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ISRAELI SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY VIS-À- VIS NON-STATE ACTORS

by

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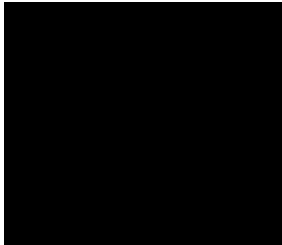
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Abstract

The global geopolitical implications of the 11 September 2001 attacks highlight the need to reassess theories and concepts of security, as well as processes of foreign policy-making. This thesis examines traditional paradigms of International Relations, suggesting an alternative conceptual framework that views non-state actors as actors in their own right. It suggests that the variables shaping a state's foreign policy towards non-state actors are similar to those shaping its foreign policy towards state actors, notwithstanding the fundamental disparity in power relations between the two types of actors. It then studies the security doctrine and foreign policy behavior of one state: Israel.

Having faced the challenge of non-state actors for much of its existence, Israel is an ideal case to examine. The thesis thus investigates Israeli attitudes and policies vis-à-vis three non-state actors: the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), and the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon (Hezbollah). It concludes that while Israel has portrayed all the actors that have challenged its interests and security as "terrorists", its attitudes and policies towards these three non-state actors are far from uniform. Furthermore, although Israel has presented its policies towards non-state actors as a function of its quest for security, some of these policies are rooted in political considerations rather than classic security interests. This is not to suggest that security and strategic considerations do not play a role; however, these considerations have often been exaggerated and utilized as a means to the attainment of political ends. Finally, this thesis contends that rather than serving its security interests, Israel's actions have been counterproductive, undermining instead of promoting the security of the state and that of its citizens.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family.

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List of Abbreviations

ANC: African National Congress

DOP: Declaration of Principles

IDF: Israel Defense Forces

IAF: Israel Air Force

LTTE: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

OPT: Occupied Palestinian Territories

PA: Palestinian Authority

PLA: Palestinian Liberation Army

PLO: Palestinian Liberation Organization

PMO: Prime Minister's Office

PNC: Palestinian National Council

SLA: South Lebanon Army

UAR: United Arab Republic

UNIFIL: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Middle East is not unique in being host to ethnic and sectarian conflicts, interstate wars, revolutions, resistance movements, and population exchanges. However, of the conflicts that have raged around the world since the Second World War, few if any have lasted longer and proven so resistant to a settlement than the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Israeli proclamation of independence, the defeat of Arab regular and irregular forces in 1948, the Palestinian mass exodus, the consolidation of the State of Israel, and the worldwide recognition its founding was met with sent shock waves throughout the Arab world. In the next three decades, three full-scale wars and a number of border skirmishes and limited operations took place, the combined effect of which was a fundamental change in the nature of the conflict and the structure of the entire region. In a sense, the Palestinian *Nakba* (Catastrophe) – the inevitable product of British imperialism and Zionist colonialism – was the precursor for a catastrophe of regional proportions. Indeed, the Middle East is arguably the most strategically significant, yet highly unstable and insecure region in the world. Its abundance in natural resources, chiefly oil reserves, has elevated it to a geostrategic position with which no other region can compete; as a meeting point between the resource-hungry developed North and the developing South, the Middle East has become the focus of superpowers and great powers alike, competing for influence, control of natural resources, and ultimately, hegemony.

Highly industrialized and militarily powerful states' thirst for oil and the possible economic and political ramifications of scarcity have transformed oil from a strategic commodity into a national security interest. Thus, oil and by extension the Middle East have been a top priority on powerful states' – particularly the United States' – security agenda. The

rise of transnational insurgent networks and other non-state actors¹ has provided cause for alarm not only because these actors are deemed to pose a danger to the safety of states that play a decisive role in the Middle East and those allied to them,² but also because they pose a threat to so-called moderate authoritarian regimes and by extension the steady flow of oil. The consequences have been nothing short of tragic for the peoples of the Middle East, and have had a profound impact on domestic politics (i.e. regime security, state-society relations, regime attitudes and policies towards Islamist parties, etc.) and arguably even inter-state relations in the region.

Security concerns – be they state- or regime- oriented – dominate the daily agenda of Arab states, Iran, Turkey³, and Israel. They manifest themselves in the form of both competition and cooperation. While competition and conflict have featured more prominently than cooperation, the latter has gained much momentum in recent years. In some cases, conflict lines have even been redrawn owing to the appearance of threats – such as to regime survival – that trump ideological rigidity. Conflict and cooperation have also characterized states' and regimes' relations with extra-regional actors.

Significantly, no state or regime has been able to cultivate relations with an extra-regional state the way Israel has done with the United States. While relations between the two states were amicable in the early years of the Jewish state's existence, the idea that Israel was an asset gained momentum only after its swift and crushing victory on all three fronts – Egyptian, Jordanian, and Syrian – in 1967. As Phyllis Bennis and Khaled Mansour said about

¹ I narrow down the term “non-state actor” to refer to any paramilitary group, irrespective of background, composition, inspirations, or associations, which espouses a combination of political, religious, ideological, and/or military goals, and utilizes various means, political and/or military, to further its ends.

² John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt criticize the lumping together of different “terrorist” actors because of their shared modus operandi. Terrorism, they argue, “is not a single adversary, but a tactic employed by a wide array of political groups. See John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” *London Review of Books* 28, no.6 (23 March 2006) : http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01_.html (last accessed: April 2008).

³ Turkey's socio-economic and political ties, along with its geographic proximity to the Middle East warrant its incorporation into the definition of the Middle East which the thesis adopts.

the post-1967 phase, “the key element in the relationship was the expectation that Israel would serve important US interests in and around the region.”⁴

What, then, are these interests, and has Israel been serving them? In the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks these questions received little attention. Instead, the debate was, to the surprise of few, framed in Huntingtonian rhetoric of clash of civilizations.⁵ For their own part, Israeli leaders were quick to capitalize on the tragedy: barely had the dust settled when former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a hearing of the U.S. House Government Reform Committee, stated that “Israel’s policy of preemptively striking at those who seek to murder its people is ... better understood today and requires no further elaboration.”⁶ Likewise, in an interview on CNN the following day, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon pointed out that “we [Israelis] have been fighting terror all our lives” and that “we [Americans and Israelis] share the same values, and ... should not let terror conduct our lives.”⁷ A month later, in a policy statement then-Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres emphasized the need for “a campaign that will punish countries that sponsor terrorism and support nations that oppose it.”⁸ On April 16, 2008, more than six and a half years after his aforementioned reaction to the 9/11 attacks, the Israeli daily *Ma’ariv* quoted Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu as saying that “[Israel is] benefiting from one thing, and that is the attack on the Twin Towers and Pentagon, and the American struggle in

⁴ Phyllis Bennis and Khaled Mansour, “‘Praise God and Pass the Ammunition!’: The Changing Nature of Israel’s US Backers,” *Middle East Report* 208 (Autumn 1998): 16.

⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, “The US Media, Huntington and September 11,” *Third World Quarterly* 24, no.3 (June 2003): 529-544.

⁶ For the full text of the speech see Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 September 2001: <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2001/Statement+by+Former+PM+Benjamin+Netanyahu+at+the+H.htm> (last accessed: April 2008).

⁷ “Interview with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on CNN,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 September 2001: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2001/Interview%20with%20PM%20Sharon%20on%20CNN%20-%2021-Sep-2001> (last accessed: April 2008).

⁸ Shimon Peres, “Terror – A Global Threat.” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 October 2001: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2001/Terror+-+A+Global+Threat+by+Shimon+Peres+-+10-Oct.htm> (last accessed: April 2008).

Iraq.”⁹ Although outrage over the statement was minimal – in no small part thanks to the fact that it received no coverage in U.S media – there is little doubt today as to whether Israel has reaped geopolitical benefits from the attacks in the heart of its patron/ally.

Israel’s constant reminders to American audiences to the effect that it is a stalwart ally of the U.S and an active partner in the global war on terror notwithstanding (reminders that are echoed by almost every U.S presidential hopeful¹⁰), the special relationship between the U.S and Israel has undergone increased scrutiny in recent years. However, much of this scrutiny has focused on the corridors of power in Washington rather than those of Jerusalem. While it is true that the leverage that facilitates the continuity of the special relationship is exerted by Zionist lobbying groups in the U.S, the interests advocated by these groups are an accurate reflection of the policy statements of successive Israeli governments. As such, the intricacies of the special relationship and the effect of Israeli policies on U.S standing in the region ought to be placed in the context of Israeli political and security interests, security doctrine, and foreign policy, not the other way around.

1.2 Case Selection

This thesis does not aim at providing a comprehensive picture of security in the region; rather, operating on the assumption that a study of limited scope such as this can hardly aspire to a thorough elucidation of the national security doctrine¹¹ and foreign policy of one state let alone several, it focuses on the national security doctrine and policies of one: Israel. This is not to dismiss the importance of comparative case studies. While single-case

⁹ “Report: Netanyahu says 9/11 terror attacks good for Israel,” *Ha’aretz*, 16 April 2008: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/975574.html> (last accessed: April 2008).

¹⁰ Including Democratic candidate Barack Obama, who in a speech on March 18, 2008 labeled Israel a stalwart ally of the U.S, pinning the blame for “the conflicts in the Middle East” on the “perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam.” For the full text of the speech, see “Barack Obama’s Speech on Race,” *The New York Times*, 18 March 2008: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/us/politics/18text-obama.html?pagewanted=print> (last accessed: April 2008).

¹¹ This thesis defines a state’s security doctrine as the amalgamation of a its national security interests and their incorporation into a grand strategy vis-à-vis states and non-state actors.

studies would not allow for generalization or conclusive theory testing, they *can* provide detailed evidence regarding the nature and causes of particular behavior, and in-depth insight into the actual workings of state behavior, mechanisms of formulating and re-shaping security doctrines, and the manner in which these policies are put into practice. Conducting an across-time survey becomes much more feasible, and would allow one to observe the differences in states' attitudes towards old paradigms in international security and traditional actors on the one hand, and newly emerging concepts and actors on the other hand. It is the contention of this thesis that a single-case study is not without its merits and contributes more to our understanding of state behavior than it is given credit for.¹²

Why Israel?

Israel is a particularly strong case to study not only in terms of its implications for the debate on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but also in terms of its possible contributions to theoretical explanations of state behavior and security. The selection of Israel is based on a number of considerations: it is the only state in the region that has experienced full-scale war and low-intensity conflict spanning decades, allowing for a more accurate path-dependency analysis.¹³ It is also subject to high levels of enmity emanating from the peoples of the region, which amplifies its security concerns. Granted that this raises the possibility that Israel might be a deviant case, ascertaining deviancy nevertheless requires a comparative study or otherwise the determination of clear standards for the evaluation of normalcy/deviancy. A third consideration is that Israel is at a quantitative disadvantage, which heightens the importance of achieving qualitative edge over its enemies. This would say much about the role of scarcity of resources (both human and natural) in the shaping of national security

¹² Jack S. Levy, "Qualitative Methods and Cross-Method Dialogue in Political Science," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 2 (February 2007): 203.

¹³ Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Complex Causal Relations and Case Study Methods: The Example of Path Dependence," *Political Analysis* 14, no.3 (Summer 2006): 259; Bennett and Elman, "Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods," *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (June 2006): 463-465.

doctrine and the manner in which states compensate for the drawbacks associated with scarcity. Furthermore, and most importantly, aside from having states as adversaries, Israel has also been engaged in conflicts with non-state actors, which can provide insight into the extent to which it has been impacted by them, the manner in which it has dealt with them, and possibly also the influence these actors have had on its policies vis-à-vis state adversaries. For their own part, these non-state adversaries have functioned in different environments, thus allowing one to assess the weight of the operational environment of non-state actors (weak states, occupied territories, etc.) and the relations they have forged with states and regimes in the region. Moreover, Israel's asymmetric struggle against non-state actors can provide insight into the question of why, and the circumstances under which, powerful states often lose wars against militarily inferior foes. Israel is also a democratic state with high levels of political mobilization; as such, the significance of domestic opinion can be assessed with more accuracy. Last but not least, given the nature of the special relationship between Israel and the U.S and its tremendous impact on the region and – in this era of globalization – the world, studying Israeli security needs, security and political interests, and behavior is not only important but also necessary.

1.3 Research Questions

The thesis explores the nature of Israel's security interests vis-à-vis non-state actors, the manner in which they have been pursued, the factors that may have transformed them, and the constraints that Israel has had to grapple with in its quest to achieve its objectives.

The rapidly deteriorating situation in the Middle East over the past two decades, especially since 9/11 has highlighted the need for a re-assessment of theoretical and practical concepts of security. What is required today is a new paradigm that would take into account oft-ignored concepts, and actors that have been largely excluded from the traditional

paradigm but which have become inescapable realities of world politics. That there have been attempts in recent years to reformulate the framework of study is undeniable. Few of these attempts, however, have incorporated non-state actors in a satisfactory manner. Owing to their strategic importance, and interactions and relations with states, these actors are crucial to our understanding of state behavior and security. Likewise, variables such as military power and domestic politics should be re-assessed and their weight reflected in the framework of study in a manner that would complement, rather than exclude, other variables (such as non-state actors' relations with other non-state actors and more importantly with patron states).

The thesis aims to redress the aforementioned gap in the conceptual framework, and to situate non-state actors within the wider mechanism of Israeli foreign policy. To do so, it looks at three non-state actors, namely the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas, and Hezbollah, focusing in particular on the nature and determinants of Israeli attitudes and policies vis-à-vis each. Naturally, non-state actors cannot exist in a vacuum; at a minimum, they rely on external sources of support. States and regimes in the region have often supported and funded such actors, be it for ideological reasons or regime-interest ends. It is therefore imperative to also address Israel's attitudes towards and relations with other states in the region and the relationship of the latter to non-state actors. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, however, this aspect will not be discussed as a separate chapter but will rather be incorporated into the two chapters dealing with non-state actors.

The study addresses three questions:

First, notwithstanding its past and present use of the "terrorist" label to refer to non-state actors, does Israel have a common plan for dealing with such actors, or is the nature of its policies determined by its differing interests in each arena?

Second, and expanding on the previous question, how has Israel perceived, defined, and dealt with the political and security challenges posed by these non-state actors? To answer these two questions, Israel's attitudes, statements, and policies towards the three aforementioned actors are to be analyzed and evaluated. Such a task requires a discussion of state interests, leadership perceptions, military power and coercive capacity, success or failure of deterrence, and systemic and unit-level opportunities and constraints.

Third, to what extent does Israel view non-state actors in isolation from their (state) sponsors and (state or non-state) allies? Does Israel view non-state actors as having interests distinct from their patrons, and as exhibiting behavior that is often independent of them? The importance of this question lay in its policy implications for Israel, its state adversaries, and non-state actors alike. To attempt to answer it – complicated a question to answer as it is – a brief examination of Israel's explicit and implicit rationale for its behavior vis-à-vis non-state actors is required. For this purpose, position statements have to be weighed against actual behavior.

The thesis considers a variety of variables but places emphasis on a select few based on an alternative theoretical framework devised in Chapter Two. Figure 1 shows, in addition to Israel, three types of actors: non-state actors, adversarial states, and friendly states.

The pyramidal figure composed of four triangles highlights the crucial fact that while Israel occupies the center of the study, it is not sufficient to merely examine its relations with the three types of actors separately; due (albeit limited) attention must also be paid to relations between: 1) adversarial states and non-state actors; 2) non-state actors and friendly states; and 3) friendly states and adversarial states.

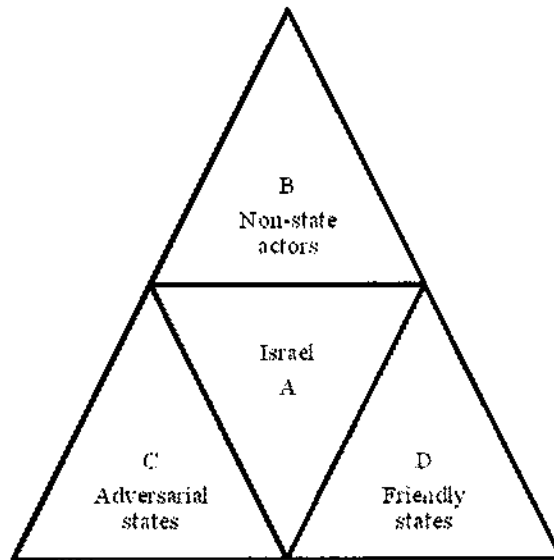


Figure 1: Israel and the world

The first and second research questions focus on the rhombus formed by triangles A and B. The third focuses on the trapezoid formed by triangles A, B, and C, with emphasis on the vertex shared by all three. At the same time, the rhombus formed by A and B is not disconnected from C and D, and the trapezoid formed by A, B, and C preserves its connection to D. In fact, the examination of any combination of two triangles is possible owing to the fact that each triangle has one side in common with the adjacent one and nodes that link it to the remaining two.

1.4 Methodology, Scope, and Limitations

The methodology employed in this thesis is an examination of the political and security-oriented attitudes and diplomatic and military actions of the Jewish state vis-à-vis non-state actors in both historical and contemporary contexts. Whereas the study is not limited to any specific period in Arab-Israeli relations, documenting every incident or detailing the debates and developments they have prompted in Israeli civil and military circles is a monumental, if not impossible, task; thus, by necessity, the scope of the study is

limited to key events in the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and in Israel's relations with its environment. Likewise, it is not possible (both due to scope and relevance) to incorporate into the study of non-state actors all the actors in the region that figure in Israeli security and political considerations. Instead, some weight is placed on Israel's immediate surroundings, especially Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon; as well as Iran.

The thesis also has two main limitations. First, given the abundance of variables in the complex social world that this thesis delves into, it is difficult for any qualitative study to make concrete claims about causality. It should therefore be noted that it is not the purpose of this thesis to establish causality, or to dismiss correlations as merely circumstantial. Second, due to this author's insufficient knowledge of the Hebrew language, the material examined in this study is limited to sources in English and Arabic, although translations from Hebrew sources, where available, are also used. The thesis will make use of both primary and secondary sources: documents, communiqués, maps, news items, reports, and interviews, as well as books, journal articles, op-eds, and policy briefs.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

The remainder of this study is divided into two components: theoretical and empirical. Chapter Two discusses the theoretical literature on international relations and critiques traditional models for explaining state behavior. The discussion of the various theories, concepts, and variables serves to formulate a new model, one that offers a more complete picture of the security politics of the Middle East and the successes and failures of dealing with resistance and liberation movements. Chapter Three focuses on two Palestinian non-state actors, namely the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), while Chapter Four focuses on a Lebanese non-state actor, the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon (Hezbollah). These two chapters examine in detail Israel's attitudes

and policies vis-à-vis each of the three actors: its reading of these actors' strategies, tactics, and relations with other actors, as well as the challenges they have posed or continue to pose to Israeli interests and security; Israel's policies towards them; and an overall assessment of their standing within the Israeli security conception and vis-à-vis Israel's foreign policy agenda. No study of a state's strategies vis-à-vis non-state actors would be complete without an overview of the broader historical context in the shadow of which the non-state actors have emerged, as well as the particular communal experiences that have brought about or facilitated their emergence, and which inform their attitudes and policy choices. Thus, in examining Israel's attitudes and policies towards the three actors, a brief and general overview of the birth of the Palestine problem will be presented at the beginning of Chapter Three, in addition to brief overviews of the specific context of each actor's emergence in both Chapter Three and Four. Moreover, key Israeli concepts of security will be examined throughout the two chapters. Chapter Five summarizes the findings of previous chapters and evaluates the proposed model and its implications for the study of security, foreign policy, and non-state actors.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Imperatives

Theoretical and Practical Concepts of Security

2.1 Introduction

Few scholars of international relations and even fewer policy- and decision- makers would deny that security is of paramount importance, and that it has been, and continues to be, one of the major problems facing humanity. Nonetheless, for a considerable period security remained a relatively underdeveloped, and a largely secondary concept in the literature. Key events, chief among them the end of the Cold War, alerted international relations scholars to the necessity of reviewing the scholarly track record of the treatment of security, addressing and redressing the dearth in the literature, and revising the manner in which security had been incorporated into the practical debate on state behavior.¹

One obstacle is that the term is not only slippery, but also still inadequately developed. The debate pertaining to the three main categories of security – individual, national, and international – is far from over, and no consensus on what each of these categories (let alone the overarching concept of security) comprises is forthcoming.² The necessity of taking into account different perceptions of *what* constitutes a security threat and to *whom*, has exacerbated the dilemma.

While the traditional paradigm, which places heavy emphasis on military aspects, has remained largely resilient to the challenges mounted by new paradigms of security, the latter have often trumped the former. One such example is the growing emphasis on human security;³ another is the emphasis on environmental security and its often fatal consequences

¹ See for example Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no.2 (June 1991): 211-239; and a critique by Edward A. Kolodziej, "Renaissance in Security Studies? Caveat Lector!" *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no.4 (December 1992): 421-438.

² Recent debates on the topic have made significant albeit insufficient contributions to the formulation of a framework for the study of security. One such contribution has been Barry Buzan's post-Cold War assessment of security and the various elements and aspects thereof. See Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991).

³ See Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?," *International Security* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 87-102.

in inter- and intra- state disputes.⁴ Case studies have elucidated the effects of environmental scarcity on state-society relations and intra-state disputes. Fast track “land reform” in Zimbabwe and land redistribution grievances in post-apartheid South Africa are cases in point.⁵ However fierce the debate on contending paradigms might be, it nevertheless continues to take place mostly within the confines of “national security”. Some fifty-five years ago, Arnold Wolfers cautioned against the danger of endorsing – without further scrutiny – political formulas such as “national interest” and “national security” that permit “everyone to label whatever policy he favors with an attractive and possibly deceptive name.”⁶ Indeed, distinguishing between real and deceptive usages of the term is perhaps the single most difficult and critical task that a scholar conducting a case study has to grapple with.

The difficulty of theorizing security and operationalizing security-related variables is three-dimensional: first, the lack of consensus on an overarching definition of security, and the overabundance of categories of security and disagreements among scholars over the importance of each, render meaningful generalization more difficult to arrive at. Second, empirical case studies of state behavior have to go beyond the definition of security espoused by the scholar, and instead adopt, where possible, the definitions of security espoused by the subjects of the case studies. Such identification is not always possible, however, and has to be based on interpretation of statements and behavior rather than the motives that lay behind them. Third, states in the international system hold different definitions of security and different interpretations of other states’ conceptualizations of security (which may or may not

⁴ See Nina Græger, “Environmental Security?”, *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 1 (1996): 109-116; and Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, “On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict,” *International Security* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 76-116.

⁵ For the latter, see Thomas Homer-Dixon and Valerie Percival, “Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case of South Africa,” *Environment, Population and Security* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science; the University of Toronto, October 1995): <http://www.library.utoronto.ca/pcs/eps/south/sa1.htm> (last accessed: December 2007).

⁶ Arnold Wolfers, “‘National Security’ as an Ambiguous Symbol,” *Political Science Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 1952): 481.

coincide). Figure 2 portrays the complex web of security definitions and interpretations. Combined with other issues, they make the task of studying inter-state relations, and more importantly the formulation of a theoretical framework for the study of security all the more difficult.

Both realist and liberal theories adopt the state as the key actor and emphasize inter-state relations. Chronically disregarded are non-state actors, which have become a prominent feature of world politics and an element that is factored into the decision-making of great powers and weak states, democracies and authoritarian regimes alike. Examples abound: guerilla organizations inspired by religious ideology and harboring resistance or liberation agendas, such as Hezbollah and Hamas; national liberation organizations with both political and military wings, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); and transnational terrorist networks, such as al-Qa'ida.

It is imperative to study these actors not only because of their growing influence and the deadly force with which they have often catapulted themselves onto the regional (or world) stage, but also because their emergence and actions are intimately related to states and state behavior. Some of these actors represent the national aspirations of stateless peoples (including their quest for security, which is often glossed over even in the literature dealing with non-state actors); these aspirations are denied by states that have control over the territory under dispute – a denial consecrated by international norms that frown upon challenges to the territorial sovereignty of nation-states. Other actors are violent manifestations of national or supranational grievances over the foreign policies of great and middle powers. The Middle East is a natural and fertile ground for such movements, owing in no small part to its geostrategic position.

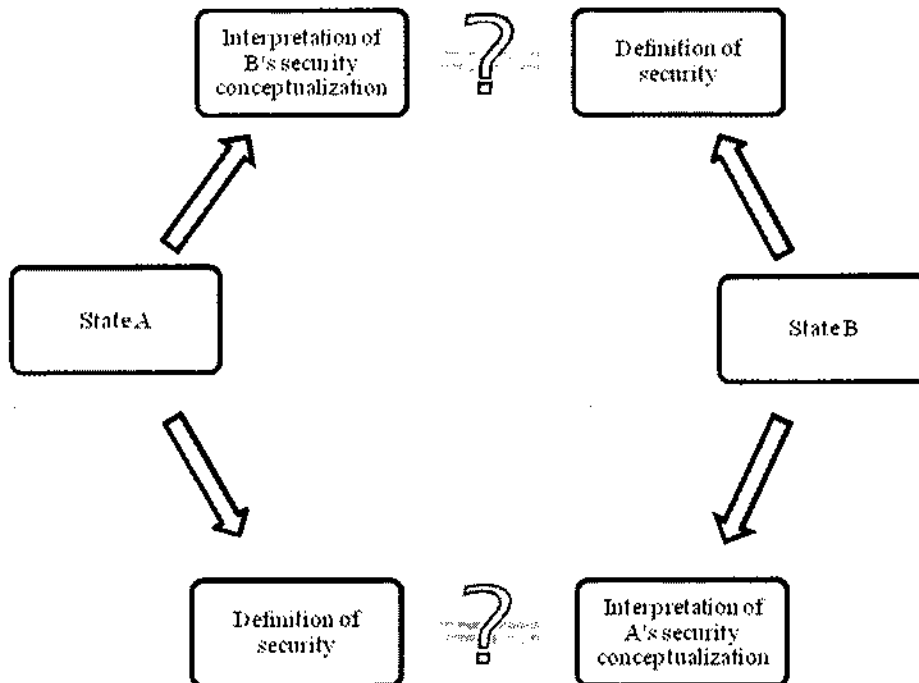


Figure 2 : States' definitions and interpretations of own and other states' security conceptualization

One major critique of realism is that it consistently ignores non-state entities as actors in their own right. According to the proponents of the realist paradigm, these actors do not qualify as initiators because they do not wield sufficient power to “affect global behavior in a significant fashion.”⁷ This assumption fails to take into account that some actors *do* command and deploy enough resources to allow for a meaningful participation in world politics, while others go even further and take on strategic roles. Thus, ignoring non-state actors might result in failure to comprehend even the seemingly “unrelated” theme of *inter-state* dynamics.

The confines of this chapter do not allow for an in-depth review of the vast and diverse theoretical literature on state behavior. Nevertheless, it is imperative to conduct an

⁷ Richard W. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, “The Effect of Actor and Issue Classifications on the Analysis of Global Conflict-Cooperation,” *The Journal of Politics* 43, no. 3 (August 1981): 863.

overview of the two dominant theories (and their various strands) of international relations⁸ to provide the reader with a more effective illustration of how the notions debated by international relations theorists are relevant to the case study of Israeli security and foreign policy. Liberalism restricts security mostly to the confines of democratic peace, economic interdependence, and institutionalized cooperation. While these are not altogether unrelated to Israel's foreign policy, they nevertheless are largely inapplicable to its position in the Middle East. Thus, while elaborating on liberal theories, the next section of this chapter will focus mostly on realist theories with special emphasis on neo-realism.⁹ The third section will address oft-dismissed factors and variables (domestic and other), which, combined with the second section will present, I argue, a more accurate framework for explaining state behavior.

2.2 Theories of State Behavior

Realist and liberal theories present contending visions of inter-state interaction. Whereas realism emphasizes the propensity for conflict between states, liberalism identifies ways in which conflicts can be and often are moderated if not altogether resolved.¹⁰ Debates within and between the two paradigms have shaped and transformed the way we view international relations. No discussion of state behavior can therefore be complete without an overview of the basic principles of, as well as the nature of the debates within and between both traditions.

⁸ This study omits constructivist theories; nevertheless, for the constructivist view of international relations, see Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 71-81, and Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1998): 171-200; for a suggested research agenda of constructivist security studies, see Theo Farrell, "Constructivist Security Studies: Portrait of a Research Program," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 49-72.

⁹ The field of international relations now boasts of a variety of realist theories; the scope of this chapter does not allow for a survey of all those theories. Only key elements of "mainstream" strands will be touched upon in this chapter, while some others will be referred to in the context of Israel's security doctrine and foreign policy in the next two chapters.

