarantees on 6 September. They felt that the special relationship would be able to defeat the administration through their powerful support in Congress (Frankel 292-302). Indeed, the Shamir government was so confident of success that it included the first instalment of \$2 billion dollars in the budget for the coming year ahead. The Israeli-AIPAC strategy was to drum up grass roots support among Israel supporters in the US. They did this by using media friendly figures such as Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Health Minister Ehud Olmert, to sell the message that this was 'humanitarian assistance'. Meanwhile, AIPAC and the Israeli Embassy worked Capitol Hill to drum up legislative support behind the Israeli demand. All the activity was set to culminate in Washington on 12 September when thousands of pro-Israel lobbyists were set to descend on the Capitol in support of loan guarantees. However, President Bush surprised the lobby by appealing straight to the American people. As a result, Israel's position in Congress crumbled and Bush's request for a 120 day delay before considering the guarantees was granted. Even when negotiations recommenced in January 1992, the Israeli government was unable to drum up the necessary support *within* the special relationship to obtain the loan guarantees on its own terms.

### **The Likud and American Jewish Opposition**

The failure to drum up sufficient support to confront the Bush administration on the loan guarantees issues was symptomatic of deeper rifts within Israel's relationship with its supporters in the US. The standard operating procedure of American Jewry allowed criticism of Israeli policy in private but not in public. As Abe Foxman the head of the ADL put it, "Israeli democracy should decide; American Jews should support" (Frankel: 222).

It was during the Lebanon War that the community consensus on not criticising Israel in public had first been called into question. Most American Jews and American Jewish organisations were publicly positive about the Reagan Plan (Tivnan: 206) which had been summarily rejected by the Begin government. Even AIPAC leader, Tom Dine had expressed a positive opinion of the Reagan plan. American Jewry always sought to avoid any potential clashes between their American and Jewish loyalties by minimising the potential for any clash between the Israeli and American governments that could threaten increase anti-Semitism in the US (Novik 1986: 69). For this reason AIPAC was primarily interested in good US-Israeli relations over and above any particular bias on the peace process itself. Still, a 1983 poll showed that 51% of American Jews favoured a settlement freeze, while a further 73% approved of negotiations between Israel and the PLO, on condition that the organisation recognised Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism (Tivnan:206).

The most significant change in American Jewish-Israel relations occurred in the wake of the Sabra and Shatilla massacre. For the first time mainstream Jewish organisations such as the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, Bnei Brith and mainstream leaders such as Rabbi Alexander Shindler a leading reform Rabbi, strongly opposed the government line by demanding an inquiry into the massacre (American Jewish Yearbook 1984: 84-90). But it was the Intifada which placed intolerable strains on the non-critical tradition. The pro-Israel community had come to be as polarised as the Israeli public over the future of the territories. Despite public pronouncements of support for the Likud's policies, a majority of the American Jewish public and a majority of American Jewish leaders favoured 'land for peace' (Melman and Raviv 1994: 432-433). The more marginal and most progressive elements of American Jewry segments of US Jewry were even beginning to meet with the PLO. They formed the Jewish Peace lobby which lobbied *against* the Likud government and in favour of linkage of loan guarantees and a settlement freeze. They were backed by a number of Israel Peace Activists who broke the powerful taboo that Israeli public figures should not criticise the Israeli government while abroad (NYT 21 February 1988, WJW 16 March 1989, 10 October 1991, JP 23 August 1990, 6 February 1992). More worrying for the Likud was the

breakdown in support for their position among mainstream US groups (JP 6 July 1990; *American Jewish Yearbook* 1992: 245). These splits weakened the image of a solid pro-Israel front, on which the special relationship relies to be really effective. In March 1988 30 Senators, including long standing supporters of Israel, criticised Shamir's opposition to land for peace. On one visit to the US, Shamir's was greeted by an open letter signed by 41 American Jewish leaders which informed him, "not to mistake courtesy for consensus or applause as endorsement for the policies you pursue" (MECS 1991: 27).

Most dangerous for the Likud was the American Jewish response to the US-PLO dialogue. One member of the Presidents Conference had helped clear the way for the dialogue by meeting Arafat in Stockholm with five other prominent American Jews just prior to Shultz announcement of the opening of the dialogue. The situation was such that when the US-PLO dialogue started one Shamir aide noted, "Israeli officials were aghast that our friends in the United States did not rise in unison to criticise this step...our friend are either critical, passive or paralysed" (Shindler 1991: 142). Subsequently, Foreign Minister Moshe Arens tried to get the Presidents Conference to strongly condemn the dialogue but the Conference refused to confront Bush over the opening of a dialogue with the PLO (Frankel: 226). These negative responses by key American Jewish organisations to the Likud agenda were primarily a result of the Party's handling of the 'Who is a Jew crisis' following the Israeli election at the end of 1988.

The 1988 election had ended in a virtual stalemate. The right-wing parties led by the Likud had a slight advantage over the left, but the religious parties held the balance of power. In return for their support for a Likud led government they demanded a change in the law of return whereby only Jews who were defined as Jewish according to orthodox Jewish law [*halacha*] would be granted automatic citizenship. To begin with both major parties were prepared to pay this price, they did not initially think that their agreement would cause a crisis with American Jewry. Although, unlike in Israel, the majority of the American Jews affiliated to non-orthodox -reform and conservative- streams of Judaism, on a practical level, only a minute number of people would actually be affected, since very few non-Orthodox converts, visit let alone, emigrate to Israel. Nonetheless, the move was seen by American Jewry as an attempt to de-legitimise their Jewish identity.

Israelis had little respect for American Jewish identity. Despite the size and importance of American Jewry, little time in the Israel school curriculum was devoted to studying the community (Shindler 1991: 85–104; Friedman 1990: 451–91). Israelis tended to see things through the Zionist prism, which ‘negated the Diaspora’ and thus could not take seriously Reform’s claim to be living a full modern Jewish life in the Diaspora. This attitude was reinforced by the fact that in Israel there was virtual no non-Orthodox religious Jews. For Israelis a person was either observant and hence Orthodox or non-observant and hence secular. Hence there was a tendency to view Reform Judaism as somewhat assimilationist and not as a serious affiliation. Consequently, Shamir underestimated the enormous American Jewish opposition to his promise to change the Law of Return. Israeli politicians failed to grasp the symbolic significance of a change in the Law of Return.

Shamir became aware of the scale of the crisis in relations when the usually apolitical organisations such as the United Israel Appeal and Hadassah lobbied Jerusalem (NYT 3/12/88: 6). Even then Shamir appeared to be prepared for a crisis with US Jewry and even a drop in the amount of money they raised for Israel until it was made clear to him by leading AIPAC officials and Moshe Arad, the Israeli Ambassador in Washington that the passing of the law would weaken Israel’s political power in the US, weaken its ability to stand up to a hostile US administration and weaken its ability to guarantee aid through Congress. The sluggish American Jewish response to the PLO dialogue was recognised as evidence of this tendency. Subsequently, to protect the Likud’s ability to counteract the US administration over the Palestinian question, Shamir agreed to drop the religious parties demands and enter another NUG. Most of American Jewry then fell into line over the PLO dialogue. However, a worse crisis was to follow over the question of loan guarantees.

Tom Dine tried to unite his AIPAC constituency behind the Israeli demand for loan guarantees without a settlement freeze. He told those who disliked Israeli settlements in the territories to, “Swallow hard, roll up your sleeves and get to work to fight linkage” (Melman and Raviv 1994: 419). Following President Bush’s dramatic news conference Shamir still wanted American Jewry to fight the administration for the guarantees, but the

community was divided over the issue and turned decisively against Shamir's confrontational approach. American Jewish leaders publicly declared that they would not act as the lackey for the Israeli government, they had not raised the settlements issue and they were not prepared to fight it. Shoshana Cardin of the Presidents Conference (the most important American Jewish organisation) criticised the Israeli Finance Minister for stating that settlements were more important than loan guarantees and stated that the organisation would take a low profile on the question of linkage and let a direct deal be worked out between the administration and the Israeli government (JP 17 October 1991; 22 January 1992).

The pro-Israel community did not wish to confront Bush after his speech. In pragmatic political terms, following the President's successful appeal to the American people, most of them genuinely believed that they could not defeat Bush on the issue in Congress. In addition, they resented the Shamir government for pursuing its ideology at the expense of the American-Israeli relationship. American Jewry sought to avoid a confrontation because they had been implicitly charged by Bush with dual loyalty; AIPAC had been equated with a "foreign interest" (JP 13 September 1991). This implicit charge of dual loyalty threatened, in the eyes of many American Jews, to raise the level of anti-Semitism in the US. Indeed one of the first things the Presidents Conference did following the speech was to obtain an apology from President Bush precisely on this point (Melman and Raviv 1994: 428). Even staunch supporters of the government such as Abe Foxman of the Anti Defamation League criticised the Likud for its lack of realism and its insensitivity to embarrassing American Jews (JR 10 October 1991).

To the Israelis the response of American Jewry appeared to fit the paradigm of typical Diaspora Jewish behaviour. Netanyahu put American Jewish reluctance to confront the Bush administration down to typical Diaspora cowardice (Shindler 1991:143). Similarly, all the advice given by American Jewry telling Shamir that his demands were unrealistic, were dismissed by the Prime Minister's Office as just the pathetic attempts of American Jews to protect their own skin, by ingratiating themselves with the *goyim* [gentiles]. Rather than support the cause of their own people i.e. the state of Israel they were cowering in front of President Bush. Even AIPAC's professional advice that a

compromise was necessary was dismissed by key Likud figures Yossi Ben Aharon, Yoram Ettinger and Moshe Katsav, as emanating from a sense of defeatism and a “*galut* [Diaspora] mentality” (JP 31 January 1992; Frankel: 306).

Indeed, the Likud’s general response to increasing Diaspora criticism was based on its perception that Diaspora opposition stemmed from a *galut* mentality. Yossi Ben Aharon, Shamir’s right hand man in the Prime Minister’s office, argued that this Diaspora mentality could be countered by pressurising American Jewry. This, he argued, would make American Jewry lobby forcefully on Israel’s behalf. Ultimately, despite Israeli declarations of loyalty to the terms of ‘the concordat’, the Israeli government was not inhibited from interfering in American Jewish politics to weaken critics of its policies, nor was it overly concerned that the demands it was making on American Jewish support threatened the Jewish community with the charge of dual loyalty. As Shamir argued to the Presidents Conference back in 1988, “Jews abroad have a moral duty to support the Israeli government, never a foreign government against Israel”(Gruen: 217). American Jews who publicly opposed the Israeli government were viewed by Sharon as “informers” a reference Shamir found to be factually correct (Frankel: 225).