¹⁰ Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* 110 (Spring 1998): 30.

2.2.1 Liberal Theories

For liberals, wars are created by authoritarian regimes for the pursuit of vested interests; the aggressive instincts of these undemocratic states are what bring about conflict between states, to the detriment of their reluctant subjects. Thus, the appropriate antidote for conflict is the replacement of such regimes with democratic ones. In other words, peace is directly proportional to legitimate domestic orders, and world peace is possible through the spread of democracy around the world. Michael Doyle argues that “[w]hen the citizens who bear the burdens of war elect their governments, wars become impossible.”¹¹ This explanation, however, is not applicable across the board. Indeed, Doyle is quick to point out that while liberal states have made a “separate peace”, they have not lost the appetite for conflicts with authoritarian states.¹²

Despite its immense influence in both academic and policymaking circles, the “democratic peace” theory has had its share of criticism¹³ and challenges. Two weaknesses of this strand of liberalism are relevant here: the first is its indifference to intra-state conflict and non-state actors; the second is its failure to account for cooperative relations, alliances, and more importantly peace treaties between democracies and authoritarian regimes. One example is the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. In a clear violation of the predictions of proponents of the democratic peace, few if any cracks have appeared in the peace treaty and relations between the two states are yet to descend into fresh conflict. This is not to say that relations are ideal (if any such notion exists in international relations); nevertheless, disagreements and conflict have become normalized, in that they are channeled through

¹¹ Michael W. Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics,” *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (December 1986): 1151.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1152, 1157.

¹³ For example, Douglas M. Gibler argues that democracy and peace are both symptoms rather than causes of the removal of territorial issues between neighbors, and that the “empirical law” of democratic peace might therefore be spurious. Douglas M. Gibler, “Bordering on Peace: Democracy, Territorial Issues, and Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (2007): 509-532. For a brief summary of the main arguments of critics of the theory, see Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories”: 39.

peaceful, diplomatic practices. Examples of cooperation between democracies and authoritarian regimes abound. The Middle East is home to a number of regimes that enjoy close ties with the state that ostensibly is the “spokesperson” of liberal democracy, namely the United States.¹⁴ The Middle East is not the only region where this phenomenon exists; the relationship between post-apartheid democratic South Africa and Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe is another case. Far from sharpening an appetite for conflict with its northern neighbor, the ANC-led government of South Africa has led fierce efforts at undercutting international pressure on the Mugabe regime, dismissing its critics, and even slamming the Bush administration’s description of Zimbabwe as an “outpost of tyranny.”¹⁵ It is not within the scope of this thesis to catalogue the examples that run contrary to what “democratic peace” theorists predict; suffice to say that this strand of liberalism, despite its clout in policymaking circles, leaves much to be explained.

Liberal institutionalists, while sharing the realists’ basic assumption about the anarchical nature of the international system and viewing the state as the key actor in world politics, posit that it is possible to achieve and advance cooperation among states in the absence of an overarching authority that would enforce agreements. This is made possible by the fact that states do not view international relations as a zero-sum game, and therefore do not fall into the relative gains dilemma that neo-realists’ states find themselves in. Instead, states seek to maximize their own gains irrespective of the gains of other states. Given that

¹⁴ Kyle Grayson, citing Barkawi and Laffey, highlights a problematic aspect of democratic peace theory. The authors point out that while the U.S has on a number of occasions used covert action to overthrow democratically elected governments in the Third World, the theory’s conception of war, i.e. recognizing only formal declarations of war, save it from invalidation. Kyle Grayson, “Democratic Peace Theory as Practice: (Re)Reading the Significance of Liberal Representations of War and Peace,” *York Centre for International and Security Studies (YCISS) Working Paper No. 22* (March 2003): <http://www.yorku.ca/yciss/publications/WP22-Grayson.pdf> (last accessed: December 2007), 5; Tarek Barkawi and Mark Laffey, “The Imperial Peace: Democracy, Force, and Globalization,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 4 (1999).

¹⁵ See Andrew Gowers, John Reed, and David White, “Mbeki attacks US over Zimbabwe stance,” *Financial Times*, 21 February 2005: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6b930894-8446-11d9-ad81-00000e2511c8.html>. The President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, went as far as to describe his relations with Mugabe as “very good.” See “Mbeki criticizes US over Zimbabwe,” *BBC News*, 22 February 2005: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4286673.stm> (last accessed: December 2007).

most institutions do not have coercive apparatuses, the primary difficulty that institutionalists have to grapple with is the incentive of states to defect. Liberal institutionalists provide only a partial explanation for this phenomenon. While states might defect in pursuit of what they perceive to be more beneficial arrangements (in absolute rather than relative terms), they have often abandoned their commitments even in the absence of alternatives.

Proponents of the third strand of liberalism, economic interdependence, argue that globalization, along with the rise of non-governmental organizations and the spread of communications technology, has brought about a decline of the territorial state and shifted attention away from military notions of security towards economics. Traditionally, states have embarked on territorial conquest as the primary means of acquiring wealth and resources; in today's complex and interdependent world, the costs of using force have increased dramatically, and the threat of the disruption of economic and social ties deters states from taking unilateral action.¹⁶ The theory suffers from a number of weaknesses, however: First, the benefits that states receive from economic interdependence are not uniform; in other words, not all states receive an equal or even proportional share of benefits in the global economy. Second, even if states pursue absolute gains as opposed to relative ones, they might still embark on other strategies of action that they perceive to be more beneficial. Third, while the theory implies a dramatic reduction in the possibility of war among highly developed and industrialized democracies, the same cannot be assumed for developing regions. Fourth, in the absence of an overarching authority, the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few developed states, and its overlap with the political influence some of them wield and the military power even fewer command, renders some

¹⁶ Gibler, *op. cit.*, 40.

states the effective “authority”.¹⁷ The situation is exacerbated by the absence of a bipolar order.

The “security dilemma” is a core issue in international relations. I define it as the situation where one state’s attempts to increase its security are perceived by another as a threat, leading to escalation and ultimately – if left unchecked – military conflict. While neo-realists place the security dilemma at center stage, liberals reject the neo-realist position that depicts the security dilemma as inescapable. Georg Sørensen points out that the classical security dilemma is irrelevant for “post-modern states” and in sharp decline among modernizing and democratizing states;¹⁸ this is because these states, in their quest for security (and other values¹⁹), choose to cooperate, a choice that has resulted in not insignificant levels of economic, political, and social integration.²⁰

While cooperation schemes such as the EU are important to take note of and study in the context of the security dilemma and the purported propensity of modernized liberal democracies to transcend it, it is simplistic to dismiss the dilemma as irrelevant for post-modern as well as modernizing states. Pending more conclusive empirical evidence, the decline in the number of inter-state conflicts and the increase in cooperation among states are necessary but not sufficient conditions to arrive at such a conclusion. Moreover, Sørensen grudgingly admits that the security dilemma “remains virulent in several major regions in Asia, as well as in the Middle East,”²¹ nevertheless declining to comment on the issue further.

¹⁷ This concern was echoed by the former UN Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali: “[The United States] will use [the United Nations] when they need to, through a multilateral approach, and if they don’t need it, they will act outside the framework of the United Nations.” See Jef Huysmans, “International Politics of Insecurity: Normativity, Inwardness and the Exception,” *Security Dialogue* 37, no. 1 (March 2006): 15.

¹⁸ Georg Sørensen, “After the Security Dilemma: The Challenges of Insecurity in Weak States and the Dilemma of Liberal Values,” *Security Dialogue* 38, no. 3 (2007): 362.

¹⁹ Such as freedom, order, justice, etc. *Ibid.*, 359.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 362.

In this context, examining the position of a modernized democratic state in a region dotted with authoritarian regimes and weak states facing what Sørensen calls “insecurity dilemmas” – a task that this thesis embarks upon – is especially appropriate.

2.2.2 Realist Theories

The emphasis this thesis places on realist and neo-realist theories stems primarily, albeit not exclusively, from the fact that they are the dominant force in system-level studies of Middle East international relations. Despite numerous challenges emanating from liberal, constructivist, and Marxist quarters, realism (and in particular neo-realism) has put on a strong showing in the debate on the nature of the international system and its relationship to outcomes of international relations. The debate has revolved chiefly around outcomes such as war and peace, and is framed primarily in terms of questions dealing with alliances, the security dilemma, deterrence, and the promise of international institutions pertaining to the expansion of the circle of cooperating states.

The elementary premise of realism is that conflict, uncertainty, suspicion, and competition are intrinsic characteristics of international relations, inevitable in an international system lacking an authority that would regulate relations between states. It is therefore not surprising that realism has been labeled a pessimistic tradition. Like its liberal counterpart, realism is not a unified theory, although all realists agree on the anarchical nature of the international system and on states as the key actors within it.

Classical realists believe that states have an innate desire to dominate others, and that it is this desire that leads them to fight wars. The main proponent of this strand of realist thought, Hans Morgenthau, identifies the guiding principle of realism as “the concept of

interest defined in terms of power.”²² According to Morgenthau, the most important element of the political power of a nation is the threat or potentiality of armed strength, which when actualized, replaces political power by military power.²³ Morgenthau’s major contribution to the field of international relations is his balance of power theory. According to this theory, states’ aspirations for power necessitate the formation of a balance of power configuration and the adoption of policies aimed at preserving it.²⁴ While there is more than one method of arriving at a balance of power, the “historically most important manifestation [thereof] is to be found in the relations between one nation or alliance of nations and another alliance.”²⁵

The literature on state behavior is rife with debates on alliance formation. Stephen M. Walt’s *The Origins of Alliances*, an examination of the history of alliance formation in the Middle East, defines “alliance” as “a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states.”²⁶ I contend that this definition risks oversimplifying relations between states by blurring the line between two essentially distinct sets of notions and processes. It disregards the factors that lead to the formation of “formal alliances” in some cases and “informal alliances” in others; these factors might be crucial in explaining outcomes and to a lesser extent predicting future behavior. Thus, this thesis distinguishes between two concepts: alliance and alignment. Separating the two is of critical importance as each has fundamentally different implications in the study of state behavior.

I use the terms “alliance” and “alignment” to refer, respectively, to a formal and informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states (irrespective of regime type). Yet the question remains: is “alignment” an appropriate term to refer to the relationship between non-state actors and sovereign states? I answer this question

²² Hans Morgenthau, “A Realist Theory of International Politics,” in *Essential Readings in World Politics*, ed. Karen A. Mingst and Jack L. Snyder. 2nd Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁶ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 1.

in the affirmative. I extend the term “alignment” to also apply to cases where at least one of the parties in the relationship is a non-state actor. One may ask: what about the possibility that a formal relationship might exist between the two actors? While such a possibility is not ruled out, given the air of secrecy that surrounds non-state actors’ functioning and their relations with friendly states, assessing the real nature of the relationship is a difficult task. Moreover, the constraints that non-state actors typically have to grapple with render the concept of penalization for defection that characterizes formal relationships a moot point: it would be safe to assume that states that enter into such relationships assess the limited resources, capabilities, and maneuverability of non-state actors and frame their expectations accordingly. Such considerations are not a typical feature of the relationship between sovereign states owing to the relatively high level of maneuverability that they typically enjoy.²⁷ The cooperative relationship between non-state actors and sovereign states has often been described as a proxy relationship, not least of all by decision-makers. Such terminology, even if an accurate description of some (or most) cases, ought to be avoided. Placing, based on actor type, the relationship outside the framework of the existing two categories is, at best, an arbitrary measure. This is not to dismiss the validity of the “proxy” characterization. Rather, it is to dismiss the soundness of the placement, by *default* and *prior* to empirical validation, of non-state actors in a third category.

What sets neo-realists and classical realists apart is the fact that while the latter offer an endogenous account of state behavior, the former direct their attention away from the interacting units, focusing instead on the structure of the system. For neo-realists, classical realists’ accounts are reductionist. Kenneth Waltz, the father of neo-realism, objects to the emphasis reductionists place on “who is doing what to produce the outcomes,”²⁸ arguing that “one cannot infer the condition of international politics from the internal composition of

²⁷ I argue that while the margins of maneuverability are narrower for weak states than for strong ones, the former nevertheless enjoy considerable advantage over non-state actors.

²⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 62.

states, nor can one arrive at an understanding of international politics by summing up the foreign policies and external behaviors of states.”²⁹ Furthermore, at the same time as he recognizes the importance of the characteristics, behavior, and interactions of units, Waltz insists on the necessity of omitting them, “so that we can distinguish between variables at the level of the units and variables at the level of the system.”³⁰ Unlike interactions, which take place at the level of units, the *arrangement* of units – which is all about relationships – is a property of the system.³¹

Waltz defines structure by three components: an ordering principle, the differentiation of units, and the distribution of capabilities.³² Addressing each of these components in some detail might elucidate the manner in which the structure of the international system may have molded the relationship between Israel on the one hand, and regional and extra-regional actors on the other.

1. Ordering Principles

In the international system, the ordering principle is anarchy, or the lack of an overarching authority to control and organize state behavior in the same way that the government in a state does within the confines of its borders. Owing to the anarchic nature of the international system and the fact that, as Waltz has observed throughout his writings, war and conflict between states to be recurrent events, the notion of self-help is “necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order.”³³ Thus, survival is the primary motive and guiding instinct of states. This does not mean that states may not and do not harbor other aims, only that survival is a prerequisite for achieving other objectives.³⁴ Without the ability to defend itself and ensure its survival, a state will be unable to pursue and achieve the other goals it

²⁹ Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (March 1997): 2.

³⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 79.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

³² *Ibid.*, 79-101.

³³ *Ibid.*, 111.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

has set for itself. Because there is a real possibility that a state might use force, all states must be prepared to do so or face the consequences. The survival assumption, Waltz notes, “allows for the fact that no state always acts exclusively to ensure its survival. It allows for the fact that some states may persistently seek goals that they value more highly than survival.”³⁵

The security dilemma, referred to earlier in this chapter, is a product of this delicate predicament. Robert Jervis defines it as the situation where “many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others.”³⁶ As Walt and Caldwell and Williams note, threat is a necessary part of any definition of security and insecurity.³⁷ In this context, one must ask what qualifies as an appropriate definition for the term. A threat cannot be defined exclusively in terms of the capabilities that states possess. It must be coupled with assessments of and assumptions about the intentions of states (whether benign or malign).³⁸ This thesis echoes Caldwell and Williams’ definition; namely, that a threat can be said to exist if an actor possesses both the capability to do harm *and* a malign intent.³⁹ I call this “real threat.” Equally important, however, are *perceptions* of threat.⁴⁰ In other words, the extent of an actor’s knowledge of the capabilities of a possible adversary, and the assumptions it makes about its intent. Wars are often the direct result of the gap between *perceived* and *real* threat. The notion of perceived threat will therefore be the subject of much attention and scrutiny throughout this thesis.

Power is an instrument that states use to threaten or reward other states or actors. Like security, the concept of power has been the subject of much debate. Zeev Maoz presents three

³⁵ Ibid., 92.

³⁶ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (January 1978): 169.

³⁷ Walt notes that “defining the basic hypotheses in terms of threats rather than power alone, we gain a more complete picture of the factors that statesmen will consider when making alliance choices.” See Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 26; and Dan Caldwell and Robert E. Williams Jr., *Seeking Security in an Insecure World* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 9.

³⁸ Walt believes that perceptions of intent are “likely to play an especially crucial role in alliance choices.” Ibid., 25.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of social constructivist and social identity (psychology) theories of identity and threat perception, see David L. Rousseau and Rocio Garcia-Retamero, “Identity, Power, and Threat Perception: A Cross-National Experimental Study,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 5 (October 2007): 747-750.

conceptualizations of power: power as control over resources, power as control over actors, and power as control over outcomes.⁴¹ Robert Dahl defines it as the ability of actor A to get actor B to do what actor A wants.⁴² Waltz, on the other hand, objects to the common definition of power that omits “consideration of how acts and relations are affected by the structure of action.”⁴³ Instead, he suggests that power should be defined in terms of the ability of an actor to affect others more than they affect it.⁴⁴

However, in much of the theoretical and empirical literature of international relations, power is measured as a function of an actor’s control over outcomes. The problem with this conceptualization is that, in Waltz’s words, “it takes much of the politics out of politics” by ruling out unintended effects.⁴⁵ Waltz’s definition is not without its shortcomings. Let us assume that actor A is a powerful state and actor B is a weak state. According to Waltz’s definition, actor A is powerful if it merely manages to affect B more than B affects it. The problem, however, arises when B is able to bridge the gap on a subsequent occasion, and manages to affect A more than it affected A on the previous occasion, although A continues to affect B more than B affects A. This is problematic given that states do not view their power position and capabilities in isolation from their expectations of outcome. *Prima facie*, the narrowing gap might appear insignificant. In reality, however, a state cannot ignore the increased ability of another actor to affect it, even if its own ability to affect that actor has remained constant or even increased. A powerful state might interpret the increased ability of the weaker actor to affect it as a threat to the status quo that it seeks to maintain, and/or as an erosion of its deterrent power.

⁴¹ Zeev Maoz, “Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes,” *World Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 1989): 240.

⁴² Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero, op. cit., 745.

⁴³ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 192.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Earlier, in *Man, the State and War*, Waltz defined power as the “capacity to produce an intended effect.” See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

⁴⁵ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 192.

For both classical and neo-realists, threats are a function of power asymmetries.⁴⁶ In other words, if actor A has more power than actor B, actor B will feel threatened because the anarchical nature of the international system does not offer any guarantees against the use of force. However, the idea of uneven distribution of power alarms not only the weaker side (which would fear exploitation), but also the stronger side, which may fear a change in the balance of power.

2. *Differentiation of Units*

Whereas the hierarchic domestic system is characterized by relations of super- and subordination, the anarchic system “entails relations of coordination among a system’s units, and that implies their sameness.”⁴⁷ States might appear to be very different from one another, but that is hardly the case. The sameness of states stems from two characteristics: their sovereignty and their function. First, each state is a sovereign political entity. This is not to say that states may not face constraints; rather, it merely refers to states’ ability to decide how they will cope with internal and external problems. Second, states perform similar tasks and aspire to similar ends, even if their capabilities may vary.⁴⁸ For example, both Israel and Iran face constraints and pressures emanating from a hostile and insecure anarchic environment, and have different modes of governance. At the same time, both are sovereign states and wish to retain their ability to make their own decisions.

3. *Distribution of Capabilities*

The units of an anarchic system differ from units in a hierarchic system in that while the latter are defined by both their functional differentiation and their capabilities, the former are distinguished primarily by their capabilities, given that (as stated above) they are

⁴⁶ Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero, *op. cit.*, 746.

⁴⁷ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

functionally undifferentiated. While it is true that capabilities are attributes of units, the distribution of capabilities across units are not.⁴⁹

The distribution of capabilities is a critical element of international relations and interstate conflict. It figures strongly in balance of power theory and configurations. According to Waltz, the two basic assumptions that the balance of power theory makes about states is that they: 1) are unitary actors which seek self-preservation at a minimum and universal domination at a maximum; and 2) try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available to them in order to achieve their desired ends. The means are divided into two categories: external, which manifests itself in the form of alliance politics; and internal, in the form of increasing capabilities (economic, military, etc.).⁵⁰ Two issues, the distribution of capabilities across actors, and the distribution, restructuring, or increase of capabilities within actors (e.g. defensive versus offensive), are predominant features of offense-defense theories.

Offense versus Defense

Neo-realism branches out into two main sub-strands: defensive and offensive realism. They part company over the question of how much power states want.⁵¹ For Waltz, who is a defensive realist, the primary concern of states is not power maximization, but the maintenance of their positions in the system. States have little incentive to seek additional power. In contrast, offensive realists, at their forefront John Mearsheimer, believe that status quo powers are rare because the international system gives rise to incentives for gaining power and aspiring for hegemony.⁵² Mearsheimer criticizes defensive realists' claims that the constraints of the international system are so powerful that offense rarely succeeds. While admitting that systemic factors do contain aggression, especially through balancing by

⁴⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 118.

⁵¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 21.

⁵² Glenn H. Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World—Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security: A Review Essay," *International Security* 27, no. 1 (Summer 2002): 152.

threatened states, he nevertheless insists that defensive realists exaggerate these restraining forces.⁵³ States, he argues, “recognize that the best way to ensure security is to achieve hegemony now,” in order to eliminate the possibility of a deficit in the future.⁵⁴ In other words, “the best way for a state to survive in anarchy is to take advantage of other states and gain power at their expense. The best defense is a good offense.”⁵⁵

For Mearsheimer, security moves are often moves of territorial expansion. In the offensive realist worldview, even if the ultimate objective of the expansion is security, it is difficult to distinguish the actual behavior of an expansionist state from pure aggrandizement.⁵⁶ This brings us to the subject of greedy versus security-seeking states.⁵⁷ States find themselves caught up in a dilemma. That a state might have benign, i.e. non-aggressive, intentions does nothing in the way of reassuring other states; this is for two reasons: first, other states have no means of being certain of its intentions; second, even if a state communicates its benign intentions, other states have no way of checking them against real motives. Does this mean that there is no way for a state to reassure other states of its non-aggressive intentions and prove that its foremost goal is security? The answer is not a straightforward one. States *do* have the option of changing their posture, but that they do not do so is not sufficient proof of their greedy nature, although other states are inclined to interpret it as such. States are often unwilling or unable to change their military posture to combat uncertainty, in no small part due to the fact that few if any conditions exist that allow them to reveal their true motives without increasing their vulnerability; in other words,

⁵³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 39.

⁵⁴ Snyder, *op. cit.*, 155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Charles L. Glaser makes a distinction between greedy (or aggressive) states and benign (non-aggressive or security-seeking) states. See Charles L. Glaser, “The Security Dilemma Revisited,” *World Politics* 50, no. 1 (1997): 189-190, n. 32.

actions that states take to reassure other states decrease their ability to defeat these states in the event of a conflict, a trade-off that states are often unwilling to accept.⁵⁸

For defensive realists, the balance between a state's offensive and defensive capabilities (commonly referred to as the offense-defense balance⁵⁹) significantly affects the degree of insecurity both it and other states face. On the one hand, offensive advantage makes conquest easier, and as a result increases the likelihood of aggression, thereby exacerbating the security dilemma. On the other hand, defensive advantage makes states feel more secure by making conquest more difficult.⁶⁰ The importance of military posturing in inter-state relations and conflict renders offense-defense balance all the more critical, in that it affects the way states perceive their adversaries' intentions. Glaser challenges the argument that it is impossible for states to alleviate uncertainty; by manipulating their military policies, he argues, states can communicate their benign motives. These policies, however, have to take into account, as Glaser rightly notes, the fact that greedy states would also be inclined to conceal their motives by adopting misleading stances. He argues that benign states could transcend this problem by adopting policies that would be more costly for greedy states to adopt.⁶¹ Likewise, Jervis argues that when offense and defense are clearly distinguishable, it would be easier to distinguish between greedy and non-greedy states.⁶² One weakness in both Glaser's and Jervis' assessment is that it glosses over the extent to which greedy states are willing to accept compromises and defer their quest for expansion until such time as the circumstances are favorable. In other words, states should have a way of telling whether their

⁵⁸ Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 153.

⁵⁹ The offense-defense balance refers to the efficacy of offensive versus defensive forces, determined mainly by military technology and geography. *Ibid.*, fn. 10 + 154; for a detailed discussion of the offense-defense balance, see Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma", 186-214 and Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," 185-189.

⁶⁰ Montgomery, *op. cit.*, 156.

⁶¹ Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994-1995): 68. Glaser identified three types of military policies that states can adopt to that end: arms control, unilateral defense, and unilateral restraint.

⁶² Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 199.

rivals have adopted defensive postures by choice or by circumstance (systemic pressures), and the willingness of greedy states to defer offensive action stands in the way of alleviating suspicion.

The offense-defense balance is related to a number of other key notions, such as preventive war, pre-emptive strikes, and deterrence. Pre-emptive strikes and preventive wars have been a recurring feature of the Arab-Israeli conflict; as such, it is imperative to incorporate the two concepts into the study of Israeli security doctrine and policies. Levy places a distinction between the two: whereas pre-emption is a tactical response brought about by perceptions that an attack by an adversary is imminent,⁶³ prevention is a strategic response stemming from the temptation to fight a war under relatively favorable conditions rather than risk fighting under less favorable conditions later.⁶⁴ Both have far-reaching consequences, not least of all for the deterrence posture of states.

Deterrence

In an address on June 1, 2002, George W. Bush defined deterrence as “the promise of massive retaliation against nations.”⁶⁵ The term, albeit oversimplified,⁶⁶ has become a prominent feature of the rhetoric of decision-makers. More important, however, is the manner in which military strategists contextualize the concept to fit their needs, and the factors (systemic or otherwise) that determine the way it is operationalized. Deterrence being a broad topic, no amount of attention to its theoretical grounding in a study of a limited scope such as

⁶³ This is coupled by the desire to gain the upper hand by striking first or destroying the adversary’s ability to do so.

⁶⁴ Jack S. Levy, “Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War,” *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (October 1987): 87, 91. Stephen Van Evera suggested that the likelihood of a preventive war or pre-emptive strike depends on “the magnitude of the power shift [i.e. decline in relative power of a state], the offensive/defensive balance, and the probability that the adversary will initiate a war during the period of vulnerability.” See Levy, 86.

⁶⁵ Derek D. Smith, “Deterrence and Counterproliferation in an Age of Weapons of Mass Destruction,” *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 152.

⁶⁶ Deterrence is traditionally defined as the ability to persuade an adversary that the costs of an action will outweigh its possible benefits. *Ibid.*, 156-157.

this can do it justice. Furthermore, unlike capabilities, credibility – which is an inseparable part of deterrence – is a fluid variable.⁶⁷ For the purpose of setting up the theoretical framework for the remainder of this thesis, it is imperative to take note of, albeit briefly, some of the main issues related to deterrence and deterrence theory.⁶⁸

Deterrence theory has had to cope with numerous challenges, not least of all emanating from scholars who have, as Achen and Snidal note, dismissed it based on the real-life failures of deterrence.⁶⁹ Rational deterrence theory has three working assumptions. First, actors are assumed to be rational; in other words, while they differ in the goals they seek, they nevertheless view the world in the same way;⁷⁰ they seek to optimize their preferences in light of other actors' preferences.⁷¹ Indeed, one major criticism of deterrence theory is that it assumes that actors are rational at the same time as it allows for the possibility that states would choose to risk their own destruction – a criticism echoed by both Jervis and Derek Smith. Second, variations in outcomes are due to differences in actors' opportunities. Third, states act as if they are unitary rational actors; in other words, issues such as elite personality, decision-making patterns and bureaucratic politics are dismissed.

A detailed specification of the debates revolving within and around deterrence theory is not crucial here. However, a number of calculations that are central to the deterrence paradigm are noteworthy and will be briefly recounted. First, the actions that states take to reassure their adversaries about their intentions could have adverse consequences for the former; retreat could be interpreted by adversaries as a sign of weakness, and encourage them

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Equally important to note is George and Smoke's observation that "a viable theory of deterrence [cannot] be developed independently of a broader theory of processes by which nations influence each other." See Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, "Deterrence and Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 1989): 182.

⁶⁹ Christopher H. Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory and Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics* 41, no. 2 (January 1989): 152.

⁷⁰ Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 296.

⁷¹ Achen and Snidal, *Ibid.*, 150.

to stand firm rather than offer any concessions.⁷² Put differently, an important determinant of whether a state stands firm is what it would lose if it retreated.⁷³ According to Jervis, this problem is especially acute when the retreating state is a large power rather than a small one.⁷⁴ Second, the easier it is to destroy a state, the more suspicious will it be of others, and attack at the slightest provocation if conditions are deemed favorable. At the other end of the spectrum, if a state gains invulnerability “by being more powerful than most others”, its security may provide “a base from which it can exploit others.”⁷⁵ Third, in a high-intensity conflict, the status quo state believes that giving the adversary anything “is at best to postpone confrontation and at worst to strengthen it and encourage it to raise new demands.”⁷⁶ Fourth, not being “tough enough” in one situation may bring peace, but the trade-off is the loss of the state’s image of resolve, and by extension its security. As a result, decision-makers “seek to demonstrate their willingness to use force on occasions when the risks seem small or controllable.”⁷⁷ Fifth, deterrence can fail as a result of a state’s mistaken beliefs about the adversary’s strength and the options open to it.⁷⁸ Sixth, decision-makers must respond to foreign *and* domestic pressures and constraints; this is especially problematic in democracies where there is a strong tendency for consensus. Internal disagreements can compromise the state’s deterrent position vis-à-vis adversaries. Moreover, internal disagreements produce a “lowest common denominator” policy, which postpones important decisions and may as a result harm the state’s interests.⁷⁹

⁷² Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” 295.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁷⁴ Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” 169.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷⁶ Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” 296.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 304.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 312.

2.3 Charting the Variables Quagmire

This chapter examined liberal and realist theories of state behavior. Yet it is clear that the account necessary to construct an overarching theoretical framework for the study of Israel's security doctrine and policies is far from complete. Little attention has been accorded to domestic variables (e.g. system of governance and policymaking mechanisms, state-society relations, leadership personality, ideology/religion, etc.). Furthermore, the discussion has thus far focused on state actors, largely ignoring the often critical role that non-state actors play in inter-state and intra-state conflicts; this includes the factors that affect the behavior of these actors, their relations with friendly and/or supporting states, and most importantly, their relationship with states that define them as enemies.

In recent years, scholars of Middle East international relations have increasingly emphasized the domestic variables that impact the foreign policy choices of Middle Eastern states.⁸⁰ This is not to say, however, that domestic variables were absent from analyses of, and the literature dealing with, the region and more specifically the Arab-Israeli conflict in previous decades. The idea that the personal whims and beliefs of ruling elites had explanatory power in and of themselves was a strong, not to say dominant, force in the field. The problem was especially acute with analyses and studies dealing with Israel; as Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber note,

“[i]n the 1950s, Israel's conduct was ... associated with the virtues and vices of David Ben Gurion; in the 1960s, especially after the Six-Day War, Israel was often reduced

⁸⁰ *The Many Faces of National Security in the Arab World* is perhaps one of the most influential and pioneering works on the topic. See especially Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, “Dilemmas of Security and Development in the Arab World: Aspects of the Linkage” and Fred H. Lawson, “Neglected Aspects of the Security Dilemma,” in *The Many Faces of National Security in the Arab World*, ed. Bahgat Korany, Paul Noble, and Rex Brynen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 76-90, and 100-126.

to the attributes of Moshe Dayan ... Since 1977, it has become indistinguishable from the personality of Menachem Begin ...”⁸¹

Identifying the personality of leaders and their belief systems as the determinants of state behavior is problematic for two main reasons. First, it renders the idea of formulating a theory of state behavior an exercise in futility, in that it focuses, as some culturalists do,⁸² on the particulars of single cases rather than the factors that are common to a number of cases. In other words, *idiosyncratic* theories hinge on the assumption that each case, and even a case within a case (i.e. different leaders within one country) is *sui generis*. Second, it reduces the analysis of foreign policy to a single variable, whereby not only the external operational environment, but also (and paradoxically so) the mechanisms through which the elites have come to power and others they utilize to put their “perceptions” into practice, are ignored.

The periodic military confrontations between Israel and its Arab adversaries since 1948, coupled with the Cold War, had exerted a strong influence on how state behavior and inter-state conflict in the region were looked at. Several works in the Cold War period dealt with the military aspects of the conflict, focusing exclusively on such concepts as security dilemmas⁸³ and military capabilities and opportunities.⁸⁴ Both offensive and defensive realism accord little coverage to domestic variables. Nonetheless, domestic variables – aside from *idiosyncratic* ones – have not been without proponents to champion their causal importance. Since the end of the Cold War, more emphasis has been placed on studying domestic factors, short of falling into the trap of reductionism. Issues that have become a predominant feature of the Israeli Studies research agenda include: the relationship between

⁸¹ Avner Yaniv and Robert J. Lieber, “Personal Whim or Strategic Imperative? The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon,” *International Security* 8, no. 2 (Autumn 1983): 117.

⁸² John S. Duffield, Theo Farrell, Richard Price, and Michael C. Desch, “Isms and Schisms: Culturalism versus Realism in Security Studies,” *International Security* 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 158.

⁸³ See for example Avner Yaniv’s book on the security dilemma that Israel and the PLO faced before, during, and after the invasion of Lebanon. Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security: Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁸⁴ Avi Shlaim and Raymond Tanter, “Decision Process, Choice, and Consequences: Israel’s Deep-Penetration Bombing in Egypt, 1970,” *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (July 1978): 483-516.

civil society and the political leadership, as well as between the political and military/security sectors;⁸⁵ domestic interest groups (including ideologically and religiously motivated movements) and their clout in electoral politics and on key foreign policy issues; the effect of public opinion on decision-makers' and strategists' range of policy options;⁸⁶ and the impact of electoral outcomes on the peace process and relations with regional actors. Thus, for example, in his aptly titled book *Generals in the Cabinet Room*, Yoram Peri examines the role the military plays in shaping Israeli policy;⁸⁷ Avraham Sela tackles the changing nature of civil-military relations through a case study of Israel's "security zone" in South Lebanon;⁸⁸ Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer survey the approaches to the study of the relationship between the security and civic sectors and attempt to fill the gap in the literature by focusing heavily on policy and social networks and demonstrating the influence these wield on policymaking;⁸⁹ Ilan Pappé tackles the ethnic-civic divide and the prospects for a civic democracy in the face of a looming "Jewish zealotocracy", especially in the aftermath of the transformation of Israeli politics from a clearly demarcated Labor-Likud dichotomy into an ideological quagmire, in which the "neo-Zionists" (i.e. proponents of a Jewish zealotocracy) might have the upper hand.⁹⁰

According to Gideon Rose, pure domestic-level explanations (e.g. political ideology, national character, electoral politics) are problematic; they fail, for example, to account for the reason that states with similar domestic systems often behave differently while dissimilar

⁸⁵ On the Israeli military-state-society tripartite nexus, see Daniel Maman, Eyal Ben-Ari, and Zeev Rosenhek, *Military, State, and Society in Israel: Theoretical & Comparative Perspectives* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001).

⁸⁶ Ranan D. Kuperman, "The Effect of Domestic and Foreign Pressure on Israeli Decisions to Use Limited Military Force," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 6 (November 2003): 677-694.

⁸⁷ Yoram Peri, *Generals in the Cabinet Room: How the Military Shapes Israeli Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006).

⁸⁸ Avraham, Sela, "Civil Society, the Military, and National Security: The Case of Israel's Security Zone in South Lebanon," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 53-78.

⁸⁹ Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer, "The Study of Civil-Military Relations in Israel: A New Perspective," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 1-27.

⁹⁰ Ilan Pappé, "Israel at a Crossroads between Civic Democracy and Jewish Zealotocracy," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 3 (Spring 2000): 33-44.

states facing similar circumstances act alike.⁹¹ Rose proposes an alternative to all three – *Innenpolitik*, offensive realist, and defensive realist – theories of state behavior: “neo-classical realism.” The neo-classical realist critique of *Innenpolitik* theories stems from the fact that the relative material power⁹² of states vis-à-vis the international system is a dominant factor in the shaping of the pattern of their foreign policies over time.⁹³ Domestic factors, which *Innenpolitik*ers identify as independent variables, should therefore be relegated to secondary position in favor of relative power. Likewise, defensive realism is misguided for overlooking the fact that relative material power shapes, at least partly, a state’s perceptions of threat. The neo-classical realist assumption is that “states respond to the uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment.”⁹⁴ From this perspective, regardless of how states may define their interests, they desire more rather than less external influence.⁹⁵

Central to neo-classical realism, then, is the belief that a theory of foreign policy that takes only systemic factors into consideration cannot accurately explain state behavior. A better understanding of how states interpret and respond to the external environment requires an examination of “how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level intervening variables.”⁹⁶ Michael Barnett notes that given that the state “sits at the nexus of the international and the domestic, it is important that our theories recognize that its security policies are a product of its dual responsibilities.”⁹⁷ Indeed, security policy itself is two-faced: it is concerned with formulating strategies vis-à-vis foreign threats as well as strategies for

⁹¹ Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 148.

⁹² In the neo-classical realist definition, power refers to the capabilities or resources with which states influence each other, as distinct from their foreign policy interests. *Ibid.*, 151.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹⁵ Neo-classical realists predict that an increase in the relative power of a state will prompt it to seek more external influence, while a decrease will result in the scaling back of ambitions. Although a single test case cannot in/validate this claim, the prediction will nevertheless be examined and tested in subsequent chapters.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Michael Barnett, “High Politics is Low Politics: The Domestic and Systemic Sources of Israeli Security Policy, 1967-1977,” *World Politics* 42, no. 4 (July 1990): 530.

mobilization of societal resources. Addressing the latter requires not only delving into the political economy of the country under investigation, but also other domestic factors that impact the state's ability to extract and mobilize the resources (human as well as material) required for its national security. These include but are not limited to state-society and political-military relations, as well as public opinion. As Barnett correctly points out, despite the fact that neo-realists recognize that resources *are* important determinants of military power, their inattention to *how* resources are mobilized is highly problematic. Furthermore, for Barnett, Walt's explanation of Middle Eastern states' alliance choices is lacking, in that it pays little attention to the motivational role of societal constraints and pressures.⁹⁸

Thus, states' war preparations are not a mere function of their ability to provide military supplies and draw up military strategies and tactics. They are also a function of socio-economic constraints. State-society relations are therefore not only of domestic significance (internal stability, regime security, etc.), but also crucial in understanding foreign policy choices, and strategies and policies pertaining to national security vis-à-vis foreign threats. This is true for both Israel and Arab regimes, despite differences in regime type and the dynamics of state-society relations.

Barnett proposes a framework for investigating the war-preparation strategies of states. The first element of this framework is states' preferences, which are subject to societal constraints. The second element comprises state-society relations, which demarcate the policy options available to decision-makers. Combined, these two elements produce the third element, the strategies of mobilization formulated by the government/regime. Barnett elaborates on two state preferences: war preparation and political stability. The former includes the mobilization of both human and material resources; the latter is aimed at protecting the government from domestic challengers. States have a limited ability to pursue

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 532.

both objectives simultaneously without facing negative consequences. The increase in extraction of resources from society as a result of war preparations may bring about protests from certain sectors of society; likewise, too much emphasis on political stability may erode a state's ability to prepare for war adequately. Also politically costly are societal perceptions that the government is not doing enough on matters pertaining to national security.⁹⁹ In its preparations for war, a state will therefore attempt to extract and mobilize the required resources with as little political cost as possible.

Barnett discusses three strategies of war preparation. The strategy most relevant to the theoretical framework proposed in this chapter, and in the study of Israeli security doctrine and foreign policy, is what he calls the "international strategy", which is equivalent to the formal and/or informal alliances and security cooperation between two or more states discussed earlier in the chapter. What is significant about Barnett's presentation of the concept, however, is the way he characterizes it: as an attempt to "distribute the costs of war onto foreign actors," which he attributes to the high level of domestic constraints a state has to grapple with.¹⁰⁰ This, too, is not without its challenges and constraints. Indeed, a dilemma arises from a state's desire for foreign assistance on the one hand and the impact of increased reliance on such assistance on its autonomy and independence on the other. This dilemma is especially acute in the case of states that have fewer resources at their disposal. Furthermore, the state's legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens contributes greatly to its ability to mobilize resources. The absence of legitimacy and societal cohesion may affect not only preparations for war, but also the conduct thereof. High levels of societal cohesion, then, are conducive to the adoption of what would, in times of peace, be considered contested policies. It is therefore not surprising that Israeli decision-makers have in recent years placed increasing emphasis on

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 535-536.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 543.

public opinion and societal cohesion (in common parlance “rallying around the flag”), which reached its apex in July 2006.

Barnett’s model, which incorporates state-society relations and integrates it with systemic variables in the study of national security policy, has found resonance in Israeli Studies in recent years thanks in no small part to the role that civil society and public opinion are said to have played in the decision to withdraw from occupied South Lebanon in 2000. However, current trends within the field may evolve and in due time become problematic: over-emphasis on domestic variables may result in a situation whereby systemic variables go virtually unnoticed. This is especially acute when it comes to the tendency to portray Israeli electoral and coalition politics as a fundamental, even causal, factor in the shaping of the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁰¹ Granted that electoral politics have indeed had a role to play in decisions to resort to diplomacy or wage war, defining this role as a determining or causal one is simplistic and misleading. One weakness of Barnett’s model is that it does not clearly specify, and indeed tends to conflate independent, intervening, and dependent variables. Furthermore, there is no clear formula for mapping the relationship between *preferences, strategies, and outcomes*.

2.4 Factoring in Non-State Actors

In the late hours of February 12, 2008 an explosion rocked a Damascene suburb, killing Imad Mughniyeh, accused “in absentia” of being the mastermind of a number of terrorist activities, including the 1980s hostage crisis in Lebanon, the 1985 hijacking of TWA 847, the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, and the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center (AMIA) in the same city. As the world woke up to the news of the

¹⁰¹ Over-emphasis on electoral/coalition politics has sprung up in tandem with the booming interest in domestic factors and increased emphasis on state-society relations in explaining the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict. See for example Arye Naor, “Hawks’ Beaks, Doves’ Feathers: Likud Prime Ministers Between Ideology and Reality,” *Israel Studies* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 154-191; and Michel Warschawski, “The 2003 Israeli Elections: Labor’s Increasing Irrelevance?,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 53-63.

assassination on February 13, 2008, numerous analyses began to surface about the identity of the assassins, the real motive behind the killing, and the timing thereof (one day prior to the third anniversary of the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri), while an air of satisfaction gripped both Washington and Tel Aviv. It did not take long for Hezbollah to make an official declaration of its own assessment of who was responsible for the assassination. On February 14, speaking at Mughniyeh's funeral, the Secretary General of Hezbollah Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah accused Israel of the assassination, insisting that it took place in the context of the July 2006 war, adding that Hezbollah had, since August 14, 2006, begun preparations to face another, imminent, round of Israeli aggression. What took the world by surprise, however, were Nasrallah's words directed at the Israelis, framed in terms of the rhetoric of the July 2006 war and interpreted the world over as a declaration of a war that would restore a "balance of terror"¹⁰²:

"You killed Hajj Imad outside the natural battleground. Our battle with you is, and has been, on Lebanese soil... You overstepped the border... I say to the Zionists: faced with this killing, its timing, location, and method, if you want this kind of open war, then let the whole world hear, let it be an open war!"¹⁰³

To make matters worse, this declaration was followed on February 18, 2008 by a public message to Hezbollah from the Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Muhammad Ali Ja'afari predicting that "in the near future, we will witness the destruction of the cancerous existence of Israel at the hands of the fighters of Hezbollah."¹⁰⁴ These statements shattered any semblance of doubt as to whether or not Hezbollah would retaliate,

¹⁰² This sentiment was echoed by Yoram Schweitzer in an article published by The Institute for National Security Studies, one of the leading Israeli think-tanks dealing with national security issues. Yoram Schweitzer, "A Balance of Terror in the War on Terror," *INSS Insight No. 45* (February 18, 2008): <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=1620> (last accessed: February 18, 2008).

¹⁰³ For the full text of the eulogy (in Arabic), see the official website of Hezbollah: <http://www.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=6684&cid=210> (last accessed: February 17, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ "Ja'afari: Hezbollah sayudammir Isra'il" (Ja'afari: Hezbollah will destroy Israel), *Al-Akhbar*, 19 February 2008: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/64323> (last accessed: February 19, 2008).

instead shifting the focus onto the location, method, timing, and consequences of the retaliation. The possibility of a second round of war between Hezbollah and Israel created a tense environment in the region and raised fears that it may result in a full-scale regional conflagration. Indeed, if the July 2006 war failed to dispel the last vestiges of skepticism about the weight that Hezbollah, as a non-state actor, exerted on the regional theatre, Nasrallah's February 14 declaration, Iran's reaffirmation of support for retaliatory actions, and Hezbollah's ability to keep the entire region in suspense pending its retaliation, confirmed the gravity of the situation and the regional and strategic significance of Hezbollah.

The above episode, like a number of others in recent years, demonstrates the strategic weight of non-state actors. Based on this and the failure of various theories of International Relations to accord these actors attention proportional to their influence and impact, this thesis posits that non-state actors are actors in their own right in the international system. Accordingly, it is imperative to address their interaction with states' relative material power, deterrence image, and objectives, and the manner in which they affect states' foreign policy choices and overall behavior; furthermore, it is suggested that states' foreign policy choices towards non-state actors are determined by the same variables that shape their foreign policy choices towards state actors. This suggestion, however, requires further inquiry and a comparative study of a state's policies towards both non-state and state actors, a task that this thesis, due to limitations of space, does not undertake.

The suggested model (see Figure 3) is a cross between the neo-classical realist model and that proposed by Barnett.

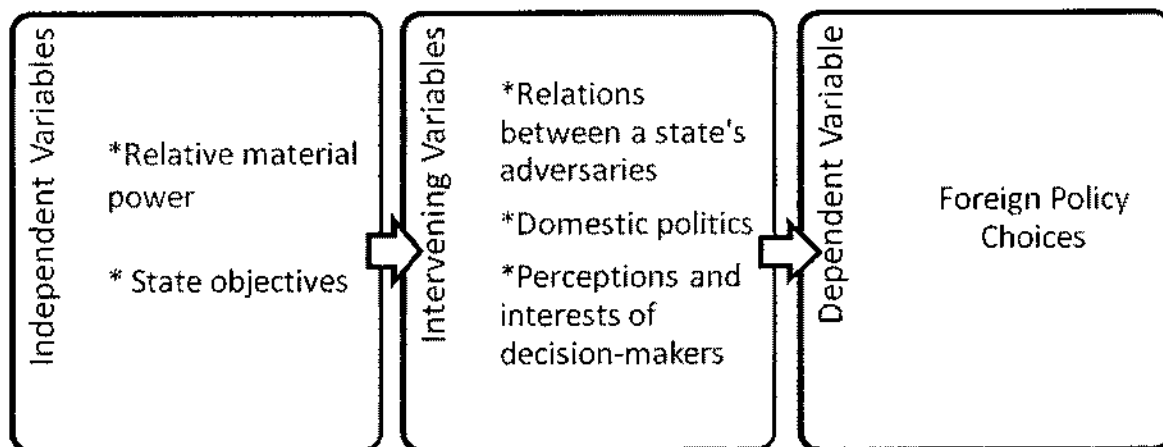


Figure 3: An explanatory model of foreign policy choices vis-à-vis non-state actors

The model adopts relative material power and state objectives as independent variables (see Figure 4 for a description of independent variables). The two work in tandem and are translated through intervening variables – both internal and external to the state – to produce the observed outcome. Change in one may lead to change in the other, either directly (i.e. change in state preferences as a result of changes in relative material power), or through the outcomes it produces (i.e. changes in preferences resulting in outcomes that in turn bring about power shifts). Their integration at the level of independent variables is a step farther than neo-classical realists' incorporation of domestic factors at the level of intervening variables; given that state preferences are of dual (internal and external) orientation, elevating them to the level of independent variable working in conjunction with the state's power position within the system increases the explanatory power of the framework.

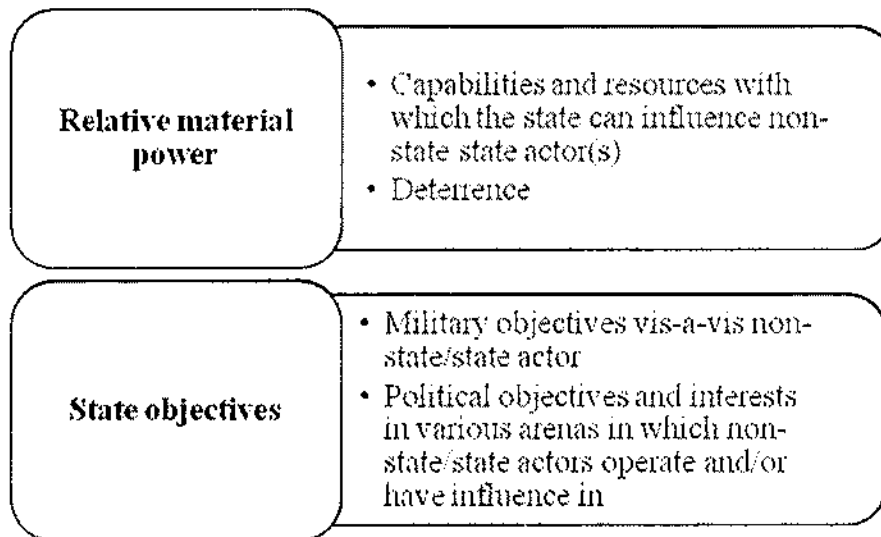


Figure 4: Descriptions of independent variables

It must be noted that relative material power is not equivalent to deterrence and an increase in the former does not necessarily imply the strengthening of the latter. Nonetheless, deterrence being a form of power relation and relying in part on the demonstrated ability to apply material power, it is closely interrelated with relative material power. Although deterrence can also be in the form of political and economic sanctions, military force – both the threat of utilization and the actual utilization thereof – is by far the most important aspect.

The first intervening variable (see Figure 5 for descriptions of intervening variables) is the relationship between a state's adversaries, be it the relationship between two non-state actors, or a non-state actor and a state. While this variable is not insignificant, its impact – especially as far as non-state-state relations are concerned – is nevertheless difficult to assess; the assessment would be based primarily on statements by the state's leadership at various junctures about how it perceives the relationship between its adversaries, whether it influences its objectives vis-à-vis any of them, and whether it is perceived to substantially alter its relative material power vis-à-vis each.

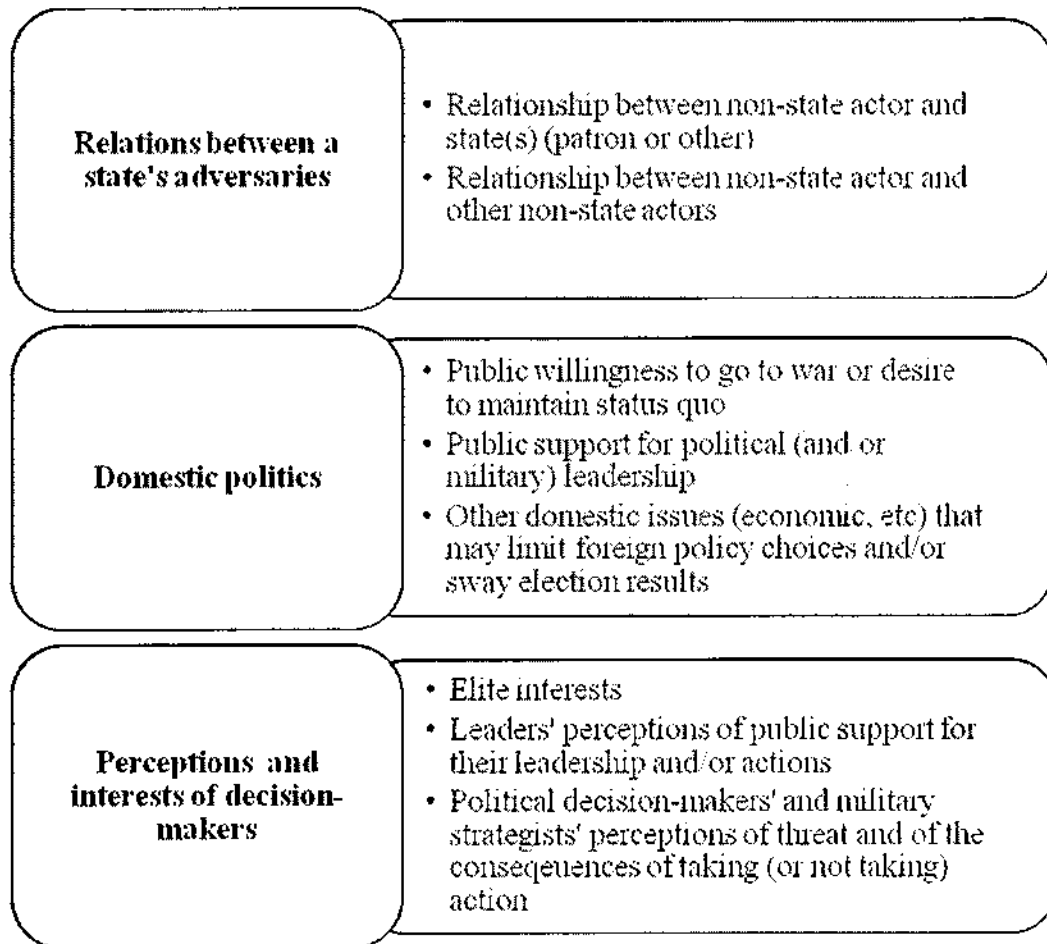


Figure 5: Descriptions of intervening variables

However, while public statements provide a glimpse into the rationale behind a particular set of policies adopted by the state, they nevertheless do not portray a complete picture, for public statements by political elites are often not indicative of all or even the primary determinants of the course of action pursued by the state. Furthermore, given that the nature of the relationship between non-state actors, as well as between non-state actors and their patron states is often vague and intangible, the state's assessment of it has to rely on assumptions rather than solid indicators; this paves the way for misperceptions and makes it difficult and more often than not impossible to identify the true impact of the variable. It is important to point out that the difficulty of handling this variable does not justify abandoning

it, for doing so would lose the framework an important part of its explanatory power, and prejudge the analysis of state behavior.

Two other intervening variables – domestic politics, and perceptions and interests of decision-makers – ought to also be incorporated into the framework. The incorporation of the former owes to the fact that state preferences cannot exist in a domestic vacuum and are necessarily shaped and transformed as a result of domestic constraints and/or factors (including civil society-military relations, public opinion, and ideological and/or religious beliefs/movements). The incorporation of the latter is based on the fact that decisions are also a function of decision-makers' *perceptions* both of their surroundings and of their relative material power vis-à-vis adversaries, which may or may not coincide with reality.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter both enumerated the dominant theories and explanations of state behavior, and proposed a refined model for the study thereof. While neo-realist theories have come a long way to explaining state foreign policy choices and behavior, their explanatory power is nevertheless limited (although the various concepts contained within them are highly relevant to the subject of this thesis). More emphasis must be placed on unit-level variables short of falling prey to reductionism. While neo-classical realism has done just that, it not only does not take into account non-state actors and the non-state actor factor in inter-state relations, but also arbitrarily – and mistakenly, as this thesis argues – condemns domestic variables merely to an intervening role. Having laid the theoretical framework, the thesis can now embark on the examination of Israel's attitudes and policies vis-à-vis non-state actors. The next chapter looks at Israel's attitudes and policies towards the PLO and Hamas.

Chapter 3: Israel, the PLO, and Hamas

Between Confrontation and Cooption

3.1 Introduction

Birth of the Palestine Problem

The roots of the Palestine problem trace back to the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, with the First Zionist Congress in 1897 and the first wave of Jewish immigration (*Aliyah*) to Palestine between 1882 and 1903 following anti-Jewish pogroms in Eastern Europe. At first low-key, Jewish immigration increased and colonization activities intensified and grew more systematic over the years, alarming the indigenous Arab population and eliciting rejectionist – and often violent – reactions. Palestinian aspirations for self-determination were dealt a severe blow with the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised to facilitate “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” without “prejudic[ing] the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.”¹ Overnight, the Palestinian people were reduced to minority status and confined merely to civil and religious rights on their ancestral lands, even as they constituted 90 percent of the total population of Palestine at the time of the Declaration.²

With the exception of the – in retrospect prophetic³ – American King-Crane Commission of Inquiry of 1919, all subsequent commissions recommended the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states.⁴ The approval of the Partition Plan was

¹ Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 7.

² J.M.N. Jeffries, “Analysis of the Balfour Declaration,” in *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948*, ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2005), 179.

³ See Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, 213-218.

⁴ The Peel Commission of 1937 presented three plans, all of which would have necessitated the forceful “transfer” of Palestinians from the areas allocated to the Jewish state, while the United Nations General Assembly recommendation, culminating in the UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 1947, allocated approximately 55 percent of Palestine – most of it land owned by Palestinians – to the Jewish state. See Walid Khalidi, “Revisiting the UNGA Partition Resolution,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 1 (Autumn 1997): 15.

followed by nearly six months of bloodbath, during which Plan Dalet⁵ was devised and deployed. It was the events during these six months that paved the way for the Israeli declaration of independence, in the process creating a wave of Palestinian refugees (especially in the wake of the massacre of Deir Yassine), which in turn necessitated the intervention of regular Arab forces.

The full-scale confrontation between the Arab armies and Zionist forces ended in the failure of the former to halt Zionist advances. By the end of hostilities, more than 750,000 Palestinians had become refugees in surrounding states and in areas of Palestine that had remained under Arab forces' control. The remaining Palestinians had become IDP, and were subject to the military rule of the newly born Jewish state. Furthermore, while Israel had acquired meaningful territorial contiguity, the areas of Palestine that had remained outside Zionist control had been denied the same precisely because of it. Divided into two, what became known as the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under Jordanian and Egyptian control respectively, rendering the idea of a Palestinian state an impossibility.