Overall then during the Bush administration the Likud reliance on the special relationship was a function of the clash of its values with the interest of the United States as represented by Bush administration. The way in which the Likud handled its relations with the pro-Israel community was characterised by the image of *shlilat hagalut*, with its concurrent insensitivity to the issue of dual loyalty for American Jewry. As a result, Likud activities between 1989-92, raised opposition within the special relationship primarily because they threatened the ‘Americaness’ of American Jewish identity; raising the opportunity for anti-Semites to charge that American Jews carried dual loyalties.

### **Labour, the Special Relationship and the Peace Process**

Labour, like the Likud saw the special relationship through the prism of *shlilat hagalut*. Prime Minister Rabin had an obvious disdain for *shtadlanut* which was one of the reasons that the special relationship was almost peripheral to Labour’s peace process strategy. As

Rabin wrote in his memoirs, “Some of the leaders of the American Jewish community exercise their influence by means of a *shtadlan* [Court Jew] the traditional intermediary who sought the favour of the ruling powers in Europe... I believe that the Israeli Embassy should assume the principal role of handling Israel’s affairs at the political level (Horowitz 157).”<sup>3</sup> Disdain for *shtadlanut* reinforced strong political reasons for the minimal role assigned to the special relationship in Labour’s peace strategy.

First, Rabin’s *mamlachti* values system led him to try and limit the role of the special relationship because he believed that aggressive lobbying undermined the most important element in US-Israeli relations, namely the inter-governmental strategic basis of the relationship. As Ambassador, Rabin had been cool about supporting the Jackson-Vanik legislation in Congress which linked Détente to freedom for Soviet Jewish Refuseniks for fear of alienating the administration (Horowitz: 157) For the same reason in 1992, despite AIPAC’s enthusiasm, Rabin agreed not to challenge the sale of 72 F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia in return for Apache helicopters and the prepositioning of American equipment in Israel (Feuweger: 55). But for Rabin the loan guarantees fiasco was the worst of all; by fighting a losing battle, AIPAC had been party to one of the most serious wedges between the US and Israel since 1957. Hence, on his first visit to the US as Prime Minister in August 1992, Rabin lambasted AIPAC for its role in the loan guarantees affair and informed them that it was for the government of Israel to negotiate with the administration and not for them (NYT, 23 August 1992: 2; MA 18 August 1992: 3).

Yet the most powerful reason for Labour’s attitude towards the special relationship’s role was that Labour’s preference for ‘land for peace’ enabled it to work closely with the State Department and the administration. Thus, during the mid-1980s, while the Likud was busy building up its contacts within Congress and the pro-Israel community, Labour leader Shimon Peres concentrated his efforts on co-ordinating with the United States administration. Periodically, some in Labour argued in favour of using dovish elements in the American Jewish community to weaken the Likud<sup>4</sup>. But only when the Reagan

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<sup>3</sup> This attitude was echoed by Colette Avital, Israel’s Consul General in New York 1993-96 (Melman and Raviv 1994: 344).

<sup>4</sup> One American Jewish leader claimed that a Labour leader had privately asked for his help in getting the United States to cut economic aid to the Begin government to help bring it down and thus advance the

administration refused to play its assigned role over the London agreement did Peres appeal to American Jewry in May 1987 to support his proposal for an international conference against Likud opposition (Shindler 1991: 231). Hence, although some supporters of the dovish position criticised and even testified against Likud policy on the loan guarantees in Washington, once Labour returned to power in 1992 the role of the special relationship in Israel's peace policy became marginal. As Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin explained, "Labour's coming to power pulls the rug from under AIPAC. We want US involvement in the peace process; their [AIPAC under the Likud] agenda was to keep the Americans out. We want peace based on compromise, and their agenda was to explain why compromise was impossible" (Horowitz: 159).

The belief that Israel was entering an era of peace further undermined the political logic which had held the special relationship together since 1948. The Foreign Ministry, under Shimon Peres decided it need no longer needed to engage in *hasbara*. Peres argued that good policies did not need *hasbara* and that the *raison detre* of *hasbara* had been the need to explain the lack of a peace policy; now that Israel was pursing peace with the PLO, policy spoke for itself. Consequently, the Foreign Ministry tried to shift the emphasis of their work away from *hasbara* towards the promotion of economic relations (Horowitz :159; JP 22 October 1992: 2-3; 4 May 1993: 1). Without an emphasis on *hasbara*, there was no political urgency in maintaining the link with American Jewry. After all, this relationship had been primarily built up as an antidote to 'the siege' which the Israeli government appeared to sense was virtually over. One consequence of this sense of 'normalisation' was that the special relationship with American Jewry seemed of little future political importance to Israel and consequently Israel had less interest in maintaining close ties with the pro-Israel community in the US. Israel could afford to negate the Diaspora<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, the weakening of relations was apparent by virtue of the fact that Rabin left the position of advisor to the Prime Minister on Diaspora Affairs vacant.