Furthermore, the denial of the refugees' Right of Return (as specified in UN General Assembly Resolution 194) and the failure of most host countries to address the refugees' needs adequately (or at all), condemned most of the refugee population to overcrowded refugee camps and miserable living conditions. The neglect of the refugees' plight by their host countries and of their yearning for return to their homeland by the international community were not without consequences. On the one hand, it channeled the yearning towards the institutionalization of Palestinian national and cultural expression and the establishment of a national-infrastructure-in-exile, providing a semblance of normalcy to a traumatized people; on the other hand, it manifested the trauma of dispossession and the

⁵ According to Walid Khalidi, Plan Dalet was, contrary to Zionist assertions of its defensive nature, a master plan for the conquest of as much of Palestine as Zionists could get their hands on. See Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 4-33.

frustrations of life in exile in the form of armed groups that promised not only defense of the community-in-exile, but also, and more crucially, liberation of the homeland.

By far the most sensitive issue for both Israelis and Palestinians, the refugee problem has often been evaded and largely left unaddressed in negotiations between the two parties. In the meantime, the Palestinian refugee population has grown from approximately 750,000 in 1948 to more than 4.56 million refugees registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in 2007, dispersed between the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.⁶ Indeed, Israel considers the preservation of a Jewish majority within its (political) boundaries⁷ to be its *sine qua non*, and any reference to, let alone implementation of, the Right of Return a clear attempt at destroying it from within. Thus, the problematic that Rex Brynen called Israel's "demographic security"⁸ is a core component of Israel's security doctrine and foreign policy agenda. To that end, the Israeli narrative of 1948, particularly as it pertains to the creation of the refugee problem, places all moral and material responsibility on Arabs, whom it accuses of encouraging – via radio broadcasts – and facilitating, the flight of Palestinians at the height of hostilities. Nonetheless, to date, no such Arab evacuation orders have been uncovered, despite Israel's relentless insistence, as it did in a 1953 official pamphlet, that the exodus followed "express instructions broadcast by the President of the Arab Higher Executive."⁹

Over the past sixty years, the contours of the Arab-Israeli conflict have changed and its frontiers have become narrower, yet the conflict remains unsettled and continues to exact a heavy price in lives, property, stability, and prosperity. More importantly, in spite of the

⁶ See "Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East: 1 January-31 December 2007," *General Assembly Official Records, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 13*: <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/pdf/ComGen-AR2007.pdf> (last accessed: June 2008).

⁷ Israel has yet to define its geographical boundaries.

⁸ Rex Brynen, "The Past as Prelude? : Negotiating the Palestinian Refugee Issue," *Chatham House Briefing Paper* (June 2008): 2: http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/publications/papers/download/-/id/631/file/11721_0608palrefugees_brynen.pdf (last accessed: June 2008).

⁹ Hedley V. Cooke, Jon Kimche, et al., "Appendix E: The Spectator Correspondence," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 55.

radical transformations that have taken place in Israel's relations with its Arab and Muslim milieu – notably the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan in 1979 and 1994 respectively, the near-permanent removal, in 2003, of Iraq from Israel's list of potential threats, and the opening-up of Arab Gulf states to Israel – the discourse emanating from official Israeli and unofficial pro-Israeli and lobbying circles continues to assert that not only has Israel always faced, but that it still faces, and will continue to face a *unique* security situation and a serious, relentless threat to its existence. This argument is perhaps best summarized by Ephraim Sneh, an Israeli Labor Party leader and ex-Deputy Minister of Defense¹⁰, in his aptly-titled book *Navigating Perilous Waters*:

“Because Israel is ... the only place where the Jewish people is sovereign, we must never forget that the difficulties Israel faces as a Jewish state in Arab-Muslim surroundings, even should they wane or fall dormant for many years, may one day reawaken. This is not paranoia, nor is it a desire to invent danger where none exists. It is, rather, the only responsible attitude for ensuring the continuation of a people that for most of its existence has not enjoyed sovereignty on its own soil...”¹¹

Indeed, Israel's security doctrine was formulated on the assumption that Israel was engaged in a struggle for survival. This comprised not only an assessment of Arab attitudes and behavior towards Israel, but also a national (or ethno-religious) consciousness and reference to the broader historical predicament of Jews and their continuous collective struggle for survival, a predicament described by Joseph Adler as “survival at the edge of the existential abyss.”¹² Israeli public opinion surveys conducted on a yearly basis between 1986

¹⁰ Sneh served as Deputy Minister of Defense between October 2006 and June 18, 2007 in the government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. See Israel's Knesset website: http://www.knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=94 (last accessed: July 2008).

¹¹ Ephraim Sneh, *Navigating Perilous Waters: An Israeli Strategy for Peace and Security*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), 3.

¹² Joseph Adler, “Israel's Security Concerns in the Peace Process,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 70, no. 2 (1994): 231.

and 2007 by Asher Arian, Yehuda Ben Meir, and Dafna Shaked reflect the dominance of this theme in Israeli national ethos.¹³

These perceptions may or may not be in tune with the aspirations of the general Arab populace, but what is clear is that they are an accurate picture neither of the tangible behavior of most of the Arab regimes (which have, over the past two decades or so, either signed peace treaties, or established diplomatic or trade relations, with Israel),¹⁴ nor of their ability to conquer or “destroy” Israel. This demonstrates an Israeli tendency – on both official and unofficial levels – to gloss over potential (and often glaring) differences between Arab authoritarian regimes and their subjects, thus using the two distinct groups interchangeably when it suits Israel’s interests. Indeed, this tendency has been a dominant feature of Israeli justifications of its intransigence on the peace-making track, and for any unilateral steps – political or military – it has taken or might take in the future. The official Israeli explanation of the chronic failure to arrive at a peaceful political settlement to the conflict with Arab states since the Armistice Agreements of 1949 posits that “[s]ince its establishment in 1948, the State of Israel has sought peace with its neighbors through direct negotiations. However, its efforts to reach out for peace and to open direct channels of dialogue were not met by similar efforts on the Arab side.”¹⁵ Positions such as the above, and similar statements emanating from Israeli politicians and elected officials to the effect that “there is no one to talk to” – or, in the words of Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1969, that “there is no such thing as either a Palestinian nation or people”¹⁶ – have found uninterrupted resonance among broad

¹³ See Figure 1 in Asher Arian, “Israeli Security and the Peace Process: Public Opinion in 1994,” *Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS) Memorandum No. 43* (1994), 6; Asher Arian, “Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 1999,” *JCSS Memorandum No. 53* (1999), 15; Yehuda Ben Meir and Dafna Shaked, “The People Speak: Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2005-2007,” *INSS Memorandum No. 90* (2007): 72.

¹⁴ Joseph Adler claims that the Israeli public’s perception of threats is a reflection of decades of conflict and war with neighboring states. *op. cit.*, 231. This claim is unconvincing and fails to account for Arab peace overtures and unconditional normalization of diplomatic and trade relations since the early 1990s.

¹⁵ See “Guide to the Mideast Peace Process,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/peace%20process/guide%20to%20the%20peace%20process/> (last accessed: June 2008).

¹⁶ See “... While the Palestinians Wait,” *The New York Times*, 16 February 1970, 36.

segments of the Israeli public as well as American and European audiences for the past sixty years. As will be demonstrated, the elusiveness of Arab-Israeli peace owes largely to Israeli, rather than Arab, intransigence, the causes and mechanisms of which will be examined in this chapter and the following one.

The Iron Wall

Of the pre-state Zionist figures, the contributions of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky – the father of Zionist Revisionism – to the Zionist movement and by extension the (then) would-be State of Israel, are perhaps the most underrated and regularly dismissed in the field of Israel Studies. Challenging this trend, Ian Lustick has gone so far as to argue that the “dominant rationale for Zionist and Israeli policies and attitudes toward the Arabs of Palestine from the 1920s to the late 1980s” was derived from Jabotinsky’s theory of the Iron Wall which he laid down in an article titled “On the Iron Wall.”¹⁷ Given that a good part of Israel’s policies towards both state and non-state actors bear stark resemblance to the strategy of the Iron Wall, it is essential to examine this theory in some depth, as well as Lustick’s Jabotinskian runthrough of the first four-five decades of Israeli policies.

Aware of the difficulties of rendering the indigenous majority a minority on its own land, and of the Zionist desire to do so, Jabotinsky attempted to address the policy implications of Arab hostility to the Zionist colonial enterprise,¹⁸ and formulate a policy that would transform Arab rejectionism to the Zionist movement’s minimum conditions – a Jewish majority in Palestine –, to consent thereof. To this end, Jabotinsky proposed the erection of an Iron Wall which would serve to eliminate the last “gleam of hope that they will succeed in getting rid of us.”¹⁹ He went on to note that, predictably, Arabs would attempt to

¹⁷ Ian Lustick, “To Build and to Be Built By: Israel and the Hidden Logic of the Iron Wall,” *Israel Studies* 1, no. 1 (1996): 199.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

break through the Wall; it must therefore be constructed in such a way so as to enable it to withstand these attacks. Repeated attempts, and failures – in the form of costly defeats – would not necessarily destroy extremist groups, but would nevertheless significantly minimize their influence, catapulting “moderate” groups to the forefront, thereby setting the stage for an historic settlement based on “mutual concessions”: Zionist guarantees for the maintenance of Arab presence in Palestine and “equality of civil and national rights,” in return for moderate Arabs’ consent to a Jewish majority in Palestine (and hence political authority).²⁰

According to Lustick, the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its dynamics can be explained by Israel’s adoption of the Iron Wall as its guiding strategy. This strategy was to be implemented in five stages. The construction of the Wall (the first stage) began in the 1930s – with both British and Jewish bayonets²¹ – and was finalized between late 1947 and early 1948 (prior to the full-scale war that erupted in May 1948), enabling Zionist militias to push beyond the territory allocated for the Jewish state in the Partition Plan, and punish Palestinians and Arab armies with crushing defeats.²² The second stage of the strategy was the defense of the Wall from repeated attempts at breaching it; this stage would not come to an end until such time as the cumulative effect of repetitive costly defeats (as a result of the repeated attempts) would bring to power moderates.²³ According to this reading, all of Israel’s wars and military campaigns until (and including) the 1967 war, were part and parcel of the movement from stage two to stage three of the strategy.

For Lustick, the 1967 war was the key event that precipitated change in the Arab world, in the form of willingness to compromise. It is here, says Lustick, that the Iron Wall

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Notably, the crushing of the Arab Revolt by the British, and Jewish fighters’ campaign of terror led by a British officer, Orde Wingate. For more about Orde Wingate’s role, see Leonard Mosley, “Orde Wingate,” in *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948*, ed. Walid Khalidi (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2005), 375-387.

²² Lustick, “To Build and to Be Built By,” 205.

²³ Arguably nothing more than a keyword to denote those who are willing to accept Israel’s conditions.

strategy collapsed. This was due not to any disruptive action on the part of Arabs, but to Israel's failure to remain true to the strategy it had adopted. The failure stemmed from the fact that the strategy was based on the (shaky) premise that the Zionist conditions that Arabs were expected to accept would not change once Arabs expressed willingness to accept them.²⁴ The departure from the initial conditions was largely a function of the scope of the victory and the desire to settle the occupied territories and incorporate them, *de facto* if not *de jure*, into Israel, as evidenced by the massive settlement drive in the years following the occupation.²⁵ If one is to accept Lustick's initial claim that Israel was indeed guided by the Iron Wall strategy, one can safely conclude that as a result of the radical shift in the balance of power (or rather, perceptions thereof, given that even in 1967 Arab armies were no match for Israel's war machine) and consequently the near-total demise of Arab deterrence, the Iron Wall strategy caved in to *machtpolitik*. This was best demonstrated by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's response, prior to the first *Intifada*, to critics who brought up the necessity of compromise with the Palestinians: "what is burning?"²⁶; in other words, what is the utility of negotiating with Arabs when they are in no position to exact a price for our intransigence? The belated movement from stage three to stage four came in 1992, with the election of Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister. Lustick attributes this change to the first *Intifada*, which erupted in 1987.

Convincing arguments as they may be at first glance, Lustick's contentions nevertheless require closer inspection, especially with regards to the assumptions they are founded on. To begin with, not enough attention is paid to what Jabotinsky had meant by "civil and national rights." Undoubtedly, Jabotinsky was not raising the possibility of two separate states in Palestine, given that he identified the minimum Zionist demand as Arab

²⁴ Ibid., 209.

²⁵ Ibid., 208-209. Lustick summarizes the logic behind the abandonment of the strategy at that critical juncture: "having convinced them by our superiority that we cannot be destroyed, why must we offer them a political settlement based on equality, which deprives us of things we want?" Ibid., 210.

²⁶ Ibid., 211.

acceptance of a Jewish majority in Palestine. Furthermore, his reference to “civil and national rights” can be read in the context of another remark in which he explained that Arabs are not “ready to give up their rights to the land of Israel in exchange for cultural or economical advantages.”²⁷ Thus, Jabotinsky’s minimum conditions are a reincarnation of the notorious Balfour Declaration. The question then is, in applying the strategy of the Iron Wall, had Israeli leaders, at various junctures, also adopted Jabotinsky’s definition of Zionism’s minimum conditions? If yes, then Lustick’s reading of a failure to transition from stage three to four is misplaced, for Arabs have yet to accept a complete surrender of their political rights in all of Palestine in return for “cultural or economical advantages.” If, on the other hand, Israeli governments’ minimum conditions were significantly different from this demand for total capitulation, what explains Israel’s refusal to entertain Arab peace overtures – including Husni al-Za’im’s offer to resettle as many as 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria²⁸ – as early as 1949? Lustick fails to provide an adequate answer to this question, merely pointing out that Israel’s New Historians attribute it to the expansion of Zionists’ minimum conditions after the victory of 1948, and not, as he estimates, after the victory of 1967.²⁹

Despite these shortcomings, Lustick’s account of Israel’s policies in the context of the Iron Wall strategy is a remarkable addition to the literature on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and at certain junctures a very convincing one, particularly with regards to Israel’s handling of the challenges posed by non-state actors, starting with the relatively minor nuisance caused by individual border infiltrators, to which I now turn my attention.

²⁷ Ibid., 200.

²⁸ Avi Shlaim, “Husni Za’im and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 4 (Summer 1986): 68-80.

²⁹ Lustick, “To Build and to Be Built By,” 210.

The Infiltration Problem

The idea (though not necessarily the perception) of Arab unwillingness to compromise was at the core of Israeli foreign policy in the years following Israel's establishment. From the outset, a siege mentality was instilled in the populace, along with the idea of the necessity of adopting an "aggressive defense" (bordering on the ruthless) in the face of challenges – real or perceived – to Israel's borders, security, and interests. It was hoped and believed that forceful and disproportionate retaliation (often deliberately targeting civilians) would have coercive impact on Arab states and their subjects.³⁰ This was first put to the test in Israel's violent handling of the problem of infiltration across the armistice boundaries.

Israel's first encounter with non-state actors after the 1948 war was in the form of individual infiltrators setting out from both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – refugees who had been dispossessed of their lands and livelihoods, or separated from relatives – who were more often than not motivated by social and economic concerns rather than political ideology or military objectives.³¹ While some acts of infiltration did indeed culminate in violence, most infiltrators were in fact unarmed and were not engaged in violent activities: of the 1,600 infiltrators Israel reported it had captured between January and June 1950, most had not carried out violent attacks and were consequently deported across the *de facto* borders, while the few who had engaged in violence were kept in Israeli custody.³²

As infiltrations continued unabated, Israel adopted a policy designed to thwart them and to deter future infiltrators. The policy was characterized not only by border patrols, but also offensive tactics, such as the setting up of ambushes and land mines deep inside enemy territory, as well as full-scale infantry attacks and air raids on villages across the armistice lines that were suspected of "harboring" infiltrators. A "free fire" policy was also adopted,

³⁰ Ibid., 206.

³¹ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 82.

³² Gene Currivan, "Arab Infiltration Troubles Israelis," *The New York Times*, 23 July 1950, 33.

whereby patrol units had shoot-to-kill authorization against any infiltrators.³³ According to Israel Tal, the Vice Chief of the General Staff of the IDF in 1973, Israeli retaliation raids were a deliberate strategy meant to spread fear and a feeling of helplessness among Arabs, and to set up a deterrent, aided by Arab regimes' fears of domestic instability which might ensue from these reprisals. In short, these attacks were meant to contribute to Israel's "deterrent image."³⁴ Passive defense was dismissed as a viable option since it was deemed not only costly and exhausting, but also ineffective and "at odds with the spirit of an army raised in the offensive doctrine."³⁵ The tactical use of violence also stemmed, in part, from a growing Israeli belief in Arab states' encouragement, or at the very least toleration, of such attacks. On January 1, 1953, Israel officially disclosed infiltration statistics – including the number of Israeli citizens killed in cross-border attacks – to "substantiate [its] complaint that the Arabs were continuing hostilities by all means short of engagement of armies – not only by diplomatic, propagandistic and economic pressure but also by guerilla warfare and by deliberate toleration of the activities of smugglers and bandits."³⁶

Nevertheless, these suspicions were hardly based in fact; the states that shared borders with Israel had already taken steps to curb infiltration or did so following Israeli requests. For instance, in response to Israeli complaints of infiltration of refugees back into northern Israel, Lebanon had gone as far as moving the refugees away from the border in 1949, and to a distance of at least 6 miles from the border in 1955.³⁷ For its own part, Jordan had taken measures to deter infiltrators by instituting harsh punishment on those who were caught in the act. According to Avi Shlaim, the Jordanian authorities were driven to take action at least in

³³ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 83.

³⁴ Israel Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience*. Translated from the Hebrew by Martin Kett (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 125-126.

³⁵ Ami Gluska, *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War: Government, Armed Forces and Defense Policy 1963-1967* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 70.

³⁶ See "Arab Infiltration Listed by Israelis," *The New York Times*, 2 January 1953, 3.

³⁷ "Refugees in Lebanon Moved from Border," *The New York Times*, 6 June 1949, 3; and "Lebanon Moves Arab Refugees Away from Israeli Border Area," *The New York Times*, 30 September 1955, 3.

part by the fear of Israeli retaliatory raids deep inside Jordanian-controlled territories.³⁸ Thus, while Israeli offensive tactics failed to put an end to the phenomenon of infiltration, they succeeded in coercing the Jordanian government into taking steps in the direction of curbing attacks – efforts that were nonetheless not appreciated, or deemed unsatisfactory, by the Israeli government. Despite these efforts on the part of Israel’s Arab neighbors,³⁹ cross-border military reprisals against civilian targets continued, and were often a function of domestic political considerations – the product of increasing criticism by opposition parties of the government’s failure to guarantee the security of border settlements and the safety of citizens,⁴⁰ a failure that severely strained the morale of thousands of settlers who had set up homes and taken up farming in border areas.⁴¹ Significantly, although the policy of reprisals had proven to be ineffective in completely eradicating the phenomenon of infiltration, it nevertheless remained the lowest common denominator between the various parties across the Israeli political spectrum.

The bloodiest culmination of this consensus was the massacre on the night of 14-15 October 1953 of fifty-three civilians in Qibya, a village of 1,500 inhabitants located near the Green Line north-west of the city of Ramallah. The incident sparked international outrage and prompted a UN Security Council resolution condemning the action and demanding a halt in future retaliatory raids.⁴² Furthermore, a UN investigation belied Israel’s official account that had described the massacre as the personal initiative of Israeli border-area villagers. The massacre at Qibya was not the first retaliatory raid into the West Bank, but it was the single bloodiest incident, and it underlined the need for even harsher measures against infiltrators by

³⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 85-86.

³⁹ This included an agreement between Israel and Jordan, signed in June 1953, to combat infiltration. See “Israelis Report 2 Arab Bombings,” *The New York Times*, 10 June 1953, 16. See also “Jordan Promises Infiltration Curb,” *The New York Times*, 30 June 1953, 1.

⁴⁰ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 87.

⁴¹ “Negev Gains Made Despite Attacks,” *The New York Times*, 2 May 1954, 31.

⁴² For the text of UN Security Council Resolution 101, see: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/089/74/IMG/NR008974.pdf> (last accessed: June 2008).

the Jordanian authorities. Over the next two years, largely as a result of draconian measures instituted by Jordan,⁴³ the number of infiltrators setting out from Jordanian-controlled West Bank declined sharply. In Israel, it was interpreted as a reaping of the benefits of Qibya and other retaliation raids.⁴⁴ To the extent that it pushed the Jordanians into more firm action against infiltrators, this was an accurate (albeit unethical) reading of the “utility” of the massacre.

The situation along Israel’s border with the Gaza Strip was not much different; infiltration was a regular phenomenon, as were Israeli reprisals. An Israeli attack on a refugee camp in August 1953 by the notorious Unit 101 led by Ariel Sharon (which was later to carry out the Qibya massacre) resulted in the death of dozens of Palestinians,⁴⁵ and pushed the Strip to the brink of an uprising against the Egyptian authorities. Riots erupted, demanding that Egypt provide weapons for self-defense against reprisal raids. Over the next three years, as infiltrations along the West Bank *de facto* border declined, Israel increasingly turned its attention to the Gaza Strip, initiating a number of fatal raids (such as the attacks in February and September of 1955 on Gaza and Khan Yunis respectively, in which at least seventy-six Palestinians and Egyptians were killed⁴⁶) primarily against Egyptian military targets. The shift in Israel’s retaliation policy – from the targeting of the civilian population to raids on military positions – had come about in 1954, largely as an implementation of the lessons learned from the Qibya massacre, which had placed a black spot on Israel’s image internationally.⁴⁷ The cumulative effect of the raids was a heightening of tensions between Israel and Egypt. Notwithstanding Israeli accusations of a concerted Egyptian campaign,

⁴³ Kennett Love, “Jordan Checking Arab Infiltrator,” *The New York Times*, 14 March 1955, 8.

⁴⁴ “Jordanian Raids into Israel Drop,” *The New York Times*, 22 August 1955, 4.

⁴⁵ “Security Council Provisional Agenda,” S/PV.630. 27 October 1953:

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/b792301807650d6685256cef0073cb80/017eefb458011c9d05256722005e5499!OpenDocument> (last accessed: June 2008).

⁴⁶ Robert C. Doty, “Egyptians Assert Israelis Slew 37 in Gaza Attacks,” *The New York Times*, 1 March 1955, 1; and Harry Gilroy, “Khan Yunis Puts Raid Dead at 39,” *The New York Times*, 4 September 1955, 3.

⁴⁷ David Tal, “Israel’s Road to the 1956 War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (February 1996): 65.

which climaxed in an October 1955 claim by Israel that “guerilla incursions from all four neighboring Arab countries were controlled and directed from Cairo,”⁴⁸ there is little doubt that between 1949 and 1954 the infiltrations were carried out on the personal initiative of Palestinian refugees, rather than with official Egyptian knowledge or sanction.⁴⁹ As David Tal notes, “[i]t was the Israeli reaction that overlaid the infiltrations with a political dimension, as Israel did not treat them for what they were but linked them to the broad Arab-Israeli context and to the country’s political and security problems.”⁵⁰

Israel’s attempt at extending its deterrence against infiltrations from the West Bank arena into the Gaza Strip was crowned with failure, as the routine Egyptian-Israeli clashes on the Gaza-Israel border in the wake of the February 1955 raid on Gaza demonstrated. Israeli reprisals, which were designed as collective punishment against the civilian population with the purpose of inducing it to put pressure on the local authorities to increase crackdown on infiltrators, had the opposite effect: Gazans demanded that Egypt respond to the attacks militarily. Hence, despite earlier measures to curb infiltrations (notably intensified a month prior to the Gaza raid),⁵¹ ‘Abdel Nasser found it increasingly difficult to ignore the pressures and constraints posed by an outraged refugee population in the Strip⁵² and criticism from within the ranks of the Egyptian army.⁵³ Thus, far from having a coercive impact as was the case with Jordan, Israeli reprisals in the Gaza Strip had a destabilizing effect on Egypt⁵⁴ and

⁴⁸ Moshe Brilliant, “Israel Says Cairo Guides Arab Raids,” *The New York Times*, 8 October 1955, 3.

⁴⁹ See, for example, a New York Times report on the desperate situation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees crammed into the tiny Gaza Strip: Kennett Love, “Destitute Arabs Crowded in Gaza,” *The New York Times*, 26 June 1955, 30.

⁵⁰ David Tal, *op. cit.*, 61.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 64; and Michael B Oren, “Escalation to Suez: The Egypt-Israel Border War, 1949-56,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 2 (April 1989): 357.

⁵² In an expression of frustration and anger, Gazans initiated protests and riots, and besieged the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) headquarters in Gaza. See Robert C. Doty, “Refugees Stone U.N. Gaza Office,” *The New York Times*, 2 March 1955, 4.

⁵³ Criticism from the army ranks intensified especially in light of the shift in Israeli retaliation policy, from the targeting of the civilian population to raids on military positions.

⁵⁴ ‘Abdel Nasser was especially alarmed by Israeli broadcasts on June 11, 1955, aimed at the Gaza Strip’s Palestinian population, which urged Gazans to “‘stand against’ their Egyptian governors”, claiming that Egyptian provocations had put the Strip’s residents in danger. See “Israelis Appeal to Arabs of Gaza,” *The New York Times*, 12 June 1955, 3.

provided 'Abdel Nasser with incentive to train Palestinian refugees in guerilla warfare and organize regular guerilla raids into Israel. Yet the unfounded accusations of Egyptian complicity were not the result of Israeli misperception of Egyptian intentions and alleged covert activities. They were, along with the raids on military targets, calculated policy. According to Ehud Yaari,

“it is difficult to connect the Israeli raid [of February 1955] with the activity of infiltration, because the Israeli action came precisely during a period of relative calm in that area and in the wake of major efforts on the part of the Egyptian regime to stop infiltrations in the Gaza Strip. Hence, it is necessary to look in another direction for an explanation for [David] Ben-Gurion’s decision to call for the raid a few days after his return from Sdeh Boker to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”⁵⁵

Avi Shlaim interprets Ben-Gurion’s approval of the operation as being motivated by four aims, both personal and political in nature. On the personal level, Ben-Gurion wanted to prove that his return to power marked the return of strong-minded leadership. On the political level, he wanted to allay domestic public resentment, which he believed would be achieved only by settling accounts with Egypt. Moreover, he viewed 'Abdel Nasser’s ascendancy in the Arab world as a serious threat to Israel’s security, and wanted to undermine him by exposing the weakness of his armed forces. Lastly, part of Ben-Gurion’s strategy bore striking resemblance to the Iron Wall strategy, whereby raids of the sort carried out in February 1955 were to serve as inducement to Arabs for accepting Israel’s own terms for calm, by demonstrating the costs of not abiding by those terms.⁵⁶ Ben-Gurion was unrepentant in commenting on the raid. Not only did he stress the importance of displaying Israel’s military superiority over the strongest of its Arab enemies (i.e. Egypt), he also

⁵⁵ Ehud Yaari, “The Challenge of the Fedayeen – February-August 1955: Analysis,” in *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present*, ed. Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 124-125.

⁵⁶ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 125.

highlighted the benefits of the raid in boosting troops' confidence in their fighting abilities, and the public's confidence in the troops. For Ben-Gurion, the reprisals were not merely a form of deterrence, they actually provided justice.⁵⁷ Moreover, Ben-Gurion dismissed the possibility of international backlash to the raid by pointing out that however exemplary Israel's conduct is, it would always be criticized, not least of all by Western powers. He attributed this to Arabs' territorial and demographic superiority, and their control over vast amounts of oil resources.⁵⁸ Surprising as this attitude is given the unquestionably pro-Israeli credentials of Western governments from 1948 until today, it nevertheless was, and continues to be, the dominant line of thinking in response to any criticism of Israeli behavior.

In contrast to their public accusations of Egyptian complicity in acts of infiltration, in private discussions Israeli officials were aware of the true chronology of events, as evidenced by a classified official circular distributed to IDF units stating that 'Abdel Nasser's activation of the *fida'iyyeen* was in retaliation to the unprovoked Israeli attack and capture of an Egyptian-manned outpost in the Gaza Strip on August 22.⁵⁹ Egypt accused Israel of staging the attack to coerce it into accepting its proposal for direct meetings in border talks.⁶⁰ Its diplomatic response came in the form of the withdrawal altogether from the border talks, which were meant to reduce tensions along the Gaza-Israel border. The military retaliation followed soon afterwards, beginning with August 26. In the next four days, at least seven Israeli civilians and a number of Israeli soldiers were killed, and many more were injured.⁶¹ Commenting on the attacks, an IDF spokesman noted that Egypt had adopted a "new" tactic: whereas in the past it had "seemed to be trying to suppress information concerning [attacks]"

⁵⁷ Ranan D. Kuperman, "The Effect of Domestic and Foreign Pressure on Israeli Decisions to Use Limited Military Force," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 6 (November 2003): 679.