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peace process (Blitzer: 106). Following the outbreak of the Intifada, members of the Israeli liberal establishment appealed to American Jewry not to support the Israeli government (NYT: 21 February 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Moreover, with Israel beginning to consider itself a reasonably well off country, there was a growing acceptance that Israel should phase out the \$1.4 billion in annual civilian aid granted by America. If Israel did not need the civilian aid, it would presumably have even less need for a powerful pro-Israel lobby or American Jewish cash as Yossi Beilin told a group of American Jews in 1994 (NYT, 1 February 1994: A3).

In fact, the special relationship was actually somewhat of an irritant to Labour's peace policies. For in order to protect the peace process and close relations with the administration, Labour sometimes had to restrain the Lobby. This was particularly in evidence on issues relating to Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> Following the Hebron massacre, the UN Resolution condemning the act referred to Jerusalem as occupied territory. The unity of Jerusalem being an emotive and unifying issue among American Jewry, AIPAC wanted to pressure the administration to veto the Bill. However, the unofficial Israeli government line was that AIPAC should not do so because the implications of a US veto might prevent the PLO from returning to the peace negotiations. The administration ended up just abstaining on the offending line referring to Jerusalem as occupied territory. As Peres put it, "Too big a victory for Israel is not in the interests of the peace process" (NYT, 20 February 1994: A39; Horowitz: 155).

### **Labour and its American Jewish Opposition**

When the dovish Labour government came to power in 1992, American Jewish public opposition to the Israeli government reached an unprecedented level of intensity. Not only was the taboo of publicly criticising the Israeli government well and truly smashed but American Jews actually lobbied against the Israeli government on security related issues. AIPAC Vice President Harvey Friedman declared that Rabin had *chutzpa* for suggesting that Israel might withdraw from the Golan and after a derogatory reference to Yossi Beilin he was forced to resign. Neo-conservatives, such as Norman Podhoretz, who had always argued against criticising Israel during the Likud years, reversed their position on the basis that it was legitimate to criticise Israel on security grounds, as opposed to moral grounds. Moreover, some previously mainstream American Jews took this one step further by lobbying Congress against Israel government policies. For example, Zionist organisations like Morton Klein's Zionist Organisation of America (ZOA) and several think tanks in Washington such as the Jewish Institute of National Security Affairs (JINSA) opposed aid to the Palestinian Authority and US troops on the Golan.

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<sup>6</sup> See also with regard to American Jewish involvement on the issue of Congressional monitoring of PLO compliance with its commitment to fight terrorism (NYT 31 March, 1995 A: 31).

### *Why did this Breakdown Occur?*

When surveyed during the 1980s and 1990s American Jewry as a whole, tended to be more dovish than the positions espoused by the Likud, despite the general lack of criticism for Likud positions. While a majority of American Jews opposed negotiations with the PLO and a Palestinian state in the first half of the 1980s, that majority was reversed if evidence was provided of the PLO's peaceful intent (Novik 1986: 71-4). So it was not really that surprising when most American Jews lined up behind the Oslo agreement (MM 13 September 1995). Yet opinion surveys tended to show that while the majority of American Jews were dovish, this was most true of the less identifying and less involved sections of American Jewry. Correspondingly, among the more involved sections of American Jewry, including many pro-Israel activists and those with the strongest sense of a particular cultural/religious Jewish identity, there was a significantly higher proportion of hawkish attitudes, which appeared to favour the Likud approach (Novik 1986: 81; Gruen: 37-39. MM 13 September 1995).

Until the Six Day War, American Jews had tended to see Israel as a safe haven for Jewish Refugees from other countries. American Jews supported Israel as an act of charity; Israel did not play a significant part in American Jewish identity. The Six Day War changed these attitudes. The run up to the War, with the spectre of a second holocaust widely feared, had the effect of making American Jews feel separated from their fellow Americans, accentuating their particular Jewish identity. Following the war, the sense of Jewish solidarity coupled with pride in Israel its power and its victory, became central to a new more assertive form of American Jewish identity. In a sense support for Israel became the religion of American Jewry.

This new sense of American Jewish identity spawned a "New Jewish Politics" (NJP) more aggressive and assertive than the traditional style of *shtadlanut* politics, whose quiet compromising deferential style was deemed to have contributed to the Holocaust. The credo of this new politics can be summed up as follows:

"The survival of Israel is at stake; the meaning of Jewish life everywhere is dependent on Israel...a threat to Israel's survival is a threat to Jews everywhere; Jews must be militant in acting to ensure Israel's survival; in

acting to ensure Israel's survival, Jews are thereby acting to ensure their own survival and continuity; the response of non-Jews to Israel's struggle is indicative of their attitude to Jews in general; in the light of history, indifference to these concerns is as dangerous as outright anti-Semitism."

(Medding 1987: 38-9)

The most important articulators of the NJP were the neo-conservatives led by Norman Podhoretz and Commentary magazine. They disassociated themselves from their former liberal universalist principles, became virulently anti-Communist and argued that Jews could not rely on anyone but themselves. They had a significant influence on American politics during the Reagan administration, but the most powerful symbol of the actualisation of the NJP was the rise to power of AIPAC whose membership rose dramatically during the 1980s.