⁵⁸ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 126.

⁵⁹ Yaari, *op. cit.*, 126.

⁶⁰ "Egypt Accuses Israel," *The New York Times*, 23 August 1955, 3.

⁶¹ "Cairo Accepts Cease-Fire Proposed by U.N. for Gaza," *The New York Times*, 31 August 1955, 1.

– a reference to Israel’s unsubstantiated accusation of Egyptian involvement in infiltrations that took place prior to 1955 – it was now boasting of them.⁶²

In a nutshell, Israel’s accusations of official Egyptian involvement in infiltration activities, and its retaliatory policy based on this allegation and on a number of other considerations, became a self-fulfilling prophecy, convincing Egypt of the need for a policy of calculated violence implemented on the ground mainly by Palestinian irregulars trained in guerilla warfare. Thus, what had started as individual acts of infiltration (and rarely violence) which were an expression of the plight of Palestinian refugees, quickly evolved into political punches and eventually spiraled into military confrontation. More importantly, the events that ensued had a profound impact on the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict in more than one respect. Undoubtedly, they set a trend of guerilla warfare and encouraged the establishment of a number of Palestinian guerilla groups, chief among them the Fateh. These developments, along with later developments in inter-Arab relations, combined to set the stage for the founding of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the dynamics of whose relationship with Israel was discussed in the previous chapter.

3.2 Israel and the PLO Between 1964 and 1977

The Founding of the PLO

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964. The idea of a Palestinian entity had in fact been raised five years prior to that momentous week in January 1964 during which the First Arab Summit Conference laid the foundations for the PLO. In March 1959, the UAR introduced the concept of a Palestinian entity which would transform Palestinian existence and the image of Palestinian people from one of mere refugees to that of a unified, organized people working towards a common national goal.⁶³ However, the

⁶² Kennett Love, “‘New’ Tactic Alleged,” *The New York Times*, 29 August 1955, 8.

⁶³ Moshe Shemesh, “The Founding of the PLO 1964,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 4 (1984): 105.

concept, along with a number of other bold statements – such as the call for the creation of a Palestinian army in all Arab countries – remained ink on paper. It was not until the First Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo that the idea of an overarching Palestinian organization, representing the Palestinian people and acting in its name, was discussed in earnest and solid steps were taken to implement it.⁶⁴ Ahmad Shuqairi, who had been appointed representative of Palestine at the Arab League by its Council in 1963, was entrusted with the task of forming and overseeing local committees for the nomination and selection of members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), which was to be the legislative body of the PLO.⁶⁵

Yet for all the public displays of enthusiasm at the founding of the PLO, there was also much hesitation and suspicion. The hesitation was chiefly articulated by revolutionary Palestinian groups – at their forefront Fateh (Palestinian National Liberation Movement) – which held that the PLO was a passive rather than a revolutionary organization; moreover, there was a not unjustified fear that the PLO would fall prey to – if it wasn't in fact a product of – Arab states' desire to control Palestinian nationalism and restrict its freedom of action lest it disrupt the often-shaky status quo between Arabs and Israel. As Anat Kurz notes, the concept of a Palestinian entity first introduced in 1959, and its logical outcome, the establishment of a Palestinian organization, was in line with 'Abdel Nasser's desire to subordinate Palestinian political action to Egyptian interests and to "manipulate the

⁶⁴ The Summit adopted "the practical decisions necessary to ward off the existing Zionist danger, be it in the defence or technical fields, or in organizing the Palestinian people and enabling them to carry out their role in liberating their homeland." Resolutions of the First Arab Summit Conference in Cairo, 13-17 January 1964: http://www.arableagueonline.org/las/arabic/print_page.jsp?art_id=394 (last accessed: June 2008).

⁶⁵ The members were to be selected rather than elected due to the impossibility of holding direct elections in most if not all of the countries and territories where Palestinians resided given the sensitivity of the issue to Arab rulers, as well as the general absence of political/electoral freedom in these countries. See Mohsen M. Saleh, ed., *Munazzamat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniya: Taqyim al-Tajriba wa l-'adat al-Binaa'* (Palestinian Liberation Organization: Evaluating the Experience and Reconstructing) (Beirut: Markaz al-Zaytouna lil Dirasaat wal Istisharat, 2007), 60. At the end of the process, 422 members were selected, more or less reflecting the geographical distribution of the Palestinian population. Rashid Hamid, "What is the PLO?", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 94-95.

Palestinian card.”⁶⁶ The fears of the “radicals” were not misplaced, however: the PLO was eventually caught up in the intricate web of inter-Arab rivalry and victimized by Arab rulers’ fears that it would come to embody radical, activist nationalism which might challenge the stability and continuity of their rule.

In the early years of its existence, the phrase that was often heard in conjunction with references to the PLO was its claim to being the sole representative of the Palestinian people, and its demand to be recognized as such.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in the Arab arena, the assertion of representativeness was merely symbolic as the PLO was created to function within the Arab framework, and for a considerable period of time had to adapt to the interests and rivalries of Arab states rather than chart a distinct Palestinian course decided upon by the Palestinian people.

The break-up of the UAR in 1961 shattered Palestinian activists’ belief in the possibility of Arab unity, which they had hoped would facilitate the liberation of Palestine. Moreover, the model of the Algerian revolution convinced them that Arab unity was not a prerequisite for liberation, and that self-reliance had the potential of accomplishing the desired national goals.⁶⁸ Henceforth, Palestinian emphasis on self-reliance intensified, and a “Palestine first” outlook was gradually adopted, with emphasis on revolutionary violence. That is not to say that the idea of violent struggle “by Palestinians for Palestine” did not exist until then. There already existed a number of groups dedicated to armed struggle. At their forefront was Fateh, which unlike other organizations that had emerged post-*Nakba*, had adopted a Palestinian-centric as opposed to pan-Arabist orientation. Nonetheless, despite its

⁶⁶ Anat N. Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence: The Institutionalization of a Popular Struggle* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 28.

⁶⁷It must be pointed out that this bold claim did not arise at later stages in the PLO’s political activism and military struggle, but was one of the decisions made by the PNC in the closing session of its first conference. “The PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinian people... The PLO alone has the right to represent Palestinians, organize them, and speak in their name,” read the text of the recommendations of the conference. “al-Quds: tawsiyat bi inshaa’ mu’askarat tadrib,” *al-Nahar*, 3 June 1964, 1.

⁶⁸ Hamid, op. cit., 92-93.

ideological dedication to revolutionary armed struggle, in the first six years of its existence Fateh had not undertaken military operations. It was only in 1965, a year after the founding of the PLO, and arguably as a direct challenge to its self-proclaimed status as the sole representative of Palestinians, that the first military raid by Fateh guerillas was carried out.⁶⁹ In subsequent months, and until the war of 1967, a series of cross-border raids were carried out by Fateh's military wing mainly from the Jordanian-controlled West Bank but also from South Lebanon. These attacks, particularly the ones originating from the West Bank, were carried out with the tacit backing of Syria, which sought to embroil Jordan in a conflict with Israel. For its part, Fateh's strategy was to drag the Arab states into war with Israel, and the cross-border raids served to stoke up the fires.⁷⁰

Operation Crusher

Two incidents that took place between 11 and 13 November emboldened the PLO and for the first time characterized the rhetoric emanating from it as militant. On the night of 11-12 November, three Israeli paratroopers were killed and half a dozen were injured when their vehicle hit a mine in enemy territory in the southern Hebron hills where they were on a mission to set up an ambush against guerillas. The following day, the IDF carried out a brutal raid, dubbed "Operation Crusher," against the West Bank village of al-Samu', killing 18 and

⁶⁹ W. Granger Blair, "Jordanian Raider Doomed in Israel," *The New York Times*, 7 June 1965, 14.

⁷⁰ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 232. Meanwhile, the newly-founded PLO viewed the Fateh challenge with much concern, and called upon Arab leaders to curb the movement's military activities, which it viewed as a dangerous development that would hinder its quest for legitimacy among the Palestinian people, if not render it altogether irrelevant in their eyes. Nonetheless, positive developments in Egyptian-Syrian relations, which culminated in the signing of the Egyptian-Syrian Joint Defense Agreement on November 4, 1966, left Fateh's freedom of action virtually intact. The PLO's attempt to co-opt Fateh into joining its ranks and fighting under its umbrella was a resounding failure, and consequently forced the PLO to co-opt smaller Palestinian factions and look into the possibility of providing a military alternative that could compete with Fateh. Concurrently, the PLO was embroiled in tensions with Jordan which forbade its political and military activities in the territories under its control. Moreover, increasing polarization in the Arab sphere forced the PLO to choose between siding with Jordan or the pan-Arab nationalist states. Naturally, the PLO chose the latter. Hamid, op. cit., 97.

injuring hundreds, and destroying 125 houses, a clinic, and a school.⁷¹ The attack marked a departure from Israel's pattern of small-scale retaliations against Jordan established shortly after the Qibya massacre, and dealt a heavy blow to King Hussein's prestige at home. What was unique about the operation was that it came in response not to a cross-border raid by Palestinian guerillas, but to a defensive action – whether by the Jordanian army or Palestinian guerillas – against an IDF force that had infiltrated the West Bank to set up an ambush. Israel justified the raid on the grounds that it was retaliation for at least thirteen acts of sabotage launched from Jordanian-controlled territory.⁷² This justification, however, failed to impress observers, who noted that Jordan had been known to be serious in its efforts to curb commando operations launched from the areas under its control.⁷³ What was even more striking about the raid was the fact that, if it had been in response to Fateh guerillas, it targeted the wrong state, for it was Syria, and not Jordan, that provided backing to Fateh, something that the Israeli authorities were well aware of. Indeed, and paradoxically, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol went so far as to accuse Syria of responsibility for what he called the “border terrorism” which he claimed had provoked the “retaliation.”⁷⁴

Both the timing and target of the attack on al-Samu' were suspect. For if the purpose was to minimize or put an end to guerilla activities, a more reasonable target would have been Syria, the main sponsor of the largest and best organized of guerilla factions. A day after the raid, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* published its interpretation of the targeting of Jordan instead of Syria, arguing that “the Soviet Union's protective attitude toward Syria prevented the operation from being directed to the right address.” Israeli politicians had an alternative

⁷¹ The figure of dead and injured was cited by the UN, and the number of houses destroyed was cited by UN Secretary General U Thant. Other estimates placed the number of houses destroyed at 40, while Israel insisted that it had leveled “only” 30 houses after removing their occupants. See “Chronology September 1, 1966—November 30, 1966,” *The Middle East Journal* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 77.

⁷² James Feron, “Retaliatory Raid by Israelis Spurs Battle in Jordan,” *The New York Times*, 14 November 1966, 1.

⁷³ “Jordan Claims Victory,” *The New York Times*, 14 November 1966, 10.

⁷⁴ “Chronology September 1, 1966—November 30, 1966,” op. cit., 77.

explanation. An attack on Syria, they said, would have been hard to explain since all recent acts of sabotage had originated in Jordan.⁷⁵ Syria was thus reaping the dividends of its refusal to allow the guerillas to set off from its territories. If the attack on al-Samu ' was intended as a warning message to Syria, it had the opposite effect, for it advanced Syria's goal of sowing unrest in Jordan. Three days after the raid, massive demonstrations took place in the West Bank cities of Nablus, Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin, Tulkarm, and Jerusalem, demanding – not unlike their Palestinian counterparts in the Gaza Strip – retaliation or arming of the general population.⁷⁶

Less than a month after the raid on al-Samu', during a General Staff meeting on December 5, 1966, Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin argued against what he called "the psychology which is beginning to gain ground... which suggests that there is a [defensive] solution to the [terror] problems." He warned that "[the advocates of this psychology] will construct electrified fences and set up another ghetto in the State of Israel," adding: "we cannot turn the defensive method into the central axis of [our] doctrine."⁷⁷ The timing of the raid on al-Samu' in fact coincided with increased American eagerness to provide assistance to Israel in the form of technological solutions to the problem of border infiltration. This eagerness on the part of the Americans to provide defensive solutions, and on the opposite end Israeli fears – as Ami Gluska notes – that it would restrict its freedom of action, may have encouraged the raid and added to its ferocity. Rabin's representative at the negotiations in Washington, Yosef Geva, pointed out to his American counterparts that static defense was unimportant, and that "Israel must avoid creating the impression that it had waived its right to

⁷⁵ James Feron, "Doubts Over Raid Stirred in Israel," *The New York Times*, 15 November 1966, 19.

⁷⁶ "Chronology September 1, 1966—November 30, 1966," op. cit., 77. The PLO tried to reap benefits from the awkward situation Jordan found itself in. In the aftermath of the raid, Shuqairi called upon King Hussein to cooperate with the PLO in the defense of Jordan, and announced that the PLO would dispatch its military wing, the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) to Jordan irrespective of the King's wishes. Moreover, in December 1966, Shuqairi announced the creation of a "Revolutionary" Council which would be responsible for "preparing the people for the war of liberation." Yet these statements and promises by the PLO under Shuqairi's command were not translated to actions on the ground, eliciting harsh criticism from a number of Palestinian parties and armed factions which went so far as to demand Shuqairi's resignation. Hamid, op. cit., 97-98.

⁷⁷ Gluska, op.cit., 88.

act in different ways. Excessive emphasis on technology would create a defensive and defeatist 'ghetto psychology' and encourage Arab attacks."⁷⁸ Israel's emphasis on offensive measures was not a new development. According to Israel Tal, one of the primary lessons that were learned from the 1948 experience was the importance of "offensive as a basic strategy, reliance on assault power, and eventually the doctrine of preemptive attack and taking the fighting into enemy territory."⁷⁹ The logic used in dealing with minor security challenges thus emulated the strategy of dealing with basic security threats.

From Nakba to Naksa

The 1967 war – which Israelis refer to as the Six-Day War – was a spectacular victory for the IDF and dealt a heavy blow not only to 'Abdel Nasser and pan-Arab nationalism, but also to the Palestinian advocates of reliance on Arab states and armies for the liberation of Palestine, as well as those who had refrained from breaking ranks with supporters of the military status quo and who had criticized independent Palestinian military action on the basis that it harmed the Palestinian cause more than it benefited it. Fateh, which had entered the battlefield in 1965 and had come under intense fire for its military activities – not least of all from the PLO – felt vindicated.⁸⁰ Yet if Fateh had consistently attempted to set the stage for large-scale confrontation between Israel and Arab states, it had thoroughly miscalculated Israel's military prowess in the face of any combination of Arab armies. The war marked the beginning of a new phase in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and as Anat Kurz notes, transformed the Palestinian element into "an independent, clearly defined actor in the regional political sphere."⁸¹ Furthermore, and paradoxically, despite its role – however minor – in the slide towards war, Fateh's standing was greatly enhanced in its wake. The disillusionment of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 89.

⁷⁹ Israel Tal, op. cit., 121-122.

⁸⁰ It must be noted here that Fateh's increased military activity between 1966 and 1967 had contributed to, though not caused, the eruption of the war, an outcome that it did not necessarily wish to avoid.

⁸¹ Kurz, op. cit., 45.

Palestinian masses in the ability of Arab states to liberate Palestine pushed them into the arms of organizations like Fateh that had adopted military struggle as a strategy.

In Palestinian national discourse, the 1967 war came to be referred to as the *Naksa*, meaning setback. However, Fateh begged to differ; for not only had it demonstrated to the Palestinian people that the path to liberation passed through Palestinian military struggle and not through Arab capitals and armies, it had also, owing to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, been handed the golden opportunity to experiment with the implementation of its revolutionary goals. This it tried to do by establishing clandestine cells and carrying out small-scale operations in the newly-conquered territories. The Israeli response to these actions was harsh, and within a short period of time most cells were either dismantled or were forced to flee to the relative safety of Jordan. Concomitantly, Israel sought to undermine Fateh by punishing population centers in which the insurgents enjoyed significant support, while sparing those where they had relatively little support. Efforts were also exerted to normalize economic life, and contacts were established with the traditional leadership of the West Bank. Notwithstanding growing support for armed struggle among the population, Fateh's plan to incite an uprising in the newly-conquered territories failed thanks to these measures.⁸² The failure pushed Fateh towards the idea of a popular protracted struggle from neighboring Arab states aiming to score small tactical victories with the hope that it would weaken Israel's perseverance and exhaust its economic resources. Israel's response to commando raids from the east bank of the Jordan River was an emulation of its policy of reprisals against infiltrations in the 1948-1967 period, bringing about a fresh escalation in tensions between the Jordanian regime and militant groups, an escalation that was to have a profound impact on the future of Palestinian armed struggle.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 48.

Shortly after the war, Shuqairi resigned from his position as Chairman of the PLO. Having already come under regular fire from several Palestinian factions for the way he ran the organization and the direction in which he was taking it, after the war Shuqairi had also become the target of an Arab campaign which held that his extremist declarations in the period immediately preceding the 1967 war had provided Israel with an opportunity to delegitimize Arab goals.⁸³ It was not the first time that inter-Arab rivalry had benefited Israel, but it was possibly one of the instances that did the Palestinian cause most damage. Nevertheless, Shuqairi's resignation opened a new phase in the PLO's relations with Palestinian factions that did not function under its umbrella, as well as in Israel's attitudes and policies towards it. By March 1968, several guerilla factions, including Fateh, were unofficially incorporated into the PLO framework and promised half the seats in the PNC (which was translated into reality during the fifth session of the PNC in February 1969), a move that signaled a bloodless takeover of the organization by the militants.

Operation Inferno

Palestinian military activities launched from Jordanian territory overlapped with political developments on the Palestinian arena. In fact, as a result of the Israeli security crackdown in the West Bank and the subsequent relocation of Fateh guerillas to the eastern bank of the Jordan River, Fateh established military training facilities across the border with the West Bank. On March 21, 1968, in a massive operation that dwarfed the raids on Qibya and Gaza, 15,000 Israeli troops were sent into Jordan to destroy what Israel described as

⁸³ Shuqairi's alleged declarations – to the effect that the Arab goal was to “throw Jews into the sea” – provided Israel with material for intense propaganda campaigns, which, with slight alterations, continue to be aired to this day. Notwithstanding Shuqairi's attempts to deny that he had uttered such statements, the allegation had already taken on a life of its own, not in the least thanks to the efforts of his Arab and Palestinian rivals. For more about the controversy, see Moshe Shemesh, “Did Shuqayri Call for ‘Throwing the Jews into the Sea’?”, *Israel Studies* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 70-81.

“bases for terrorists.”⁸⁴ The raid on the village of Karameh, labelled Operation Inferno by Israel and the “Battle of Karameh” by the Palestinians, was both a tactical and a strategic failure for the Israelis. Not only did the battle fail to push Fateh away from the border and put an end to its guerilla attacks,⁸⁵ it also provided it with an opportunity to turn the battle into a national myth and a tale of heroism and steadfastness in the face of a far more superior military force, and present itself as the vanguard of the revolutionary struggle for liberation.⁸⁶ Certainly, the number of losses Israel sustained in the attack was unprecedented and unexpected for what was supposed to be a routine, albeit a large-scale, reprisal raid in response to an incident in which an Israeli schoolbus had run over a mine, killing two Israelis.⁸⁷ Minor an event as it was in the broader Arab-Israeli conflict, Operation Inferno nevertheless highlighted the limits of military power and once again brought to the fore the dilemma of how best to deal with non-state actors. It was possibly also the first time that a significant number of Israelis questioned the worth of military action based on the costs (in the lives of Israeli soldiers) associated with it.⁸⁸

For Fateh, the Battle of Karameh was an historic moment; it catapulted it, and the hitherto little-known Yasser ‘Arafat, from a relatively marginal position prior to 1967 to the forefront of Palestinian politics. In the weeks following the raid, inspired by the example of selfless heroism set by Fateh guerillas in Karameh, thousands enlisted in the organization, especially in its military wing. Thus, what was meant to be a devastating blow not only to the practice, but also the very concept, of Palestinian resistance, had the opposite effect. The paradox was that Fateh’s popularity, and as of early 1969 that of the PLO, was achieved in

⁸⁴ James Feron, “Israelis Withdraw After Raid in Jordan,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 1968, 1.

⁸⁵ Thomas F. Brady, “Guerillas Back at Jordan Camp,” *The New York Times*, 23 March 1968, 1.

⁸⁶ W. Andrew Terrill, “The Political Mythology of the Battle of Karameh,” *The Middle East Journal* 55, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 91-111.

⁸⁷ The commando chief at Karameh, who claimed responsibility for an attack that wounded the Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan, argued that the attack on Karameh was just as much in retaliation for that incident as it was for the mine incident involving a schoolbus. Brady, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Feron, “Israelis Withdraw After Raid in Jordan.”

spite of battlefield failures. This was to be the PLO's first, but by no means last, experience in translating military defeat (or at the very least lack of success) into political victory. At the same time, the operation, along with other reprisal attacks, were successful in that they set the stage for the confrontation between the Fateh-led PLO and the Jordanian army, which led to the violent eviction, in September 1970 (which in Palestinian parlance came to be referred to as "Black September"), of the PLO from Jordan to the last sanctuary abutting Israel.

The expulsion placed the PLO in a delicate situation given that Lebanon was the last sanctuary that shared borders with Israel. The loss of that sanctuary would be disastrous in its implications for the Palestinian refugees who still dreamed of returning to their lost homeland. The PLO would thus have to be careful not to repeat the same set of mistakes that culminated in Black September. Yet this was to prove an overwhelming and impossible task, in no small part due to the nature and scope of Israeli reaction, especially after 1970, to PLO activity emanating from Lebanon; which, combined with the delicate confessional system that was prone to disintegration, served to embroil the PLO into the complexities of Lebanese domestic politics, and by extension, its disasters. Until September 1970 the PLO had viewed Lebanon as a secondary base, though also a frequent launching ground for guerilla raids between 1968 and 1970.⁸⁹

Yet, problematic as the PLO's exile to Lebanon was, it was equally problematic for Israel. Whereas the Jordanian regime was more-or-less stable and could therefore muster the political will to order the army into confrontation with the PLO, Lebanon was in no such position by virtue of both its internal dynamics and its weak position in the Arab states system. The Lebanese Armed Forces could therefore not be expected to act against the PLO in the same manner that the Jordanian army had. Thus, in its attitudes and behavior towards

⁸⁹ Avner Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security: Politics, Strategy, and the Israeli Experience in Lebanon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 40.

Lebanon as a "sanctuary" state, Israel failed to appreciate these glaring facts, and attempted to attach an address to its reprisals that did not exist.

Avner Yaniv posits that Israel was faced with three choices in dealing with PLO armed activities from Lebanon between 1967 and 1970: driving the PLO away through the use of overwhelming force in an all-out war, adopting a defensive posture, or formulating an alternative strategy comprising elements of the two.⁹⁰ The first option was, according to Yaniv, dismissed because of the political backlash that would ensue. In addition, the conquest of territories in 1967 had placed millions of Palestinians and thousands of Syrians under direct Israeli rule, and the occupation of South Lebanon would have simply made matters worse for Israel in that respect. The second option was unacceptable; although implemented in the occupied Jordan Valley with a degree of success (combined with offensive measures, such as the raid on Karameh), defensive measures were considered to be inapplicable to the Galilee, given that unlike much of the Jordan Valley it was inhabited by Israeli civilians, including many new immigrants who were especially vulnerable to the pressures posed by PLO violence. Hence, it was believed that defensive measures would have to be coupled with offensive actions that would limit the PLO's degree of maneuverability by giving rise to obstacles from within its Lebanese sanctuary.⁹¹ It was this belief that ultimately led to the adoption of the same reprisals policies that were in effect against Egypt and Jordan in the 1950s. It was hoped that by punishing Lebanese villages from whose vicinity the PLO launched its commando operations, the inhabitants' willingness to cooperate with the PLO or to consent to its functioning near their villages would diminish. The bottom line of this policy was that if enough of these villages stood up against the PLO, Lebanon would cease to be a safe haven for Palestinian militants, and given that it was their last remaining sanctuary

⁹⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁹¹ Ibid., 41-42.

adjoining Israel, such an outcome would put the final nail in the coffin of the Palestinian resistance.

Operation Gift

The first major Israeli retaliation against Lebanon came in the wake of an attack on an Israeli plane in Athens on December 26, 1968. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).⁹² The same day, Israel issued a warning to Arab governments that backed “terrorists”, threatening that “Arab airliners were as vulnerable as Israeli ones.” The Israeli Minister of Transportation also pointed out that since the attack was claimed by the PFLP and given that members the PFLP “openly train in Lebanon for acts of sabotage”, the government of Lebanon could not be relieved of the responsibility of acts of sabotage “organized on Lebanese soil with Governmental encouragement.”⁹³ These statements were meant to prepare world public opinion for what was to follow. The rationale of the raid, as described by the Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan in a briefing of commandos about to embark on their mission, was

“to make clear to the Arabs of Lebanon that they should avoid the employment of Fateh against our civil aviation services...If the Government of Lebanon allows the Fateh to train in its territory they must be punished... The result of the operation must be such that the Lebanese (sic) will think twice before they carry out such operations against our planes.”⁹⁴

Besides describing the logic behind the raid (aptly named Operation Gift), Dayan’s statement betrays a deeply-flawed understanding of the ideological and practical differences between the various Palestinian factions, for it was the PFLP, and not Fateh, that had claimed responsibility for the Athens incident. The Israeli response came a mere two days after the

⁹² “2 Arab Terrorists Attack Israeli Jetliner in Athens,” *The New York Times*, 27 December 1968, 1.

⁹³ “Israel Says That Arab Jets, Too, Can Be Attacked,” *The New York Times*, 27 December 1968, 3.

⁹⁴ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 43.

Athens attack, and dealt a devastating blow to Lebanese aviation and the Lebanese economy. Thirteen civilian airliners, all belonging to the Lebanese-owned Middle East Airlines, were blown up. Notwithstanding international outrage, not least of all from the U.S.,⁹⁵ the Israeli message had been delivered loud and clear to the intended addressees. Over the course of the next eleven months, sporadic confrontations between the PLO and the Lebanese Armed Forces were recorded, as were PLO guerilla raids into Israel and Israeli reprisals against Lebanese villages. Nevertheless, these confrontations failed to bring about a breakthrough, and on November 3, 1969, the PLO and the Lebanese government signed the Cairo Accord. Far from rewarding Israeli efforts, the accord presented a clear victory for the PLO and the effective surrender of parts of the Lebanese state to its armed presence and activities against Israel. The accord having thus provided a "legal" framework for PLO military activities, attacks on Israel continued at a steady rate, Israeli counter-attacks notwithstanding. More than being a serious security challenge or military threat to Israel, the PLO's attacks were a test of Israel's patience. The inability of Israel's reprisals policy to put an end to attacks, and the resulting trend of negative migration in Israeli border towns, especially Kiryat Shemonah, were the last straw, underlining to Israeli leaders the need for escalation. Hence, on May 12, 1970, the IDF raided three Lebanese villages and demolished tens of houses. The message of this escalation, however, did not seem to have been absorbed, neither by the PLO, nor their Lebanese "hosts", be they civilians, armed forces, or government. In January 1972 Israel issued a stern warning to Lebanon, threatening to invade the country unless attacks on Israel originating from its territory were halted.⁹⁶ The warning went largely unheeded; on the one hand, the PLO, despite agreeing to periods of calm, could not afford to abandon its military activities. On the other hand, the Lebanese state was caught between domestic pressures and

⁹⁵ "U.S. Protests Raid in Strong Terms," *The New York Times*, 29 December 1968, 1.

⁹⁶ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 45.

Israeli warnings,⁹⁷ and owing to its weak stature, failed to take the initiative in the same way Jordan had done in September 1970 or to stand in the face of Israeli raids as Jordanian forces had done on more than one occasion, including at Karameh. For its own part, Israel could not afford not to escalate, both because inaction would have invited heavy domestic criticism, and because of the demoralization of border communities.