The rise in American Jewish particularism which brought about the NJP after the Six Day War matched the rise in Jewish particularism that helped bring the Likud to power in 1977. The centrality of the Holocaust to the NJP matched Israel's new civil religion and the outlook of Menachem Begin. The focus on the centrality of Israel to Jewish survival was also a shared value as Arens asserted, "There is a partnership between Israel and Jews in the Diaspora because we share a common destiny.... If you are not living in Israel, however, you are not less of a Jew. A Jew is a person who believes in *Jewish survival*, who believes in the unity of the Jewish people - that we are responsible for each other as Jews, and who *believe in the centrality of the state of Israel*." (Simon: 130). Another key shared value is the emphasis on political assertiveness of the NJP (Gorny 1992: 134-9) which is matched in the thought of Jabotinsky. Revisionism and the NJP shared a belief that Jewish self-assertion was not only an instrumental value but also an existential value. Tom Dine even spoke publicly of AIPAC representing 'the new Jew', politically active and prepared to proudly defend Jewish interests (Tivnan: 165). Thus, while the Israeli military establishment and Rabin did not oppose the sale of AWACS to Saudi Arabia in 1981, Begin and AIPAC opposed the move on principle, as a symbol of Jewish self-assertion (Melman and Raviv 1994: 103, 192-3).

Labour was also out of touch with another key element of the NJP. Prime Minister Rabin's declaration that 'the siege' was over, Foreign Minister Peres argument that Israel's security could not be guaranteed unilaterally but only through economic

interdependence and a regional security pact, and Deputy Foreign Minister Beilin belief in the importance of Israel being a part of the world community (Klieman 1994: 96-117), clashed with the fundamentals of the NJP. The new assertive American Jewish politics resonated more with the Likud's defiant rhetorical style of politics than with Labour's optimistic progressive politics of compromise. This became apparent at AIPAC's annual policy conference in Washington in 1993. Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich told the 2,400 participants that, "not just Arabs but also Israel would have to make compromises for peace. Only one delegate in the cavernous auditorium clapped. Sensing the awkward moment, Rabinovich recovered by saying: "If it is hard to applaud the concessions we have to make, let us applaud the concessions the Arabs will have to provide." The crowd roared" (JP, 9 July 1993). In essence the whole Rabin peace policy of conciliation clashed with the NJP whereby political assertiveness was deemed to be the key to security.

The Labour government's peace policy also uncovered a deeper clash between the symbolic heroic special Israel of American Jewish consciousness and the real, pragmatic Israel which aspired to normality, peace and a quiet life. As Matti Golan (1993: 38), the biographer of Shimon Peres, explained in his dialogue with an American Jew, "Were burned out, we're exhausted. I talk with my friends. All were born in this country. All hold important jobs. All have good incomes. And nearly all are ready to leave Israel... Offer them a good, well paying job in America and they'll start packing immediately. You (American Jews) want a Jewish state? Then please be so kind as to stand guard over it yourself. I've been doing it for dozens of years...I just can't take it any more." For large sections of active American Jewry wanted Israel to symbolise something special in terms of Jewish history culture and religion, whereas the Israelis were primarily concerned to advance the reality of the process of normalisation in the Middle East.

Thus for American Jewry, the issue of Jerusalem as the undivided sovereign capital of Israel had always been a consensus issue of great symbolic importance and consequently what appeared to be Israeli nonchalance regarding the symbolism of the Jerusalem question caused friction between American Jewry and the Rabin government. In January 1995 after promotion of the issue among American Jewish groups, 93 senators wrote to Secretary of State Warren Christopher regarding the moving of the American Embassy to

Jerusalem and subsequently Senator Dole sponsored a bill in Congress to that effect. Both the administration and the Labour government were not keen on Dole's Bill as they feared that bringing up the issue of Jerusalem at this stage would cause the peace process to collapse (NYT, 20 February 1994: A39; Horowitz: 155). For opponents of the Labour government the issue was a good one on which to attack, as it would be difficult for Rabin to publicly oppose the move without doing great damage to his standing in Israeli public opinion. Consequently, despite private reservations Rabin publicly supported the move when he met Dole in May. This incidence of American Jewish opposition to the Rabin government caused Akiva Eldar, the Ha'aretz correspondent in Washington to comment, "Never before has a group of Jews so blatantly exploited its political clout to thwart a diplomatic compromise reached by Israel and United States government leaders" (HA 21 March 1994).

The most vociferous opposition to the Labour government following the Oslo Accords came from the Orthodox Jewish community (MM 13 September 1995; JC 13 September 1995) mainly based in New York. They perceived the Labour government as founded on secular Western materialistic values which they opposed. The aspiration to normalisation was an anathema to them as it symbolised collective assimilation and contradicted their basic concept of the Jewish people as a 'people that dwells alone'. They shared this orientation with many Orthodox Jews in Israel. This outlook coloured heavily the way they looked at the Oslo accords. They saw the Oslo deal, particularly in the wake of subsequent terror attacks, as a symptom of the fact that Labour was unconcerned about Jewish lives in Israel (Jewish Press 15 September 1995: 14). They argued that the Oslo Accords could lead to a new Holocaust and compared the Rabin government to a "Judenrat" handing over Jews to be killed by Arafat (Jewish Press: 6 October 1993: 16; Los Angeles Times 9 September 1995, JP 6 September 1995; JR 19 October 1995: 38; WP 14 June 1995: A32). Many other Orthodox Jews opposition to the Rabin government was supplemented by their belief that it is forbidden by Jewish law to cede territory in the land of Israel (MA 11 September 1995: 7). Many Orthodox and other identifying Jews opposed to the peace process live in New York. Two of the main Congressmen who challenged the Rabin's government policies in Congress, Republicans Senator Al D'Amato, and Representative Benjamin Gilman, represented New York as did another

opponent of the Rabin government Charles Schumer who represented Brooklyn (NYT 2 July 1994: 19).

This tendency to favour the Likud was compounded by the fact that during the 1980s the Likud had built up a strong network of supporters in the American Jewish community and in Congress including groups such as *Americans for a Safe Israel* and key leaders within the President's Conference. Netanyahu, as Deputy Foreign Minister, tried to make sure that right-wing speakers were promoted in the American Jewish community and tried to support right-wingers to obtain positions of communal power. Also, conservative Republican senators, such as Jesse Helms, were sympathetic to the Israeli opposition's agenda in Washington. They too were sceptical of the Labour government's peace policy which involved concessions to former PLO terrorists who had been 'allied' with the 'Evil Empire'. Nor were they keen on supplying American aid to Arab dictatorship for the sake of peace, which to them sounded like 'appeasement' or worse, Détente<sup>7</sup>. In addition, their fiscal conservatism encouraged them to oppose US troops on the Golan and the extension of foreign aid to the PA (JR 15 December 1994: 32-35).

While the conservatives were uncomfortable with Labour's 'soft line' on security; Christian Zionists opposed territorial compromise for the same reason Gush Emunim and the religious right did in Israel, namely that to do so would threaten a reversal of the messianic process. In a broader sense, in the Christian fundamentalist theology of history the Jewish people had a special role to play in the 'second coming'. Thus the expressed desire of the Israeli leadership to 'normalise Israel' was fundamentally at odds with their particular Christian vision (Melman and Raviv 1994: 349-361) In this vein Christian Zionist Jan Willen Van der Hoeven attacked Rabin's land for peace policy (American Jewish Yearbook 1995: 15).

### **The Challenge to Labour's Peace Strategy in the US**

The Israeli right's penetration of the pro-Israel lobby was evident during the 1980s (Tivnan: 213-248). However Likud and American-Jewish opposition to Labour only

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<sup>7</sup> For an example of this approach see Newt Gingrich's speech to AIPAC (JP 9 April 1997).

became really apparent between 1992-96. Leading the anti-Labour coalition on Capitol Hill, were the Israeli Likud activists Yossi Ben Aharon, Yoram Ettinger, and Yigal Carmon, all of whom had been key government players during the Shamir years in the US. The team was an offshoot of a group set up by Netanyahu during the Shamir years to secretly raise funds from US Jews to help 'correct' Israel's image in the media (JP, 13 July 1995: 4). While in opposition, they worked with groups sympathetic to the Likud in the USA and conservative Republican senators with whom they had established strong connections during their years in power. Ever since the Lebanon War, the Likud had rejected the right of Labour and American Jews to criticise the Israeli government while in the United States. Now they were in opposition, the taboo was broken. Shamir criticised the Oslo Accord in a meeting with the President's Conference, Sharon declared that American Jews were welcome to criticise the Israeli government publicly, other Likud figures toured US Jewish communities promoting the Likud line (JP 31 January 1994: 7, 3 November 1995:4).

However, the real shift was not so much the public criticism but the fact that former top Likud officials were openly lobbying against the Israeli government in Washington. Following the Oslo Accord, Congress allowed the President to suspend the anti-PLO legislation and grant aid to the Palestinian Authority in return for periodic reports on PLO compliance with its commitments in the DoP, in particular, to end terror. This agreement then formed the basis for the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act (MEPFA) which allowed this arrangement to continue for a year. With the renewal of MEPFA due in June 1995, the opposition in America in conjunction with the three Likud activists undertook a serious campaign to stop the flow of American aid to the PA. They encouraged Congressional initiatives to set up separate Congressional committees to monitor PLO compliance. They hired a Washington public relations firm to discredit the PLO. Meanwhile, Netanyahu and the Likud in Israel "bombed Congressmen's offices with faxes" attacking the Oslo accords and the Palestinian Authority's record regarding implementation (WP 10 July 1995: JR 27 July 1995: 11; JP 22 July 1996; WJW 24 August 1995). Likud MK Uzi Landau lobbied Congress against MEPFA and Senator Alfonse D'amato introduced a bill which sought to stop aid flowing to the PA altogether (JR 27 July 1995: 11-12). Jesse Helms, apparently after talks with Ben Aharon and the

ZOA, introduced a bill which sought to tighten the terms of MEPFA by linking US aid to the PNC's cancellation of the Palestinian Covenant and the extradition of terrorists (JP 18 November 1994: 3, 19 September 1995: 2, 6 October 1995:10). MEPFA became law at the end of the 1996 but subsequently, Helms continued to echo Likud doubts as to the PNC's actual revocation of the PLO Covenant, while Gilman's Committee blocked \$13 million in aid from reaching the PA (WP 1 November 1995; AP 12 March 1996: 1; Reuters 9 May 1996).