During this period, Israel defined its actions in Lebanon in terms of deterring the PLO from continuing with its military campaign or forcing the Lebanese to keep the organization in check. By mid-1973, however, neither option had been realized, and Israel found itself in an uneasy coexistence with, and growing international recognition of, what it described as “terrorists.” It was precisely this reality that Israel was attempting to change when it dispatched its commandos to Beirut in April 1973 in a bid to assassinate top PLO figures. The assassinations were also Israel’s chief response to the massacre of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic games in Munich. During this period, the PLO was faced with two major dilemmas: on the one hand, its growing entrenchment in Lebanon since 1969 and domestic opposition to the new realities represented by the Cairo Accord meant growing involvement in Lebanese politics, an eventuality that the PLO had wanted to avoid, and now needed to dedicate considerable attention and energy to; on the other hand, two proposals, namely the American Rogers Plan of 1969-1970, and the Jordanian plan of March 1972 for a United Arab Kingdom incorporating the West Bank into a federal union with Jordan-proper.⁹⁸ Sympathetic reactions in the Arab world to the former raised the PLO’s alarm, as they both bypassed Palestinians (and the PLO) and portrayed the Arab-Israeli conflict as being between Arab states and Israel, rendering the Palestinian issue a mere function of this relationship, rather than the chief determinant of it. The Rogers Plan in fact presented the Palestinian issue

⁹⁷ Kurz, *op.cit.*, 67.

⁹⁸ “King Hussein’s Federal Plan, broadcast on Amman Radio, 15 March 1972,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 March 1972:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/36+King+Hussein-s+Federal+Plan+broadcast+on+Amman.htm> (last accessed: August 2008).

as a merely humanitarian (i.e. refugees), rather than a national-political one. Awareness of the dangers of public support for either plan thus underscored the need for sabotaging the former, and producing an alternative to the latter. However, there was in fact little need for acts of sabotage, for Israeli intransigence was just as effective in sabotaging the Rogers Plan as an act of sabotage by the PLO would have been, and Israel's refusal to extend its negotiations with Egypt and Syria to Jordan was particularly conducive to the sinking of Jordanian proposals for a Palestinian-Jordanian federation.⁹⁹ Paradoxically, Israel's refusal to negotiate with Jordan was particularly helpful to the PLO, for it saved it from the danger of a confrontation with the majority of Arab states, at the same time as it paved the way for its rise, politically, on the regional and international stage.

"Auschwitz Borders" Expanded

The June 1967 war changed the discourse emanating from the various sides. The new power dynamics, and the ensuing policies that produced new facts on the ground and safeguarded them, had not only short-term effects, but also long-term consequences for Israel, a number of Arab states, and most importantly, the Palestinians.

According to Avi Shlaim, Israel's Iron Wall strategy – if it ever had formally adopted one – was in fact abandoned from the very beginning, shortly after the 1948 war, in which Israel not only scored an impressive military victory, but also managed to achieve, to a large extent, demographic homogeneity in the territories it had conquered.¹⁰⁰ Ian Lustick, in contrast, argues that Israel's Iron Wall strategy was the first casualty of its earth-shattering victory in 1967.¹⁰¹ According to this view, Israel's feelings of invincibility that followed the victory brought about an unwillingness to accommodate the voices in the Arab world that had become convinced of its invincibility. This argument is not incorrect in and of itself; it is

⁹⁹ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 48.

¹⁰⁰ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 45-46.

¹⁰¹ Lustick, "To Build and to Be Built By," 209.

certainly true that after 1967, the more accommodating Arab regimes became, the more unwilling Israel was to accept their accommodation, and the more conditions it imposed upon them. The position of strength that Israel found itself in had defeated the purpose of having to accept a settlement which would require compromise on its part.

Given Israel's narrow territorial dimensions prior to the 1967 war, its choice – as emphasized by Rabin in 1966 – of an operationally offensive doctrine necessitated the “transfer of hostilities to enemy territory”, and thus the occupation of territories situated beyond the *de facto* borders of the state.¹⁰² The 1967 war was significant in the sense that the conquest of vast swathes of land meant the attainment of strategic depth, which would supposedly protect Israel's soft underbelly, namely the densely-populated coastal strip in the center of the country. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abba Eban's famous reference to the pre-1967 borders as “Auschwitz borders” may have been an emphasis on the importance of the strategic depth taken to the extreme, but it adequately captured Israel's stubborn insistence on maintaining its hold over the Occupied Palestinian Territories (hereafter OPT)¹⁰³ at all costs. Thus, to Prime Minister Moshe Sharrett's 1955 list of issues Israel was unwilling to compromise on – refugees and territories occupied in 1948¹⁰⁴ – were added the territories occupied in 1967. Having thus expanded its “Auschwitz borders,” Israel proceeded to erect colonies in the newly-conquered territories beginning in the same year.

From this point onward, Israel's focus was on maintaining what it referred to as “defensible borders,” a watered-down version of Eban's wild claims of an omnipresent danger of extermination looming over Israel's head. A month after the end of the war, even before Eban's description of the 1949 armistice lines as “Auschwitz borders”, the chief

¹⁰² Gluska, *op. cit.*, 146-147.

¹⁰³ The term “Occupied Palestinian Territories” and the acronym OPT will hereafter be used to refer to the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967, namely the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip.

¹⁰⁴ Moshe Sharrett, “Israel's Foreign and Middle Eastern Policy May 28, 1955,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, *op. cit.*, 128.

proponent of the defensive borders doctrine, Yigal Allon¹⁰⁵, presented to the Israeli establishment what became known as the Allon Plan. The plan was a radical departure from Allon's previously relatively "moderate" views summarized in a 1964 publication in *International Affairs* which is replete with references to mutual compromise and contains only one reference to Israel's "unique" security predicament whereby Israel, supposedly unlike other states, cannot afford to lose a war as that would mean the physical extermination of much of its populace and the political elimination of the Jewish state. However, instead of advocating unilateral moves and the creation of facts on the ground as per the recommendations of the Allon Plan, the article emphasizes mutual steps to be taken to avert the eruption of war.¹⁰⁶

Allon's 1967 plan emphasized the fact that Israel had limited human and financial resources; being surrounded by a sea of Arabs who had both demographic and financial advantages over it, Israel faced the ever-present danger of political decimation and the physical extermination of a good part of its population, whereas none of the Arab states were at risk of such an eventuality. Thus, while Arabs could "afford to" lose wars, Israel could not, and therefore had to maintain its ability to, if necessary, take the initiative and prevent its enemies from deciding the time, place, and type of confrontation. In addition, Israel had to maintain its military superiority over any combination of Arab armies, and in case of war, the ability to defeat them without receiving help from any foreign army.¹⁰⁷ This, combined with the vulnerability of Israel's densely-populated and topographically low and narrow (in terms of strategic depth) center, rendered the acquisition of higher ground and other areas of strategic value a boost to Israel's strategic position, and the maintenance of control of these, or at least some of these areas, a prerequisite for the preservation of Israel's minimum

¹⁰⁵ Later Minister of Foreign Affairs during Rabin's first term as Prime Minister.

¹⁰⁶ Yigal Allon, "The Arab-Israel Conflict. Some Suggested Solutions," *International Affairs* 40, no. 2 (April 1964): 205-218.

¹⁰⁷ Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders," *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 1 (October 1976): 39, 40.

security needs. For Allon, territory was important insofar as it had strategic value. It was for this reason that he pointed out the need to determine where Israel's borders would have to be, and advocated the negotiated handover of the remaining strategically insignificant areas to Jordan. This handover, Allon noted, would not be for lack of a historical Jewish connection to the lands in question, but in spite of that connection, for the sake of attaining peace.

Roughly speaking, Allon's plan required the annexation of the Jordan Valley and the northwestern shores of the Dead Sea, and the incorporation of all of Jerusalem as well as the Gush Etzion bloc west of Bethlehem, leaving a narrow corridor connecting Jericho both to Jordan and to the areas of the West Bank to be handed over to it.¹⁰⁸ In addition, Israel would annex nearly all of the Gaza Strip except for Gaza City and the immediate surroundings, and nearly the entire Golan Heights and a strip in the Sinai that ran parallel to the Egyptian-Israeli border. These suggestions were based not only on the desire to attain strategic depth and allay Israel's security concerns, but also to maintain the Jewish character of the state by avoiding incorporating Palestinian population centers into Israel. To this end, where it was not possible to carve out significant areas without annexing to Israel a large number of Palestinians, topographically significant areas would have to be sacrificed for demographic considerations. To offset this disadvantage, Israel would annex the Jordan Valley and the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, where there were relatively few Palestinian villages in no small part due to Israel's policy of clearing these areas of Palestinians during the course of the 1967 war. Allon suggested that the best solution to the Palestinian issue would then be a Palestinian-Jordanian state comprising Jordan-proper, the areas of the West Bank not annexed by Israel, and Gaza City which would serve as this state's port and be connected to the other parts of the country through a land route (distinct from a land corridor).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ For the map of the Allon Plan, see *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 48.

Allon was also careful to address the issue of technological advances (particularly the development of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles) and the argument that they had rendered a territorially-oriented strategy irrelevant. This was far from the case, he argued, adding that it was precisely these developments in weapons technologies that had elevated the significance of a territorially-based strategy in general and strategic depth in particular; after all, such weapons were not sufficient in bringing about the demise of an enemy determined to fight back, but were one element among others, including and especially ground forces. Moreover, the fact that Arab states, too, were vulnerable to rocket attacks and aerial bombardment, was interpreted as a restraining factor that would limit the use of such weapons, thus leaving open only the possibility of ground invasions, a fact that justified the quest for strategic depth.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Allon failed to take into account three important points, thus rendering his argument weak. First, the possibility that Arab states might be willing to pay the price of launching a war of attrition using long-range missiles, instead of resorting to a ground invasion that would likely be even more costly. In fact, given Israel's immense military superiority, a war of attrition might be deemed to be the only option. However, faced with such a situation, Israel could possibly reinforce its deterrent power by adding significantly to the costs of waging such a war against it, thereby decreasing the difference in the price tag between a ground invasion and a remotely-controlled war of attrition, and diminishing Arab incentives to embark on such a course of action. This, however, fails to resolve the dilemma of non-state actors, if it does not in fact give rise to them. Non-state actors pose a more difficult challenge, for they lack a proper "address" where Israel's response could be delivered, and establishing a deterrence against them is therefore a more complex task, one that must take into account many additional factors than would a response directed at state actors. Third, in case of Israeli failure to deter either state or non-

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

state actors (or both) from embarking on rocket attacks, Israeli willingness to fight back would be of little help if it was not translated into concrete action, and more importantly, tangible outcomes. The absence of a positive outcome would further demoralize an already demoralized population, and likely result in significant economic loss and even negative migration, a prospect that is viewed by the Israeli establishment as a mortal danger in light of demographic realities, especially after the 1967 war that placed millions of Palestinians under direct Israeli rule. Thus, far from being a strategic imperative, the concept of strategic depth fails to address the rapidly-shifting nature of conflict and the rise of non-state actors, which are inherently non-territorial in their tactics though not in their overarching objective.

Settlements for Defense

By the time Allon had published his detailed and slightly revised description and defense of the “defensible borders”, at least twenty-eight settlements had already been erected in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip alone, twenty-four in the former and four in the latter. Some, but by no means most or all, of these settlements were semi-military ones, commonly known as “Nahal settlements” founded by the IDF’s Nahal brigade. Crucially, until that point, most of the West Bank settlements – fifteen out of twenty-four – had been established in the eastern strip covering the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea shores. Four had been established in Gush Etzion, the site of a Jewish colony that had been abandoned during the 1948 war. The remaining five had been built, respectively, west of Bethlehem, near Latrun, east of Jerusalem, northeast of Ramallah, and in the city of Hebron. In the Gaza Strip, two settlements had been built in the central sector and another two in the south.¹¹¹ Although not officially endorsed or rejected by the Israeli government it appeared that Allon’s

¹¹¹ For a list of settlements with founding dates, see “Population by year in West Bank settlements,” B’Tselem: http://www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/Settlement_population.xls (last accessed: July 2008) and “Gaza Settlements population by year, prior to evacuation,” B’Tselem: http://www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/Gaza_Settlements_before_evacuation.xls (last accessed: July 2008).

recommendations had found listening ears and willing hands. Commenting in 1976, Allon himself referred to a “selective settlement policy that Israel is pursuing”, pointing out that its rationale was purely strategic rather than expansionist.¹¹² Writing in *Ma'ariv* in 1971, Meir Hare'oveni noted that “[a]fter nearly four and a half years it can be definitely stated, in the light of an examination of the map of Israeli settlement in the areas taken from Syria and Jordan in the Six Day War, that the Allon Plan has, in fact, become the blueprint for the settlement of the areas, if not a basis for the negotiation of peace with our neighbours.”¹¹³

Two years after the war, and faced with the question of whether Israel was willing to return to the pre-1967 boundaries, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was firm in his reply: “The armistice agreements are dead and buried... We don't want any part of the settled area of the West Bank – Nablus, Jenin, and so on. What we say is that the Jordan River must become a security border for Israel with all that that implies.”¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, notwithstanding Eshkol's stated lack of interest in areas of Palestinian population concentration and the selective settlement policy based, informally, on the Allon Plan, Israel's unwillingness to negotiate with Jordan – as pointed to earlier in the chapter – in contrast to its willingness to negotiate with Egypt and Syria in the early 1970s, indicated a reluctance to relinquish *any* part of the West Bank to Jordan, in a clear departure from Allon's recommendations. This reluctance, while partly inspired by strategic considerations, was also in no small part inspired by ideology – the prioritization of the territorialist-nationalist concept of the Land of Israel over the civic-political concept of the State of Israel – and a growing trend of Messianism that had come about as a result of the “miraculous” victory of the IDF in 1967. From a strategic point of view, as Arye Naor notes, “the danger that should be prevented was, between the 1967 Six-Day war and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, a total war, and the argument was that, by holding all the territories occupied by Israel in 1967, the danger of war would be

¹¹² Allon, “Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders”, 49-50.

¹¹³ “Progress of the Allon Plan,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1972): 148-149.

¹¹⁴ Dan Diker, “A Return to Defensible Borders,” *Azure* 21 (Summer 2005): 62.

eliminated.”¹¹⁵ This was to be based on the concept of “territorial defense”, whereby a system of fortified settlements would be built on possible invasion routes in order to stop or delay invading forces to provide the IDF with enough time to mobilize its reserves and prepare for a counter-offensive.¹¹⁶

The 1973 war, which coincided with the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, changed the terms, though not the contents, of the discourse on the occupied territories. This was the result of the failure of settlements on the Golan Heights to withstand the Syrian onslaught, and their subsequent evacuation in the middle of a two-pronged surprise attack on the occupied territories. After the war, this failure gave rise to the argument that in light of new technologies of warfare, settlements were not a strategic asset but had become a military liability.¹¹⁷ Supporters of the concept of strategic depth, however, argued that the failure was due to the fact that the settlements had been unprepared for an attack. Allon for his own part argued in 1976 that “a settlement that is not fortified and not equipped with sophisticated weapons can become a liability. But the same settlement, equipped with well trained settlers, can be very effective in checking the enemy advance.”¹¹⁸ To be sure, this was a strange concept, one based on recursive logic. In effect, it advocated sending civilians to reside in front-line areas, training them and equipping them with light as well as heavy weapons with the express purpose of securing for the army the ability to launch a counter-attack in order to not only defend those who lived within the pre-1967 boundaries but also rush to the rescue of the citizens who had stood their ground precisely in order to allow the army a margin of maneuver. If this wasn’t paradoxical enough, both Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin during their premierships from 1969 to 1974 and 1974 to 1977 respectively, insisted that Israel

¹¹⁵ Arye Naor, “The Security Argument in the Territorial Debate in Israel: Rhetoric and Policy,” *Israel Studies* 4, no. 2 (1999): 151.

¹¹⁶ Efraim Inbar, *Israel's National Security: Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War* (London: Routledge, 2008): 11-12.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

should preserve the status quo until such time as Arabs accepted the concept of defensible borders.¹¹⁹

The very concept of establishing settlements for defensive purposes rather than merely establishing military presence in select strategic areas, was suspect, since placing civilians in the line of fire defeated the purpose of holding on to these territories, if indeed the purpose was strictly defensive-strategic rather than ideological-expansionist. Nonetheless, the territorial defense doctrine was adopted by the government headed by Prime Minister Rabin in 1974, and from then on, new settlements were built in accordance to it. The idea was to transform civilian settlers into state-sponsored paramilitary groups trained in conventional warfare and equipped with weapons – such as tanks – suitable for a conventional army rather than guerilla units.¹²⁰ Concomitantly, and given the need, in light of the 1973 experience, for a more convincing argument in favor of keeping the territories, the discourse was transformed from one of national security to personal security, from references to the menace of total war, to constant invocations of the dangers of terrorism. The argument was that, if territories were to be handed over, no-one would enjoy personal security, and therefore, keeping the territories was a prerequisite. Hence, after 1973, terrorism was Israel's rallying call and its battle cry. This, at least, signaled an Israeli awareness, though not an official admission, that the danger of large-scale warfare involving states and regular armies had receded and was nothing more than a mere remote possibility.

Although between 1973 and 1977 there were signs of the emergence of a new concept as an alternative to defensible borders, it was not until 1977, especially with the coming to power of the right wing, that it was given serious thought. This new concept – which was rejected by Rabin during his three-year term as Prime Minister¹²¹ – posited that defensible

¹¹⁹ Diker, op. cit., 63.

¹²⁰ According to Efraim Inbar, settlers were to be equipped with “tanks, anti-tank guns and missiles, recoilless guns and mortars, as well as modern communication equipment.” Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 12.

¹²¹ Diker, op. cit., 64.

borders were not a guarantee against Arab invasion and could in fact invite aggression. Instead, it suggested the complete return of territories, along with mutual agreements between Israel and Arab states on security arrangements (such as demilitarization and the deployment of international monitors) as part of peace treaties. This transformation, however, was acceptable to Israel only on one front, namely the Egyptian one. In fact, from 1977 onwards, and in conjunction with the advance in Israeli-Egyptian negotiations, the selective settlement policy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began to change. In 1977 alone fourteen new settlements were built, of which only four were in the Jordan Valley and the Gush Etzion, and the remaining deep inside the West Bank often abutting and encircling Palestinian villages and towns. This change in policy coincided with the results of the 1977 legislative elections, which, for the first time in Israeli history broke the left-wing monopoly and brought to power a Right-Religious coalition government, demonstrating the growing ideological-religious attachment to what almost all Israeli politicians and many if not most Israelis referred to as Yehuda, Shomron, and `Azza (Judea, Samaria, and Gaza). In a revealing set of remarks, the basic guidelines of Prime Minister Menachem Begin's government emphasized the concept of the Land of Israel, and Article 2 of the guidelines underscored the Jewish people's "eternal, historic right" to it, as the "inalienable inheritance of its forefathers."¹²²

Israeli Political Attitudes Toward the PLO

Since its founding, the PLO aspired to attain the status of sole representative of the Palestinian people, and continued to pursue that goal for the first three decades of its military and political struggle. Israel, on the other hand, for a considerable period, refused to recognize the very existence of a Palestinian people, much less negotiate with its self-proclaimed representative, which it labeled as a terrorist entity hellbent on Israel's

¹²² "Basic guidelines of the government, 20 June 1977," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 June 1977: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Previous+governments/2%20Basic%20guidelines%20of%20the%20government-%2020%20June%201977> (last accessed: July 2008).

destruction. Although this refusal was expressed formally only in the 1970s by three-time Prime Minister Golda Meir, it had been part and parcel of Israeli policy since the very establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. It was not until the Camp David Accords in 1978 that Israel recognized “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements”, and even then, Prime Minister Begin insisted that the Hebrew version of the accord read “the Arabs of the Land of Israel” rather than “Palestinians.”¹²³ This, however, did not amount to a recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, or an agreement that Palestinians’ legitimate rights necessitated the establishment of an independent state on the western bank of the Jordan River. Israel’s argument on this point was that there was no place for a state between Jordan and Israel, and that a Palestinian state in the area would serve as launching ground for terror attacks against Israel, and would not resolve the Palestinian problem. Another argument was that Jordan was in fact Palestine, in the sense that it was there that Palestinians could legitimately aspire to self-determination – an idea advocated by Member of Knesset Ariel Sharon in 1974¹²⁴ – or that the Palestinians and Jordanians were in fact the same people, as argued by the then Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Benjamin Netanyahu in 1989.¹²⁵ The “Jordan is Palestine” concept was given a boost due to the fact that the majority of Jordan’s citizens were of Palestinian origin, and has, in recent years, undergone revival in popular discourse in Israel on the question of Palestinian statehood. Nevertheless, it did not evolve into active policy in and of itself, although it certainly informed attitudes and influenced decisions on the future of the OPT, particularly the West Bank.

The main declared obstacle to Israel’s recognition of the PLO and to its acceptance to negotiate with it on the future of the occupied territories and on prospects for Palestinian self-

¹²³ Susan Hattis Rolef, “Israel’s Policy Toward the PLO: From Rejection to Recognition,” in *The PLO and Israel: From Armed Conflict to Political Solution, 1964-1994*, ed. Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma’oz (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997), 255.

¹²⁴ Benny Morris, “The New Herut Supermarket,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 193.

¹²⁵ Rolef, op. cit., 256.

determination, was the PLO's "terrorist" nature, and its denial of Israel's "right to exist", a denial expressed in the articles of the Palestinian National Charter and at the mouths of its members and spokespeople. In fact, the PLO's calls for the liquidation of Israel were utilized as propaganda material to market to world public opinion Israel's justifications for refusing to talk to Palestinians on the fate of Palestinian-inhabited territories occupied in 1967 and about other issues, such as the problem of the Palestinian refugees; for, if the Palestinians' self-proclaimed representative organization denied even the most basic of Israel's rights – the so-called "right to exist" – how could Israel be expected to extend recognition to it, let alone negotiate with it? However, as Palestinian writer Sabri Jiryis correctly observed in an op-ed in the Lebanese daily *al-Nahar*, Israeli leaders' constant repetition that

“they cannot possibly deal with the Palestinians so long as they refuse to recognize the existence of the Israeli state... [is]... a cover-up for Israel's own refusal to recognize the Palestinians' existence... there is nothing... to support any of the interpretations to the effect that Israel is seeking recognition by the Palestinians as part of the attempts to reach a political settlement in the area.”¹²⁶

Jonathan Rynhold argues that the portrayal of the conflict with Palestinians as an inherently existential one and its placement in the context of the Jewish history of persecution formed the crux of ultra-nationalist discourse, which found a willing practitioner in Begin who went so far as to compare the PLO to the Nazi SS, and the Palestinian National Charter to a modern-day *Mein Kampf*, in the Knesset in September 1978.¹²⁷ Not only that, but Israel also posited that moderate statements emanating from the PLO should not be understood for what they appeared to be, but for what they really were. In effect, Israel's case in the court of international opinion was that Palestinians were not to be trusted, since their statements were misleading and were merely intended to drive a wedge between Israel and the world, rather

¹²⁶ Sabri Jiryis, "Recognition of Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 139-140.

¹²⁷ Jonathan Rynhold, "Re-Conceptualizing Israeli Approaches to 'Land for Peace' and the Palestinian Question Since 1967," *Israel Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 36.

than contribute to a process of meaningful and honest dialogue which Israel insisted it was ready to undertake.

Yet this insistence was contradicted by Israel's actions on the ground, in the form of not only unwillingness to engage in dialogue with either Jordan or the PLO, but also adoption of a set of schemes and procedures designed specifically to ward off international pressure to relinquish most or all of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. According to Ezer Weizman, Minister of Defense during Begin's first term as Prime Minister, Begin's main purpose in surrendering the Sinai to Egypt was to "divert international pressure for withdrawal from the West Bank."¹²⁸ Hence, while political pressures succeeded in forcing Israel toward compromise, they did so at a substantial, albeit undeclared price tag. The upshot of giving up on the Sinai was a hardening of Israel's stance with regard to the OPT. Despite their detailed attention to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Camp David Accords left the status of these territories undetermined and subject to further (bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral) negotiations.¹²⁹ These negotiations, as the Director-General of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) noted at the time, would set the stage for *de facto* annexation; for, "after five years when both sides [sic] will disagree, the situation would mean that things stayed the same in Israel's favor."¹³⁰

Israel's unbending attitude and policies toward the PLO were in fact out of tune with the significant transformation in the latter's outlook over the years, especially in the wake of the 1973 war. Manuel Hassassian argues that the PNC sessions between the year of founding of the PLO and the breakthrough year of 1988 could be divided into three phases: liberation and return (1964-1968); a secular democratic state (1969-1973); and two-state solution

¹²⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹²⁹ "Camp David Accords," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 September 1978: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Camp%20David%20Accords> (last accessed: July 2008).

¹³⁰ Rynhold, op. cit., 37.

(1974-).¹³¹ The third phase, that of acceptance of a two-state solution, started with the twelfth PNC in 1974, and marked a decisive moment in Palestinian history. The turnaround came in a number of forms. Firstly, whereas in the past the PLO merely reacted to proposals and plans that were formulated by others without consultation with it, from 1974 onwards it insisted on being a participant in any negotiations dealing with the Palestinian problem, and doing so as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. This was a significant departure from the PLO's insistence that the only way to achieve Palestinian national aspirations was through armed struggle. Second, this participation was to be an active one, whereby the PLO would seek to chart an independent Palestinian course and attempt to defend Palestinian interests and acquire, to the best of its abilities, Palestinian rights. This was most apparent in the February 1974 working paper which preceded the twelfth PNC, and in which the PLO vowed to take up arms against Jordan if the West Bank ever reverted to its control. More significant, however, was the working paper's – and later the twelfth PNC's resolution to the same effect – acceptance of the idea of declaring Palestinian independence on any piece of Palestine the PLO would gain custody of.¹³² While these resolutions were not in and of themselves tantamount to recognition of Israel's existence, their implementation would have entailed *de facto* recognition of the Jewish state. The PLO, however, rejected UN Security Council Resolution 242 on the basis that it made no mention of the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination and merely emphasized the need to achieve a “just settlement of the refugee problem.”¹³³ In contrast, Israel insisted on Resolution 242 as the “basis for talks”,

¹³¹ Manuel Hassassian, “Policy and Attitude Changes in the Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965-1994: A Democracy in the Making,” in Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz, op. cit., 80-81.

¹³² “P.L.O. ‘Working Paper’ Accepts Palestine State as Interim Step,” *MERIP Reports* 27 (April 1974): 25; and Sameer Abraham, “The PLO at the Crossroads: Moderation, Encirclement, Future Prospects,” *MERIP Reports* 80 (September 1979): 5.

¹³³ “Resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967,” United Nations Department of Public Information: [http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/242%20\(1967\)&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION](http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=S/RES/242%20(1967)&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION) (last accessed: August 2008). See also “al-muqawama tarfud Geneve `ala asas al-qarar 242... wa tuta'lib bi sulta wataniyya mustaqilla wa muqatila” (The Resistance rejects Geneva on the basis of Resolution 242... and demands an independent and fighter national authority), *al-Nahar*, 4 June 1974, 1.

pointing out that it did not require withdrawal from *all* – only some of – the territories occupied in 1967.¹³⁴

1974 was a key year in another sense too. It was in that year that the PLO rose to international prominence; the United Nations General Assembly resolution 3210 of October 1974 invited the PLO to attend plenary meetings on the Palestine question; in the same month, Arab states recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people during the Arab League summit in Rabat, a recognition they had withheld both based on regime calculations, such as the fear that the PLO might become “a vehicle of militant Arab nationalism”, and on grounds that it might act in ways harmful to the Arab strategy of confrontation with Israel.¹³⁵ These were major political achievements, ones that the PLO had aspired to and worked for since at least the 1967 war. The General Assembly invitation – albeit at that point limited to attendance of sessions on the question of Palestine – and Arab recognition had a domino effect: both the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement followed suit. In November of the same year, Yasser ‘Arafat made a speech at the United Nations, and two General Assembly resolutions (3236 and 3237) were passed, which not only reaffirmed the Palestinian right to self-determination and referred to the violation of that right, but also recognized that the Palestinian people were a principal party to the attainment of a just and durable peace in the region and accordingly awarded the PLO observer status at all meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the General Assembly and the United Nations more generally, including but crucially not limited to the question of Palestine.¹³⁶ The Israeli response to the resolutions came at the mouth of none

¹³⁴ “Israel-U.S. working paper on The Geneva Conference, 5 October 1977,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 October 1977:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1977-1979/54%20Israel-US%20working%20paper%20on%20The%20Geneva%20Conferece> (last accessed: August 2008).

¹³⁵ Ronald R. Macintyre, “The Palestine Liberation Organization: Tactics, Strategies and Options towards the Geneva Peace Conference,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1975): 72.