In response to the threat posed by Likud supporters in the US, the Labour government recognised the importance of working with the special relationship and using *hasbara* in the Jewish community. They could not afford to negate the Diaspora, if only for political reasons. Even Rabin, by now, recognised the political importance of Diaspora Jewry and finally appointed an advisor for Diaspora relations. Subsequently, the Labour party set up an American desk for the first time which arranged for English speakers to promote the Labour line in the Jewish community (JP 11 January 1994: 7, 4 September 1994: 4, 14 February 1995: 6; HA 11/9/95: 2). Israeli Officials also began to seek a dialogue with Orthodox Jews in America (WJW 27 July 1995: 27; YA 11 September 1995: 1).

### **Conclusion**

Although Labour and Likud had opposite approaches to using the special relationship in the context of the peace process, both parties were primarily guided by the same calculation: the compatibility of their approach to the Palestinian question [chapter 3] with that of the American executive. In addition, both parties made sense of their relationship with pro-Israel forces in the US and were influenced in that relationship, by the idea of *shlilat hagalut*. In the case of the Likud, the concept helped explain why the pro-Israel lobby failed to defeat the President over loan guarantees and also helped map out a strategy to try and reverse that position. In the case of Labour, the idea helped explain why a 'special relationship' was apparently undesirable and hence led to it being neglected. Indeed, it can be concluded that while the idea of a 'negation of the Diaspora' encouraged the Likud to overestimate the potential of the special relationship, it also led Labour to underestimate the importance of the special relationship.

One of the consequences of this was that while Likud actions were perceived by sections of American Jewry to have threatened the 'Americaness' of their identity, Labour actions were perceived by sections of American Jewry as threatening to the 'Jewishness' of their identity. It was the tension between communities, between Israel and the Diaspora, focused around the idea of the 'negation of the Diaspora' and over the meaning 'Zionism' that was primarily behind American Jewish opposition to the Likud between 1989-92. In contrast, American Jewish opposition to Labour, stemmed from a tension to be found across both communities. The debate was between those with, on the one hand, a more particularistic sense of Jewish identity, a strong perception of the Gentile world as basically antagonistic and a sense of Israel as something special; as opposed to those, on the other hand, with a more universalistic tendency within their Jewish identity, who do not believe that non-Jews are basically hostile and who tend to value the idea of Israel becoming a 'normal' country.

Thus, the underlying dichotomy in Israeli political culture that distinguished left from right in terms of universalism and particularism is also the key dichotomy which has increasingly determined the nature of Labour and Likud respective relationships with the pro-Israel community over the peace process. Moreover, the breakdown of the consensus against criticising Israeli government policy whilst abroad and lobbying against it in Congress, suggests that Israeli political culture, which was held together by Zionism and a common enemy, is now polarised to such an extent that there are developing closer bonds between the universalists and particularists across national boundaries than between political opponents within the territorial boundaries of the state of Israel.

What does this change in the special relationship mean for Israeli political culture? Some academics, notably David Vital (1990) have argued that a distancing between Israel and the Diaspora is inevitable; post-Zionists agree seeing the phenomena as the desirable outcome of the process of normalisation. Certainly, *aliyah* from Western countries is no longer a mainstream political objective. Indeed, for the first time Israeli figures on the right and the left have spoken of the need for Diaspora Jewry to invest in their own communities to

ensure cultural survival and prevent complete assimilation, rather than focus on Israel<sup>8</sup>. Though this may indeed hint at an underlying post-Zionist tendency, it does not represent conscious post-Zionism, rather it represents a turn towards a kind of cultural Zionism akin to that proposed by Ahad Ha'am (JP 13 November 1992: 6, 9 November 1993: 6; YA 29 January 1996: Beilin 1997: 257). As Peres put it, “Israel needs more *Yiddishkeit* (Judaism), the Diaspora more Hebrew. Israel was an answer to Jewish tragedy and the Holocaust. Now it must attract people by choice... Israel must be a spiritual centre, where whatever is Jewish historically, universally and intellectually should be brought to Israel” (JP 9 April 1996: 7).

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<sup>8</sup> To an extent, this concern is shrewd politics, with the end of the cold war questioning the continued strategic rationale for a close relationship and with the memory of the Holocaust fading from mainstream American consciousness, the prevention of assimilation is the key to the maintenance of the special relationship as a political force at Israel’s disposal in the long-run (JP 4 January 1993).

## Conclusion

At the macro-level of Israeli political culture the central tension, identified in this thesis, has been that between universalism and particularism. After 1967 the political culture of particularism became increasingly dominant, albeit within an increasingly polarised environment. However, from the late 1980s onwards the universalist trend gained greater prominence. As a result, there was a movement toward the ethos of normalisation. Some analysts have defined this trend as post-Zionism. At the conscious level, both elite and mass in Israel are not post-Zionist. They continue to value Israel as the state of the Jewish people. However, there remains an impersonal force within Israeli political culture away from the sense of collective mission which characterised Zionism, towards a more individualistic bourgeois culture. In this more limited sense, Israel is becoming a post-Zionist society.

In what sense, if any, has these shifts affected Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question?

There was certainly a correlation between the development outlined within Israeli political culture and the development of Israel's relations with the United States over the Palestinian question from the government of Begin in 1981 to the government of Rabin in 1996. At the very least, the increasingly dovish trend within Israeli foreign policy is a symptom of the more general trend towards normalisation. Within Israel the pursuit of normalisation, of private individual interests, was mirrored by a desire for normalisation and peace externally, as a means of actualising the 'quiet life', facilitating domestic objectives. But changes in policy cannot be solely attributed to this correlation. Most of the impact of the developments within Israeli political culture on foreign policy was indirect. The polarisation of the political culture and the advantage held first by particularism and then by universalism was manifest primarily through the impact of elections and coalition building. These determined which political sub-culture was in power. Thus, the particularist bias of the religious parties and the Sephardim was one factor which allowed the Likud to maintain control over foreign policy throughout the 1980s. These general trends also helped to determine which political sub-cultures gained

power within the main parties. Hence, the trend towards normalisation led to the increased strength of the progressive sub-culture within the Labour party and ultimately increased control over foreign policy. As a result of these trends, a favourable climate for a changing approach to foreign policy was brought about and the range of options which policy-makers considered desirable and legitimate was altered. Whereas, in 1981 radicalism and its emphasis on settling the land of Israel was a popular core component of Israeli political culture, by 1996 the Likud, for the first time ever, did not mention the land of Israel and settlements in its election campaign. The debate was no longer focused on fulfilling the Zionist mission or values but on how best to secure the state of Israel.

These changes at the macro-level interacted with changes wrought by external forces, such as the end of the cold war, to force tactical amendments at the micro-level of political culture on the Israeli policy-making elite. But none of the about turns in policy towards the Palestinians and relations with the United States can be solely attributed to external pressures. First, Israeli political culture itself helps to constitute the external environment. Thus, when the conservatives stated that they came to terms with Oslo because it was part of a new reality which had been imposed upon them, one which they would not have chosen, this was true. But, that new reality was in part constituted by the actions taken by the Israeli progressives. Moreover, 'external reality' was not persuasive enough to force the radicals to accept Oslo. It is inconceivable that a government led by the radical Shamir would ever have signed the Oslo accord with the PLO. Indeed, this thesis has demonstrated that throughout the 1981-96 period, the differences within Israeli political culture, determined the different approaches, both in theory and practice, of the two major parties to relations with the United States over the Palestinian question.

Because of its emphasis on the land of Israel as an existential value, the particularist culture generally sought to limit the role of American administrations regarding the Palestinian question. As a result of American opposition to the implementation of the 'whole land of Israel' ideal, relations between particularism and the American executive were generally strained. This reality was exacerbated by the radical tendency, prevalent between 1981-3, to value an aggressively defiant unilateral approach to the relationship, as a value in of itself. Ultimately however, it was the incompatibility of the American

adherence to 'land for peace' and the Likud's adherence to 'whole land of Israel' that was of greater importance in determining the nature of the relationship. As a consequence, the Likud was forced to rely on relations with Congress to try and counteract this bias. On the other hand, the universalist political culture generally had a closer relationship with the various administrations, because of its flexibility over the land of Israel. Nonetheless, relations between the various American administrations and the progressives soured because of differences over the instrumentalities of peace. The progressives were not prepared to do things 'the American way' just to stay close with the US, in circumstances that suggested that peace was attainable through some other route, such as via Oslo. Thus, while the progressives and radicals had diametrically opposed approaches to the land of Israel, their shared sense of idealism led them to view relations with the United States as a secondary instrumental value. By way of contrast, both the conservatives and the *mamlachti'im*, whose similar perceptions of international relations emphasised the constraining role of the balance of power in foreign relations, saw relations with the United States as a crucial component of Israeli security and hence an instrumental value of the first order. Combining these two sets of conclusions, it is clear that the *mamlachti* approach was both most compatible in theory and the most successful in practice in sustaining a good relationship with the United States over the Palestinian question, while the radical approach was the least successful.

However, this reality was mitigated, for significant periods, by the particularists ability to play on the common values between the American and Israeli political elites. Building on pro-Israel themes in American political culture and playing on the theme of the cold war, the Likud was able to retain American support and continue settlement in the territories throughout the 1980s. It was even able to block opportunities for peace that fitted relatively closely with American preferences, such as the London agreement. However, under the less sympathetic Bush administration this strategy failed to deliver. The ability of Israel to manipulate the values of the American executive diminished. Moreover, with the fading of the Holocaust from the memory of younger generation and the transformation of Israel from a pioneering society, coupled with the end of the cold war, the ability of the Israeli elite in this regard will continue to weaken. In addition, the ability to call on the basic cultural affinity between the pro-Israel community in the US as a tool

of policy is also diminishing as the peace process becomes a politically divisive issue within the lobby, and American Jewry becomes increasingly separate and even alienated from their Israeli brethren. Thus, increasingly, American-Israeli relations will become a function of the degree to which Israel fits into America's peace policy. This fact was recognised by Rabin, who had been the first to push the idea of an Israeli-American strategic partnership during the cold war. On coming to power after the cold war, he stressed the need for Israel to be cognisant of the new international realities, which demanded, 'fitting in' [with America] and 'making peace' [with the Arab states and the Palestinians] (Klieman 1994: 106). Whether, peace will be achieved depends, of course, not only on Israel, or even the US, but on their neighbours as well. But understanding the Israeli side of the equation has necessitated this examination of Israeli political culture, for as Shimon Peres (1980: 889) explained:

*"To define what sort of peace Israel is looking for we first have to answer the key question: what sort of Israel do we want."*

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