¹³⁶ See “3236 (XXIX). Question of Palestine,” United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/3236, 22 November 1974:

other than the architect of the “defensible borders” concept, Minister of Foreign Affairs Allon, who in his Knesset statement reaffirmed Israel’s position on recognition of and negotiations with the PLO, saying:

“No one can expect us to recognize the terrorist organization called the PLO as representing the Palestinians – because it does not. No one can expect us to negotiate with the heads of terror-gangs, who through their ideology and actions, endeavour to liquidate the State of Israel.”¹³⁷

The PLO’s rise on the international stage confronted it with the dilemma of how to “maximize international support... without losing freedom to pursue the revolutionary struggle,” a dilemma that is characteristic of non-state actors and particularly national liberation movements which more often than not lack a secure territorial base for their military struggle.¹³⁸ This meant that it would have to divide its efforts equally between diplomatic work and military struggle, if not lean more towards the diplomatic track. While this awarded Israel short-term benefits in the sense that it brought about a decline in guerilla attacks, in the long run, it had in store for Israel a problem far more worrying and dangerous than the nuisance the PLO’s guerilla activities had proven to be. Israel’s fears were centered on what the growing recognition, should its circle become enlarged to include western Europe¹³⁹ and the United States, would mean for its stance on and policies in the OPT. It feared that recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people would

<http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.nsf/f45643a78fcba719852560f6005987ad/025974039acfb171852560de00548bbe!OpenDocument> (last accessed: August 2008); and “3237 (XXIX). Observer status for the Palestine Liberation Organization,” United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/3237, 22 November 1974: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/a06f2943c226015c85256c40005d359c/512baa69b5a32794852560de0054b9b2!OpenDocument> (last accessed: August 2008).

¹³⁷ “Statement in the Knesset by Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Allon, 26 November 1974,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 November 1974:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1974-1977/48%20Statement%20in%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Deputy%20Premier%20and> (last accessed: September 2008).

¹³⁸ Macintyre, op. cit., 66-67.

¹³⁹ Indeed there were signs that attitudes were slowly changing towards greater recognition of Palestinian national rights, as the joint declaration of the European community in November 1973 indicated. See Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 52-53.

set the stage for worldwide endorsement of the PLO's claim that the only solution to the Palestinian problem is through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a suggestion that Israel refused to even entertain let alone accept. Commenting on the Palestinian issue in an address to the Secretariat of the Labor Party in April 1973, Prime Minister Golda Meir noted that

“There are in Jordan wide spaces with a development potential in which the Palestinians can be rehabilitated... Between the Mediterranean Sea and the eastern desert, there is room for two States only: a Jewish State, and an Arab State - Israel and Jordan. We oppose the establishment of an additional Arab State in the region between Israel and Jordan.”¹⁴⁰

According to Avner Yaniv, both Meir and after her Rabin were pre-occupied with the security rather than national-religious value of the OPT, and were opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state in those territories for fear that it would become launching ground for further attacks into Israel-proper. If indeed Yaniv's reading is an accurate description of the official Israeli mindset, the rationale on which Israeli concerns were built was a fallacious one, for the phenomenon of infiltration was present in the absence, rather than presence, of an independent Palestinian state and despite significant efforts by Jordan to curb if not altogether eliminate it. According to Yaniv, a sovereign Palestine could also invite Arab armies to be stationed on its soil, a possibility that would pose a risk to the very existence of the state, and at the very least a severe threat to the security of its citizens.¹⁴¹ This, however, fails to explain Israel's implementation of its alternative vision for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which actually placed thousands of Israeli citizens – most with little military training much less an adequate supply of weapons or the ability to hold its ground

¹⁴⁰ “Statement by the Prime Minister on the Palestinian issue, 12 April 1973,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 12 April 1973:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign+Relations/Israels+Foreign+Relations+since+1947/1947-1974/40+Statement+by+the+Prime+Minister+on+the+Palestin.htm> (last accessed: September 2008).

¹⁴¹ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 50.

against a large-scale invasion – on possible invasion routes of Arab armies. If the settlement enterprise was a mere function of the need to create facts on the ground – based on security considerations – in order to render withdrawal from certain areas irrelevant, it was also based on recursive logic, since the very act of planting facts on the ground defeated the purported purpose of planting them.

Moreover, Yaniv's assertion that Israel's refusal to accommodate the PLO was due to a classical security dilemma at play fails to explain Israel's unwillingness to recognize the PLO and negotiate with it even after the radical, indeed quite accommodative, changes in the PLO's outlook on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is also far from evident that recognition would have been a slippery slope leading to accommodation, namely the establishment of a Palestinian state, especially in light of the fact that Israel, as a state actor with immense resources at its disposal and institutionalized forms of domestic dissent, enjoyed a larger margin of maneuverability than did the PLO, and was therefore better-placed to take minor risks, such as recognition of the PLO and the embarking on dialogue with it, and emerge from it relatively unharmed in the event of failure. Nevertheless, as frequent Israeli statements demonstrated, Israel's decision not to negotiate with the PLO was first and foremost a function of its refusal to part with the OPT and allow the establishment of a Palestinian state on them,¹⁴² and not, as it insisted, primarily a function of the PLO's terrorist nature, actions, or statements, or the threat it posed to Israeli security and, ultimately, allegedly to Israel's very existence.

Israeli fears of the PLO were manifested in its lobbying efforts in the United States, which resulted in September 1975 in a Memorandum of Agreement between the two countries regarding the Geneva Peace Conference that had been convened in late 1973, prior to the PNC's groundbreaking twelfth session, with the notable exclusion of the PLO. While

¹⁴² Prime Minister Rabin was adamant in his refusal: "I repeat firmly, clearly, categorically... [such a state] will not be created." *Ibid.*, 50-51.

the PLO had refused to attend the Conference even if invited – as that would have amounted to *de facto* recognition of Israel and of UN Security Council Resolution 242 which the PLO firmly rejected – it was Israeli pressure that resulted in the blacklisting of the organization. The Memorandum was the result of Arab, primarily Egyptian, attempts to resume the Geneva Peace process and Israeli fears that it would give rise to pressures to allow the participation of a PLO delegation. It therefore ensured that the United States would “continue to adhere to its present policy with respect to the Palestinian Liberation Organization, whereby it will not recognize or negotiate with [it] so long as [it] does not recognize Israel’s right to exist and does not accept Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.”¹⁴³ In 1977, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Dayan reiterated Israel’s refusal to deal with the PLO, going a step further than merely justifying it based on the organization’s non-acceptance of Resolution 242, by insisting that “even if the PLO will state that they do accept the 242, and even if they say that they accept it without any reservations, it will not mean that we accept the PLO as partners for negotiations for peace, or as participants in the Geneva Peace Conference... We do not think that the solution for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is either by a Palestinian State, or by any other form...”¹⁴⁴ The Israeli reaction to the PLO’s growing independence was in tune with Mohammed Selim’s argument that the adversaries of non-state actors, when faced with the reality of increasing visibility and international legitimacy of such actors, resort to portraying them as “mavericks threatening international legitimacy.”¹⁴⁵

Israeli military action was therefore not merely a function of military objectives, but also, and arguably chiefly, a function of political ends, foremost among them, as Yaniv points

¹⁴³ “Memorandum of Agreement Between the United States and Israel regarding the Geneva Peace Conference, September 17, 1975,” in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, *op. cit.*, 348.

¹⁴⁴ “Press conference with Foreign Minister Dayan, 9 August 1977,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 August 1977:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1977-1979/31%20Press%20conference%20with%20Foreign%20Minister%20Dayan-%209> (last accessed: September 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), 16, 206.

out, the “weakening of PLO moderates and strengthening their radical rivals.”¹⁴⁶ While this would have had repercussions for Israeli security because greater influence of radicals in the PLO would have brought about an escalation in guerilla activities, the rationale was that the strengthening of the radicals’ hand would force the PLO into accepting the radicals’ outlook on the conflict with Israel rather than maintaining the moderate and pragmatic line that the PLO had adopted since 1974. This, in turn, would restore the PLO to its previous standing in European and American public opinion. To the extent that the implementation of this project succeeded in bringing about a rift within the PLO on the policy to be adopted vis-à-vis Israel, the failure of the pragmatic mainstream, headed by Fateh, to restrain radical factions insistent on violent struggle aggravated an already tense situation in Lebanon; in 1973 Israeli elite units headed by Ehud Barak (who, less than two decades later, would be appointed IDF Chief of Staff, and a few years after that elected to the office of Prime Minister) had assassinated three PLO figures in an operation dubbed Operation Spring of Youth, which caused outrage in Lebanon and prompted political fallout, further destabilizing an already delicate situation.

3.3 Operation Litani and Operation Peace for the Galilee

Israeli attacks on Lebanon continued unabated. Lebanon was a soft target and was consequently attacked on the grounds that it was responsible for ongoing Palestinian attacks along the Lebanese-Israeli border.¹⁴⁷ Moshe Dayan, the Minister of Defense between 1969 and 1974, went a step further and announced that Israel would no longer implement a policy of retaliation, but rather would “seek to preempt Palestinian military action, striking Lebanon

¹⁴⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1989), 174.

¹⁴⁷ As early as 1954 Ben Gurion noted that since Lebanon was “the weakest link in the [Arab] League’s chain,” it was “the place in which a breakthrough could be effected that would lead to a qualitative change in Israel’s regional position.” See Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon 1970-1985* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 162.

at will.”¹⁴⁸ The direct result of these strikes – whether preemptive or retaliatory – was a further escalation of tensions in Lebanon, and contributed, if not led to, the eruption of civil war in the country. The critical moment came in September 1975, with the Sinai II (interim) disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel. According to Zuhayr Muhsin of the Syrian-backed al-Sa’iqa, had it not been for the Agreement, the situation in Lebanon would not have escalated. Muhsin, whose outlook was no doubt similar to the Syrian perception of developments on the Sinai front, argued that the escalation in Lebanon was “intended to distract the attention of Syria and the PLO... sap [Syria’s] energies and weaken [its] strategic position.”¹⁴⁹ In his study of the PLO’s experience in Lebanon, Rex Brynen concurs with this analysis.¹⁵⁰

The civil war presented Israel with both opportunities and dilemmas. On the one hand, PLO involvement in the intra-Lebanese struggle eased the pressure on the border with Lebanon to some extent albeit not completely; on the other hand, the PLO’s intervention in the fighting tilted the military balance in favor of the Lebanese factions fighting against the status quo, a tilt that did not bode well for Israel’s political interests and security considerations. In addition, the continuous fighting added another factor – namely Syria – to an already complex equation. Direct Syrian involvement both posed a danger and provided benefits to Israel. The threat, as perceived, was in the form of a possible extension of the Syrian front across the entire length of Israel’s northern borders should Syria succeed in taking control of Lebanon. Should Syria face difficulties in the attainment of such an outcome, however, the benefits would outweigh the costs since it was in Israel’s interest to see Syria bogged down in the Lebanese quagmire, which would have meant that Syria would not only be unable to take action on the Golan front, but also find itself in need of aid from

¹⁴⁸ Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival*, 61.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

Gulf Arab states, chief among them Saudi Arabia, which were considered to be subservient to the United States.¹⁵¹

The benefits of Syrian intervention were most evident in the Syrian-PLO confrontations that took place in 1976, in conjunction with an Israeli blockade of ports controlled by the leftist-Palestinian coalition. The Israeli blockade was beneficial in two ways: first, the interception and searching of all ships often led to the confiscation of shiploads of weaponry headed for the Palestinians, thereby significantly drying up the PLO's weapons cache; second, the confiscated weapons were shipped to Israel's Christian allies, thereby reducing the financial burden of maintaining proxies. In addition, and according to a *Time* newspaper report in September 1976, Israel began training "a battalion of mixed Lebanese Christian and Moslem troops in tank warfare at an Israeli base on the edge of the Sinai desert...[to] be sent back to Lebanon with 38 American-made Sherman tanks."¹⁵² Thus, while the PLO was entangled in a confrontation with the Syrians and Israel's Christian proxies – notably the siege of Tal el-Za'atar refugee camp, which Syria approved of – Israel was laying the groundwork for a proxy army headed by Sa'ad Haddad, the purpose of which was to secure the border against PLO activities. The Syrian intervention and Israel's Red Line in Lebanon – which prevented Syria from entering southern Lebanon – resulted in a paradoxical situation whereby the PLO found shelter in the areas of Lebanon's southern border that were not under Syrian control. Rabin, who had earlier expressed satisfaction at the fact that Syria had been "subdu[ing] Arafat's terrorists"¹⁵³, was well aware of this paradox, and noted that "because the Syrians were prevented from moving south of the Red Line, southern Lebanon became a haven for the terrorists... PLO terrorists, Israel's sworn foes, found asylum under the Israeli 'deterrent umbrella' intended against the Syrians."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 60.

¹⁵² "Why Syria Invaded Lebanon," *MERIP Reports* 51 (October 1976): 5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁴ Yaniv, *op. cit.*, 61.

Concurrently, Israel experimented with what it called the "Good Fences" policy, whereby it would open the borders with southern Lebanon and provide assistance to residents of the area (albeit selectively), with the hope that it would cultivate "good neighborly relations" – summarized by the cliché statement "good fences make good neighbors" – in the heart of the PLO's operative area and erode the PLO's standing there. In the event of the success of the policy, it could then be extended further northward, thereby pacifying a larger area than what a security belt could secure. In reality, this policy was intended to create local clients rather than equal partners in a relationship of peaceful co-existence. Moreover, the policy, which continued through the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 on an ad-hoc basis, proved to be a one-sided enterprise which boosted Israel's exports market while causing extensive damage to local markets¹⁵⁵ due to their saturation with Israeli produce, thereby eliciting local opposition rather than encouraging normalization.

During this period, Israel faced two real dangers. The first stemmed from the very fact that its blind eye policy toward Syrian intervention in Lebanon had backfired. That there was a chance, indeed a strong probability, that Syria would, sooner or later, repair its relationship with the PLO, had been overlooked. The Syrian-PLO rapprochement took place following Anwar al-Sadat's November 1977 visit to Jerusalem and the unfolding of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations which would eventually give rise to a peace treaty between the two countries, and intensified in the wake of increased levels of activity by Israeli-trained and backed militias in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian negotiations which culminated in the signing of the Shtura agreement took place amidst renewed fighting, which shattered the unilateral ceasefire the PLO had declared in April under Syrian pressure, and was widely perceived to be Israel's implementation of its declared stance on the negotiations. Israel's position, as elaborated by Prime Minister Menachem Begin's government, comprised

¹⁵⁵ With the notable exception of the booming drug trade. "Lebanon-Israel Drug Connection," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 4 (Summer 1984): 169-170.

three demands: the withdrawal of the PLO a distance of ten kilometers north of the Litani River; the allocation of security responsibility in the border zones to the Israel-trained Haddad militia; and the maintenance of the “good fence” crossings.¹⁵⁶

The second danger that Israel faced was the Carter administration’s statements on the Palestinian issue – such as the emphasis on the Palestinians’ entitlement to a national home – and President Carter’s attempts to bring the PLO into the fold by establishing contacts with the organization and encouraging its gradual movement towards an acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 242. Israeli leaders feared such an outcome as much as they feared Syrian military and strategic achievements in Lebanon, as it would have confronted Israel with two options neither of which its leaders wanted. The first was a grudging acceptance of a Palestinian state in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. The second was a falling out of favor with the United States and diplomatic isolation. Despite the critical nature of this dilemma, Israel could not possibly have referred to it explicitly, for it would have shattered the myth of its dedication to the pursuit of peace and stability.¹⁵⁷ The dilemma alerted Israeli leaders to the necessity of preventive action. Paradoxically, what was to be prevented was not, as one would think, Palestinian militarism and armed activities – or what Israel referred to as “terrorism” – but quite the opposite: PLO moderation.

Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem paved the way for the Camp David Accords, which comprised two separate frameworks. Of relevance to this section is the “Framework for Peace in the Middle East”. This framework set the outline of the process for determining the future status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, specifying a period of five years during which a solution was to be negotiated for and agreed upon by Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. During this period, the territories in question were to have full autonomy. The Israeli reading of and intentions behind its agreement to this plan for the OPT differed from the Egyptian reading

¹⁵⁶ Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival*, 116.

¹⁵⁷ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 68.

thereof. According to Israel's view, as elaborated less than two years after the Camp David Accords were signed, there would be no delincation of the borders between the autonomous areas and Israel. Defining borders, after all, would have necessitated the application of autonomy throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip irrespective of the religious/ethnic background of the inhabitants. In other words, autonomy was to be a loosely-defined arrangement, applied to the Palestinian residents of the OPT but not to the Jewish settlers. In contrast to their Palestinian counterparts, Jewish settlers, who held Israeli citizenship, had the right to vote in Israeli elections while inhabiting the same areas as Palestinians. Thus, the autonomy in force was not a territorial one, but rather an ethnic-religious one. Furthermore, the autonomy was limited, in the sense that it was still subject to the authority of the Israeli establishment and functioned largely according to its whims.

For all intents and purposes, autonomy as envisioned by Israel – whether an interpretation of the articles of the Camp David Accords dealing with autonomy, or Israel's own autonomy plan presented to the Knesset by Begin in December 1977¹⁵⁸ – was a plan for permanent apartheid – albeit differing in some respects from the South African model.

The PLO, for its own part, was alarmed by Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and concerned about the repercussions of an impending Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, which it perceived to pose a severe setback to the Palestinian cause. According to Yaniv, this led the organization to seek an escalation, hoping that it would disrupt the negotiations. However, given its expectations of a brutal Israeli retaliation and to avoid risking Sadat's ire, the PLO had to ensure that the timing of its escalation was appropriate and would have the desired effect

¹⁵⁸ See "Autonomy Plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip," Jewish Virtual Library: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/AutonomyPlan.html> (last accessed: November 2008). Contrary to Uzi Benziman's interpretation of the autonomy plan published in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, the citizenship clauses were not an offer of Israeli citizenship to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as that would have been subject to Israel's "law of return", which restricted immigration to Israel and receipt of citizenship to persons of Jewish descent. For Benziman's interpretation, see Uzi Benziman, "The Likud should remember Begin," *Ha'aretz*: <http://news.haaretz.co.il/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=162449&contrassID=3&subContrassID=4&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y> (last accessed: January 2009).

rather than catastrophic consequences.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, in March 1978, following a deadlock in Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, the PLO carried out a daring attack near Tel Aviv that left three dozen Israelis dead. It was in response to this operation – as well as the increasingly untenable position of Haddad's forces in the border belt, as evidenced by the loss of a key strategic position to the PLO in Maroun al-Ras – that Israel launched Operation Litani.¹⁶⁰ The rationale behind the operation was that limited reprisals had proven ineffective in preventing PLO attacks, as had Haddad's militia. Thus, Israel was faced with two options: invest more heavily in defenses along the Lebanese border, an option that might not necessarily result in the eradication of the threat to the Galilee; or, invade and occupy southern Lebanon up to the Red Line. Given that the IDF's operative doctrine was offensive in nature, and complemented by Begin's determination to attain the conditions necessary for implementing his autonomy plan, Israel naturally opted for the second option.

The operation's success depended on a number of criteria, some of which had already been incorporated into Israeli warfare strategy. Most important of all was the time factor. In other words, the operation was to be brief. In addition, it would have to have minimal Israeli casualties. Given that Israel had opted for the second option – namely invasion and occupation – it would also have to be ready for prolonged stay. Furthermore, in order to avoid negative publicity and criticism, especially from Western states, it had to ensure that its actions would minimize Lebanese casualties while dealing a heavy blow to the PLO and avoiding confrontation with Syria. Last but not least, Israel's response should not lead to the breakdown of Egyptian-Israeli negotiations, as that would sink Begin's autonomy plan and undermine Israel's claim to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹⁶¹ While the operation lasted a mere five days, cost Israel relatively few casualties, and managed to keep a lid on possible Israeli-Syrian confrontation, it failed to meet the remaining criteria and more importantly the

¹⁵⁹ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 72.

¹⁶⁰ Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival*, 118.

¹⁶¹ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 72.

core objective. First and foremost, as a result of U.S pressure, Israel failed to realize its plans for prolonged stay in the area, and barely succeeded in holding on to a security belt manned by Haddad's proxy militia. Second, the very fact that Israel had earlier encouraged Syrian intervention in Lebanon and now wished to avoid direct confrontation with Syria there, meant that it would be unable to pursue the PLO as it moved northward taking refuge behind Syrian lines. This too, meant that whatever force Israel used – primarily air power given Israel's utmost care in minimizing casualties in the IDF's ranks – mostly struck civilian targets, causing many civilian casualties and leading to a wave of refugees.

The upshot of Operation Litani was the passage of a UN Security Council resolution – Resolution 425 – which called upon Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon immediately and established a UN force which came to be known as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The deployment of this force proved to be a strategic defeat for Israel; far from being a force that would curb PLO activities and defend Israel on Lebanese territory, its stationing, movement, and activities in southern Lebanon were in fact a function of PLO consent. More importantly, the PLO refused to recognize UNIFIL's mandate given that Resolution 425 had made no reference to the organization. Consequently, and in order to get the PLO to cooperate with it, UNIFIL was forced to sign an agreement with the PLO whereupon the latter accepted a ceasefire with Israel; this meant that, indirectly, Israel had been made a party to an agreement with the PLO. For the PLO, UNIFIL had served as a “mediator” between it and Israel even without the latter's approval let alone active participation.¹⁶² Thus, from the outset, UNIFIL became a political instrument manipulated for the interests of the parties to the conflict or subject to their condemnation and, in extreme circumstances, drawn into confrontations. Israel considered the UNIFIL a devalued force, which was not merely ineffective, but also subject to the PLO agenda. The presence of

¹⁶² Ibid., 73.

international forces in Lebanon was a hindrance to Israel's pursuit of the PLO deep inside the area under UNIFIL's mandate, and its attempts to exact a heavy price from the organization for its activities against Israel. Given that the UNIFIL comprised forces from countries that had friendly relations with Israel, tensions between it and Israel on the ground spilled into the diplomatic track and led to the straining of Israel's relationship with those countries that had contributed troops. Operation Litani was not only an operative and strategic failure for Israel, it also provided a backdrop for future escalation.

The continuation of the Camp David talks and Israel's announcement – at Begin's mouth – of its intentions to impose administrative autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip at the same time as it ruled out a halt to settlement activities, led to tensions in the OPT and provided the PLO with the opportunity to boost its standing there. While Israel's construction of new settlements and the linking of infrastructure in the areas of settlement to Israel continued in full force, its efforts to cultivate a local leadership that would collaborate with it and aid it in its implementation of the autonomy plan did not achieve the expected results. In fact, in 1976, a year prior to the unveiling of the autonomy plan, PLO supporters had won the municipal elections in most West Bank cities. The government associated the failure to cultivate a client leadership with the PLO's clout in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – which had been the result of the policies vis-à-vis occupied Palestinians adopted by the Military Government since 1967 – and argued that the autonomy plan could not be achieved unless and until the organization was undermined. Thus, as Itamar Rabinovich notes, in a departure from the concept of the alleged administrative autonomy Israel had promised, the government (during Begin's second term) adopted a new policy whereby a new Israeli "Civil Administration" and Palestinian "Village Leagues"¹⁶³ (handpicked by Israel rather than

¹⁶³ For more on Village Leagues, see Yehuda Litani, "Village Leagues: What Kind of Carrot?", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 174-178.

elected representatives of Palestinians) would run Palestinians' affairs and intervene in every aspect of Palestinian life.¹⁶⁴

The curtailing of PLO influence in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, however, was not possible merely by a crackdown on PLO figures and supporters there. So long as the PLO's institutional base in Lebanon, which doubled as a government-in-exile, was intact, there was little chance of fully eradicating support for the PLO in the OPT and putting the final nail in the coffin of Palestinian nationalism and aspirations for statehood. Hence, the period between the end of Operation Litani and the establishment of the Civil Administration in 1981 saw a continuation and even escalation of Israeli-PLO friction, despite the fact that the UNIFIL zone and the Haddad buffer zone complicated the PLO's task of infiltrating Israel and carrying out operations there. In addition to overcoming the obstacles on the ground, the PLO developed alternative methods of infiltration: by sea using inflatable boats and by air using hand gliders. Moreover, Operation Litani alerted the PLO to the probability of a bigger, possibly final, showdown between it and Israel; consequently, the organization worked on acquiring more sophisticated weaponry such as long-range artillery. The acquisition of long-range artillery and Katyusha rockets, it was hoped, would be instrumental in harassing Israeli front-line communities and would create a "balance of terror". To these developments Israel responded with limited military incursions and artillery fire, the combined result of which was the increasing preoccupation of the PLO with securing its own security – not only by the acquisition of weapons but also by attempting to mend fences with Arab states, chief among them Syria – rather than intensifying its armed struggle against Israel. Nevertheless, this preoccupation was not a long-term answer to Israel's concerns and interests; given its refusal to negotiate with the PLO for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and its dedication to the maintenance of total

¹⁶⁴ Rabinovich, *op. cit.*, 130-131.

control of those territories, and in light of the PLO's hoarding of new weapons systems, a large-scale confrontation between the two seemed, and indeed proved to be, inevitable. The inevitability, however, was a function of Israel's political intransigence, and not, as Avner Yaniv argues in his book *Dilemmas of Security*, the result of a security dilemma which neither Israel nor the PLO could escape from. The security dilemma operated merely as a *function* of the political line advanced by Israel, rather than as the *determinant* thereof. Israeli policy between 1978 and 1982 – escalation in order to achieve de-escalation, as Yaniv describes it¹⁶⁵ – was paradoxical, just as Israeli policies in the past had been. Nevertheless, the fact that Israel stubbornly adhered to its own formula for “resolving” the Palestinian issue meant that it had no choice but to continuously escalate in order to reach the turning point it desired.

Escalation became an even more pressing need given the movement in April 1981 of the new Reagan administration – despite its declared commitment to shunning the PLO – towards negotiations with the organization and the revival of autonomy discussions between Israel and its Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts with the intent of resolving the issue once and for all.¹⁶⁶ A mutual agreement on autonomy, however, was not in Israel's interests, as pointed out earlier, for Israel hoped that with the end of the five-year period without any agreement on the fate of the OPT, it would be justified in maintaining its hold over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It was therefore imperative for Israel to continue its assaults on the PLO with the hope that its actions would radicalize the organization and sever the dialogue between it and the U.S. To this end, Israel launched a massive air assault on the PLO in May 1981. The PLO's reaction to the attack was cautious, although there were signs that Israel's policy was indeed on the way to achieving its desired outcome. Israel's response to the PLO's cautious reply came in the form of another escalation in July. This time, however, the PLO –

¹⁶⁵ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 84.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

under pressure by radicals – was anything but cautious, responding to the provocation by rocket and artillery fire on Israeli towns and kibbutzes along the entire length of the Lebanese-Israeli border. The bombardment caused panic in Israeli border settlements and led to a flight of the population. The Israeli leadership was taken aback at both the PLO response and the reaction of the Israeli inhabitants of the border area to the bombardment. The result was that Begin was forced to turn down the recommendations of military advisers to maintain pressure on the PLO for a few more days, reluctantly entering into a ceasefire with Lebanon on July 24, 1981, which was in fact nothing but a ceasefire with the PLO. According to Yezid Sayigh, Israel's main failure in 1981 (as well as in 1978) was its inability to, through the use of excessive force, push the PLO to the point of unilaterally declaring a ceasefire.¹⁶⁷ Thus, through a set of escalatory actions, Israel had brought itself to the point of grudgingly conferring legitimacy on the PLO.

The ceasefire, however, was a prelude to further escalation and a final showdown, one that Israel set out to prepare for and provoke. Notably, Israel attempted to blur the terms of the agreement as it had done on numerous occasions in the past, and would continue to do so in the future. As Itamar Rabinovich notes, it insisted that the ceasefire applied not only to activities launched from Lebanon at Israel-proper, but also to any action that it considered to be aimed at Israel, even if not targeting Israelis themselves, but their proxies. Thus, attacks on Haddad's militia, or along the Jordan-West Bank frontier, and even in Europe, were to be considered violations of the ceasefire. The PLO, in contrast, insisted, reasonably so, that the ceasefire was limited to attacks across the Lebanese-Israeli border rather than inclusive of any and all unspecified arenas of possible struggle against Israel.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, Begin's government experienced internal dissent and was subjected to extensive pressure not least of all by hawkish IDF officers and public officials from the Galilee, who had been shocked by

¹⁶⁷ Yezid Sayigh, "Palestinian Military Performance in the 1982 War," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 4 (1983): 8.

¹⁶⁸ Rabinovich, *op. cit.*, 123.

the damage inflicted by the PLO's latest artillery fire. These figures lobbied for a major ground operation to destroy the PLO infrastructure, or what Israelis referred to as the PLO "state within a state." Moreover, the IDF was of the opinion, as were many members of the Cabinet, that the ceasefire would not hold for too long, and that therefore it was possible, indeed imperative, to resort to pre-emption. More tellingly, much of the criticism regarding the ceasefire agreement circled around the idea that it, and by extension Israel, had contributed to the improvement of the PLO's reputation and credibility especially that the organization had defied Israeli expectations and remained true to the agreement, demonstrating that it was capable of and willing to keep its part of agreements. The ceasefire also deepened the PLO's entrenchment in the Lebanese sanctuary, a reality that had implications both for population centers in the Galilee as well as for the autonomy plan in the occupied territories.¹⁶⁹ Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon believed that the only way to halt and roll back the PLO's diplomatic advances was to deal it a blow it would not recover from for years if not decades; such a blow necessitated the deprivation of the PLO of its sanctuary. It was this attitude that informed Sharon's decision to turn down a U.S. proposal for mutual withdrawal of PLO artillery and IDF troops from the areas they were stationed in.¹⁷⁰

On December 18, 1981, the Israeli daily newspaper *Ma'ariv* published excerpts from a lecture on Israel's strategic and security concerns and problems that was to be delivered by Ariel Sharon at a seminar organized by the Institute for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, but was canceled due to domestic controversy surrounding Israel's official annexation of the Golan Heights. The lecture came to be known as the "Sharon Doctrine", and was the first of its kind in summing up Israel's security conception and its perceptions of the threats and challenges facing it. The Sharon doctrine first and foremost emphasized Arab reliance on a "phased political and military strategy for the elimination of the state of Israel,"

¹⁶⁹ Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival*, 153.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of which the PLO was but one aspect, “an instrument for the performance of terrorist operations.” More importantly, the PLO was “one of the principal bases of the phased strategy, inasmuch as Israel’s deterrent position and other political considerations prevent the formation of an Arab alliance prepared to go to war.” Sharon’s attitude of the PLO was therefore largely a function of his belief in the existence of an Arab strategy of phases. Of no relevance was the fact that the PLO embodied – or could embody – Palestinian aspirations for liberation and statehood. Indeed, these aspirations were not considered to be noteworthy. The PLO was described as “a latent threat to the very existence of the state of Israel and ... one of the main obstacles to the solution of the Palestine problem on the basis of the Camp David accords.” Its objectives were, according to Sharon, to undermine Israel’s security and stability, amplify international pressure on Israel, draw Arab countries into a confrontation with Israel, and deter what he called “moderate Arab states and Palestinian institutions” from negotiating with Israel on the basis of Camp David.¹⁷¹

Yet Sharon’s identification of the PLO’s alleged objectives contradicted his argument that the PLO was a mere tactical and strategic instrument in Arab hands. If the PLO were indeed a mere instrument, its alleged attempts at drawing Arab countries into a confrontation with Israel they were not ready for would have gone against Arab interests and been damaging to the alleged Arab strategy of phases, which would have required careful planning and cautious implementation. The Sharon doctrine was also contradictory in its presentation of the question of strategic depth which was Israel’s declared rationale for its refusal to part with the West Bank. On the one hand, it pointed out the lack of territorial depth and the “resulting need to build up a strong territorial defence network based on settlement of high quality population and [high] density in areas of great strategic importance on the frontiers in Judea and Samaria, the Gaza area...” On the other hand it observed that because of new

¹⁷¹ Ariel Sharon, “The Sharon Doctrine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 167-168.

weapons systems that “cover all the territory of Israel... we are faced with the same defence problems on our present frontiers that we were faced with in 1967.”¹⁷² If anything, this was an admission of the irrelevance of the concept of strategic depth, and that defense of settlements was an end in itself rather than a means to an end. The Sharon doctrine was significant because the Israeli elections of June 1981 had propelled him, along with other hawks such as Yitzhak Shamir and Moshe Arens, to positions of power – in the case of Sharon, Minister of Defense – that had, until then, been occupied by pragmatists like Moshe Dayan who had been instrumental in pushing Begin towards a land-for-peace formula with Egypt, the main feature of which was autonomy for the West Bank.¹⁷³

Rex Brynen notes that the ability and willingness of states to apply coercive violence against other states that serve as sanctuaries for insurgents is a function of three main factors: the regional balance of power, the relative strength of the sanctuary state and enemy insurgents, and the degree of international support for the host state. To stave off aggression by an enemy seeking to strip it of its sanctuary, a non-state actor would therefore intensify diplomatic activities aimed at acquiring new allies and mobilizing old ones, with the hope that it would boost the sanctuary state’s willingness and ability to resist any aggression.¹⁷⁴ This the PLO did through the late 1970s and early 1980s, aware of the probability of a large-scale Israeli operation. Israel, for its own part, aware of the political and military weakness of Lebanon as well as of the limited capabilities of the PLO¹⁷⁵ and taking advantage of the situation in Lebanon where a civil war had been raging for years with little international intervention to halt the fighting and stand Lebanon back on its feet, prepared itself for what it hoped would be a killer blow to the PLO. This, however, would not have been possible

¹⁷² Ibid., 169-170.

¹⁷³ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 92.

¹⁷⁴ Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival*, 176.

¹⁷⁵ Especially that the PLO had, in the wake of the ceasefire, worked on transforming itself into a semi-conventional army rather than maintaining its guerilla nature, a transformation that suited Israel which found it easier to deal with poorly trained and equipped regular forces than irregular ones.

without the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed in 1979. Indeed, a mere month after the treaty was signed, Israel announced a new policy of pre-emptive and preventive attacks on the PLO in Lebanon. The announcement was followed by four incursions into southern Lebanon as well as the shelling of what Israel claimed were PLO military outposts.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, as Yezid Sayigh points out, Israeli policy from the signing of the Camp David Accords until the ceasefire of July 1981 included the deliberate targeting of civilian areas with the purpose of creating mass exodus of the population and tensions between the Lebanese and Palestinians.¹⁷⁷

Although the plan for invasion had been floating around in Israeli decision-making circles for at least a year, when it came to launching the operation, as Yaniv notes, two contradictory concepts came to the fore. The first was Begin's concept, which was in favor of a brief and territorially limited operation which would unseat the PLO from southern Lebanon and put an end to its attacks on northern Israel. The second was Sharon's concept, which argued that the only way to stop the PLO's rise to international respectability was through a military blow not only to its military infrastructure and command centers, but also to its political, economic, and even cultural infrastructure through which it also cultivated popular support among the refugee populations of Lebanon and other Arab states, and more importantly, among the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. On the fate of the West Bank, Sharon believed that a blow to the PLO would convince Palestinian leaders in the West Bank to accept the autonomy plan.¹⁷⁸ Sharon went even further, arguing that "the problem in the south could not be solved without solving the wider Lebanese crisis" and that the solution of the Lebanese crisis would lead to "a significant change in the politics of the whole region."¹⁷⁹ To be sure, this was in effect an argument in favor of "playing" regional

¹⁷⁶ Brynen, op. cit., 144.

¹⁷⁷ Yezid Sayigh, "Israel's Military Performance in Lebanon," 31.

¹⁷⁸ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 100-101.

¹⁷⁹ Rabinovich, op. cit., 132-133.

politics through Lebanon. The drawback of this scheme was that it would not be limited to southern Lebanon, but would require a large-scale invasion all the way to Beirut. The rationale was that a limited operation would not only fail to achieve the objective of destroying the PLO, but would in fact bolster support for it, as had happened in the wake of the Battle of Karameh. An operation of the same caliber as Operation Litani could, at best, serve as a temporary remedy rather than a long-term solution to Israel's interests and concerns, both political and security-wise.¹⁸⁰

Sharon's plan was rejected by the majority of the members of the Cabinet. The rejection was not based on disagreements about the desirability of the objectives, but rather, on the perceived costs of attempting to attain those objectives. Increased sensitivity to the loss of soldiers on the battlefield, wariness of the dangers of economic decline, and fear of diplomatic repercussions acted as a deterrence to the Cabinet's approval of a large-scale invasion. This, however, did not deter Sharon – and at that point Begin too – from pursuing the achievement of appropriate circumstances to launch just such an invasion. From Sharon's and Begin's perspective, Israel's freedom of action was restricted due to the PLO's strict adherence to the terms of the ceasefire. Hence, it was imperative to provoke the organization into a retaliation, which would then be utilized – irrespective of the actual chronology of events – by Israel as justification for its assault. The PLO proved to be difficult to provoke due in no small part to 'Arafat's realization that retaliation to any Israeli provocation would play into Israel's hands and give it the perfect excuse to attack his organization. It was based on this that the PLO refrained from reacting to the aerial bombardment of West Beirut by Israel in April and May 1982, ostensibly in retaliation for the shooting of an Israeli diplomat in Paris in early April, but in reality a blatant attempt at provoking the PLO.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 123.

The failure to push the PLO into resuming its military activities and the inability to extract agreement from the Cabinet for a widescale operation frustrated Sharon and Begin and led them to adopt a different strategy whereby a limited operation would be launched at the slightest opportunity with the approval of the Cabinet, and later expanded incrementally – without authorization – to include the objectives defined in the grand plan. Just as a near-consensus was reached in the Cabinet on the acceptability of a limited operation, an opportunity presented itself for Israel to take action. The opportunity came in the form of an assassination attempt on the Israeli Ambassador in the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov in June 1982. Despite the Israeli knowledge that the assassination attempt was not carried out by Fateh but by its rival the Abu Nidal Organization, it was not in Israel's interest, now that the perfect opportunity had presented itself, to pay attention to such details. An aerial attack on PLO offices in Beirut was launched in response to the assassination attempt, provoking massive retaliation by the PLO – a departure from its inaction in April and intermittent fire in May – and setting the pretext for the invasion.¹⁸¹ From there on, Sharon succeeded in putting to practice most of the war plans that his original scheme had proposed, to the outrage of many ministers who perceived themselves to be the victims of deceit.

West Beirut, however, posed a dilemma. Having reached it, Israel was faced with the unexpected refusal of its Lebanese allies to carry out its task of entering the city. This presented Israel with a dilemma: on the one hand, entering the city could be costly for the IDF in terms of loss of lives among its ranks and might bring about political repercussions far outweighing the benefits. On the other hand, having reached the outskirts of the city, a withdrawal without the destruction of the PLO's "nerve center" would severely damage

¹⁸¹ For a detailed account of the debates prior to, during, and after the invasion and the events that transpired on the ground in Lebanon, see Yaniv, *op. cit.*, 91-147. For the details of the progress of the military efforts of 1982 and maps of invasion routes, see Sayigh, "Israel's Military Performance in Lebanon, June 1982," 32-41. For an analysis of the Israeli objectives behind the invasion of Lebanon, see Ze'ev Schiff, "The Political Background of the War in Lebanon," in *Toward a Viable Lebanon*, ed. Halim Barakat (Washington, D.C.: Center for Arab Contemporary Studies, 1988), 160-166.

Israeli deterrence, demoralize the IDF, and fail to achieve the objectives for which Israel had sent its armed forces to Beirut. In the face of such a dilemma, Sharon opted to maintain and gradually tighten the siege of the city until the PLO accepted to evacuate. Yet even in besieging the city, Israel faced a dilemma: the longer the siege lasted, the higher the chances that it would eventually be portrayed by the PLO as a victory. Moreover, Sharon was fearful that, with the changing mood of the Israeli public towards greater criticism of the course of the operation, his strategy would begin to run into bigger problems and greater opposition and prevent him from pursuing his plan to the fullest, thereby embarrassing him and shattering his political career. Consequently, despite significant opposition within the government, Sharon authorized the intensification of bombardments of the city. The combination of the siege and massive bombardments forced the PLO to accept evacuation from Lebanon to Tunisia; the result was a vindication of Sharon and his strategy, most of which he had implemented without the government's authorization. Nevertheless, there could be no doubt that Israel's battlefield successes during the initial phases of the invasion were facilitated, if not altogether made possible, by the fact that Palestinian military forces had over the years become increasingly "regularized" in terms of both armaments and structure, at the same time as they had failed to acquire the firepower and levels of organization necessary for a regular army to be able to withstand the onslaught of an enemy far superior both numerically and technologically. As a result, Palestinian forces had lost the flexibility, mobility, and invisibility characteristic of guerilla forces. It was no surprise that the IDF's Chief of Staff at the time, Rafael Eitan, noted with satisfaction that the PLO was "going regular."¹⁸² Undoubtedly, and notwithstanding fierce resistance by the PLO in certain locales, Israel scored significant successes in the battlefield in the initial stages of the invasion. However, Sharon's announcement that 'Arafat and the PLO had been defeated, and that their

¹⁸² Sayigh, "Palestinian Military Performance in the 1982 War," 8.

defeat was “mainly political,” proved to be an overestimation of Israel’s overall achievements. The victory that Israel had allegedly achieved against the PLO would in the years following the ouster of the PLO from Lebanon prove to have been a pyrrhic one, based on an evaluation of developments against the political objectives of Operation Peace for the Galilee.

A day after the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, President Reagan unveiled his peace plan which was based on the Camp David Accords and presented an interpretation of it that conflicted with that advanced by Israel. While Israel hoped that the victory it achieved in Lebanon – however pyrrhic it was or would soon prove to be – would clear the way for the solidification of its control over the West Bank, Reagan’s proposal envisioned an outcome whereby most of the West Bank would be turned over to Jordan. The peace Reagan sought was therefore on the middle ground between two ends of the spectrum – a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and total Israeli annexation of the same – advocated, respectively, by the PLO and Israel. Yet while Israel’s insistence on the maintenance of its hold over the Palestinian territories it had occupied in 1967 was a hard-line position, the PLO’s acceptance of a Palestinian state in a fraction of pre-1948 Palestine was a genuine, even unwarranted compromise. For the PLO, the Reagan plan represented a blatant attempt at rolling back the resolutions of the Rabat Arab summit which had crowned the organization “the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” Israel’s uncompromising stance was a combination of irredentism and naked calculations of relative material power, for, not only had it crushed three Arab armies in 1967, it had also, thanks to the Camp David Accords, neutralized the largest and militarily most capable and resourceful Arab state among the confrontation states. Moreover, the main suggestions of the Reagan plan did not coincide with the Israeli reading of the nature and scale of its achievements against the PLO and Syria in Lebanon. Acceptance of the plan would have entailed abandonment of the project of

transforming the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into permanent fact and stripped Operation Peace for the Galilee of its *raison d'être*. For this reason, Israel rejected the Reagan plan out of hand, despite the plan's proposal of full Israeli sovereignty over an undivided Jerusalem, its rejection of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip let alone the return of *any* number of Palestinian refugees to their lands in Israel, and its acceptance of partial Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 – based on Israeli security interests – even in the context of peace treaties with the Arab states concerned (i.e. Jordan and Syria).¹⁸³

The Reagan plan was notable in its adoption of Allon's concept of "secure and defensible borders" – though not necessarily all its contents – which had been abandoned by Israel in favor of a massive settlement drive across the West Bank since the electoral victory of the Likud; it also had the hallmarks of a study prepared by Tel Aviv University's Centre for Strategic Studies titled "Autonomy and Possible Solutions", which recommended the incorporation of Palestinian areas of the West Bank into a confederal arrangement with Jordan, arguing that autonomy would eventually lay the groundwork for Palestinian independence in spite of Israeli opposition; the authors of the study argued that it was therefore preferable for Israel to accept a middle-ground arrangement before the wearing away of its military supremacy and the depletion of the favorable political situation that it found itself in.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Israel was firm in its stance on the Reagan plan; and while it continued to present its behavior under the rubric of attaining secure and defensible borders, its rejection of the plan was in effect an official admission of the abandonment of the defensible borders concept, the irrelevance of which was admitted to by Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon a year earlier in the undelivered lecture referred to earlier.

¹⁸³ Naseer H. Aruri and Fouad M. Moughrabi, "The Reagan Middle East Initiative," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1983): 10, 13.

¹⁸⁴ "Grappling with the Implications of Palestinian Autonomy," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 131.

3.4 Uprising in the Occupied Palestinian Territories: Enter Hamas

The "Inside" Resurgent

Since its founding, the PLO's main political weight derived chiefly from refugees. The 1967 war was a seminal moment in Palestinian politics; this was so for a number of reasons, some of which have thus far been enumerated. One crucial outcome of the war was that it altered the geographical boundaries of the Palestinian predicament. Whereas prior to 1967 the Palestinian people had been under the authority of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and a host of other Arab states, after the 1967 war the territorial disconnect between the Palestinians of the West Bank and those of the Gaza Strip, and between them and the Palestinian citizens of Israel, was done away with. Overnight, the Palestinian refugees living in neighboring Arab countries found themselves on the geographical fringes of the Palestinian struggle rather than at its center. The reallocation of boundaries thus transformed the Palestinian struggle from one focused almost exclusively on the dispossessed segments of Palestinian society (or the "outside" as they were commonly referred to), to one focused on both the dispossessed of the 1948 war as well as the occupied of the 1967 war (or what was known as the "inside").¹⁸⁵

The interests of the "outside" and the "inside" while complementing each other – in the sense that they both were a function of the Palestinian national struggle – nevertheless did not always coincide, and more often than not could not be accommodated simultaneously by the PLO, which despite its growing international stature, continued to grapple with the problem of limited resources. Thus, for a significant period of time, the leadership of the "outside" commanded greater weight within the PLO than did the leadership of the "inside." The latter was in fact limited in scope, in no small part due to the fact that between 1948 and

¹⁸⁵ Note that in this context the term "inside" refers to Palestinians residing in historic Palestine, i.e. *both* in Israel-proper and in the OPT, unlike the current usage which is reserved for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. For more on the inside-outside dichotomy that the PLO had to grapple with, see Meir Litvak, "Inside Versus Outside: The Challenge of the Local Leadership, 1967-1994," in Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz, op. cit., 171-195.

1967 the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had been under different authorities and after 1967 came under the direct military rule of Israel which sought to crush Palestinian nationalism by every means at its disposal. The 1982 war and the ensuing PLO evacuation from Beirut was a hollow victory for Israel precisely because it further advanced the prioritization, within the PLO, of the struggle of the "inside" over that of the "outside"; although the shift had begun to take shape in 1974, it was not until the paralysis of Palestinian refugee communities brought about by the destruction of Palestinian political-national infrastructure and institutions in the last sanctuary state, namely Lebanon, between 1982 and 1983 that the transformation assumed greater proportions.¹⁸⁶ If Israel's objective was the neutralization of the limited threat the PLO represented in its quest for the achievement of the agenda of the Palestinian "outside", it was successful. However, as demonstrated above, Israel considered the main threat emanating from the PLO to be its international stature which primarily effected the territories occupied in 1967, for, while there was international consensus on Israel's right to exist and to maintain its Jewish character, there was no such consensus on Israel's right to keep the territories it had occupied in 1967.

Between 1983 and 1987, the PLO entrenched itself deeper into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, relying primarily on grassroots mobilization due to the constraints of operating under heavy-handed Israeli rule which was even more brutal than that imposed by Begin's "dovish" predecessors. During this period, violent struggle in the OPT (albeit limited) went hand in hand with grassroots efforts to roll back the chokehold that the Village Leagues had over Palestinian life and nationalist expression and action. This required the discovery and neutralization of Israel's network of Palestinian collaborators and informants. This was achieved in large part by a massive campaign of "carrots and sticks" whereby collaborators

¹⁸⁶ The blow to the PLO came not only in the form of its ouster from Beirut in 1982, but also the Syrian-supported mutiny within Fateh that resulted in its ouster from the city of Tripoli in North Lebanon. Yezid Sayigh, "Struggle within, struggle without: the transformation of PLO politics since 1982," *International Affairs* 65, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 248, 255.

were given both incentives to abandon their activities, and threats if they failed to comply. The results of the campaign were evident by 1988, a year after the eruption of the first *Intifada* in December 1987. The Palestinian underground, led by the PLO, had succeeded in leaving Israel – as Salim Tamari describes it – “eyeless in Judea.”¹⁸⁷

The First Intifada

The first *Intifada*, a grassroots outburst against the occupation, caught Israeli decision-makers off-guard. This in turn, over time (especially after the first *Intifada*), gave rise to two simultaneous but conflicting perceptions revolving around the quest for security. On the one hand was the idea that political violence was unrelated to the predicament and aspirations of Palestinians in the territories and could even be externally-incited; this argument was usually accompanied by the unsubstantiated, even discredited, claim that appeasing Palestinian nationalists would have adverse effects on Israeli security, an argument that the Begin government advanced to discredit the allegedly placatory actions of its predecessors vis-à-vis Palestinians in the territories which it claimed had brought about the 1976 victory of the PLO in municipal elections. On the other hand was the argument that the violence was a symptom of a deeper problem which stemmed at least in part from Israel's hold over a large Arab population; during the first *Intifada* the problem was not identified expressly as the occupation, but there was a growing trend of public and political awareness of its impact on the safety and security of Israeli citizens. This awareness was accompanied by increased emphasis on the permissibility and even necessity of engaging the PLO in dialogue. Nevertheless, at least from the perspective of decision-makers, dialogue alone was not considered sufficient in quelling the uprising.

¹⁸⁷ Salim Tamari, “Eyeless in Judea: Israel's Strategy of Collaborators and Forgeries,” *Middle East Report* 164/165 (May-August 1990): 39-45.

The uprising, along with the apprehensions of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza about the military activities of its activist offshoot, namely the Islamic Jihad, and the increase in internal debate on the issue of participation in the struggle against occupation – with a growing number of young activists advocating involvement – necessitated a compromise between the reformist and revolutionary currents. The product of this compromise was the founding of the Islamic Resistance Movement-Hamas.¹⁸⁸ The emergence of the party altered the equation in the Palestinian arena. The PLO, feeling that Hamas presented a danger to its hegemony, leveled the accusation that Hamas was created by Israel in order to sabotage the uprising and weaken the PLO, reminding the Palestinian public that the Muslim Brotherhood had abstained from military struggle during the past three decades. While the accusation of abstention from military action was an accurate one, it was in large part the result of the party's difficult predicament under 'Abdel Nasser's rule which resulted in the restriction of its activities mostly to the sphere of social welfare. Israel for its own part, since its occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, had seen in the Muslim Brotherhood and its network of charitable institutions the opportunity both to lessen its own financial burden and later on attempt to undermine the PLO and challenge its political standing amongst the Palestinians.¹⁸⁹ Strategic a move as this was deemed to be by Israel, it soon proved to be a blunder brought about by strategic myopia, the effects of which would continue to be felt decades on. Indeed, more than anything, it was the unexpected rise of Hamas and soon thereafter its military wing, Kata'eb Izz al-Din al-Qassam, and the violent activities carried out by its members in the

¹⁸⁸ Within a few days of the start of the uprising, Hamas published a communiqué and less than a year later, in August 1988, a 36-article Charter detailing the party's position on various issues – political as well as social – in addition to its views of the PLO. For the full translated text of the charter, see Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, D.C: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2000), 267-291. The PLO was considered a brother organization only by virtue of its Palestinian belonging; its secular nature an ideology could not be adopted by Hamas as that would have meant the abandonment of the "Islamic nature of the Palestinian issue." Moreover, recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people is not addressed, and the overall tone of reference to the organization is critical though not outrightly hostile. Hroub, *Hamas*, 284.

¹⁸⁹ Are Knudsen, "Crescent and Sword: The Hamas Enigma," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 8 (2005): 1376.

OPT, especially the Gaza Strip, that would eventually push Israel into at first an uneasy co-existence with, and later on the propping up of, the PLO.

Although Israel viewed Hamas with much concern and was not particularly fond of the idea of opening up to the PLO, it would soon see the turn of events as less threatening than at first thought, for the PLO's edging closer towards a moderate stance which the world would point to in order to pressure Israel into a moderate position and possibly compromise, was offset by the rise of another and an even more threatening menace, namely Hamas, the violent activities of which would be utilized as justification for the continuation of the occupation, as well as the brutal military policies against and repression of the Palestinians. This twin policy of cooptation of some Palestinians and confrontation with others would in fact form the core of Israel's policy from the early nineties and onwards.

According to Efraim Inbar, the uprising was neither guerilla warfare nor a campaign of terror, but rather a "small war." From the perspective of Rabin, who was Minister of Defense at the time the uprising broke out, military superiority, although not sufficient, was nevertheless necessary for putting an end to the conflict. It was considered to be the means for the attainment of the best bargaining position possible for the inevitable transfer of the clashes from the streets to the negotiating table. In other words, military power was to be put to use against a virtually defenseless "enemy" for the sake of a set of political objectives. In effect, Israel's preferred policy was a "diplomacy of violence."¹⁹⁰ Rabin was aware of the political objectives of the uprising: the weakening of Israeli control over the OPT leading to its eventual withdrawal from it and the establishment of a Palestinian state there. In March 1988, a few months after the eruption of the *Intifada*, he referred to these objectives and the "violent civilian activity" that sought to achieve them as "no different from that of the Arab states in their wars against us... [the goal] is to push us out of the West Bank and the Gaza

¹⁹⁰ Inbar, *Israel's National Security*, 39-40.

Strip, and I am not sure whether it is only these territories from which the Palestinians want to push us.”¹⁹¹ Whether Rabin believed this fallacious and outlandish reasoning or it was a public relations feat on his part is unclear; however, what was more than clear was Israel’s stubborn dedication to maintaining the status quo in the OPT. As Inbar points out, Rabin’s “political goal was...to force the Arabs in the territories to forgo their aspiration for a separate Palestinian state.”¹⁹² In Rabin’s view, the PLO (which he referred to as the “so-called PLO”) was an organization set up by Arab states for the purpose of destroying Israel. As such, Rabin believed that the crux of the conflict was not the Palestinian struggle for liberation and statehood, but rather, Arab states’ quest to expunge Israel from their midst. The resolution of the Palestinian issue was therefore placed within the context of the resolution of the umbrella problem of Arab states’ enmity to the Jewish state. In a telling remark, Rabin declared that the Palestinian problem “is not the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict.”¹⁹³

Nevertheless, the increasing Palestinianization of the conflict, i.e. its transformation from an inter-state conflict to an Israeli-Palestinian one, apparent especially in the 1980s, did not escape Rabin’s attention, and in fact was a source of great worry to him. The negative Israeli attitude towards this transformation was paradoxical, for an interstate conflict naturally presented Israel with a greater security threat (and even an existential danger) than an Israeli-Palestinian conflict would. Outgunned and lacking resources at the disposal of Arab states, Palestinians would be no match for the immense military power and political resources at Israel’s fingertips. Rather than present Israel with graver security threats, the transformation rendered the conflict far more asymmetrical – in favor of Israel – than it already was. What this discomfort within the Israeli political and military establishment about the Palestinianization of the conflict demonstrates is the fact that Israel’s chief concern was not

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹² Ibid., 44.

¹⁹³ Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel's National Security* (Washington, D.C., The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1999), 24.

quite security-oriented, but rather, political and ideological. In light of the bitter failure in the 1973 war to defend the settlements established (as per the security-oriented Allon Plan) in the territories occupied in 1967, let alone utilize them as military assets, and the fact that Arab states and armies posed a far greater security threat to Israel than loosely organized and lightly armed Palestinian militias, Israel's concerns regarding the Palestinianization of the conflict and its stubborn attachment to the OPT could not be said to have been a function of any security interests.

According to then-Minister of Defense Rabin, the main Israeli concern with the emergence of the Palestinian element was the fact that the attempt to resolve the problem now necessitated negotiating with the PLO, an act that would bestow legitimacy upon the organization which Israel had shunned for decades.¹⁹⁴ Undoubtedly Israel felt uncomfortable negotiating with an organization it had, throughout the organization's existence, labeled a terrorist entity. Nonetheless, that this was the main reason Israel frowned upon the "Palestinianization" of the conflict is a dubious claim. A more likely explanation would be Israel's plans for the OPT; for, in the event that the PLO moderated its stances and accepted compromise – an eventuality that Israel attempted to force the PLO away from as early as 1982 – these plans would be rendered inapplicable due to an expected rise in international scrutiny and criticism of Israel's behavior, and pressure on it to, in turn, moderate its positions and accept a compromise solution. In contrast, the maintenance of the inter-state nature of the conflict – as one between Israel and the surrounding Arab states – would ensure not only that Israel could continue to portray itself as the outgunned David forced to face off against a mighty, resourceful Goliath, but also that it could negotiate with these states on the future of the OPT at the expense of the Palestinian people and their nationalist agenda. This

¹⁹⁴ This explanation was provided by Rabin in an article he authored in 1988. Ibid.

rigid outlook, however, proved to be out of tune with the reality on the ground, and unable to withstand the pace of developments.

In July 1988, King Hussein announced Jordan's legal and administrative disengagement from the West Bank, an announcement that caught both Israel and the PLO off guard. The PLO was suspicious that the initiative stemmed from the King's desire to place the organization in front of an impossible task – taking care of the West Bank population's needs – in order to make a mockery of the PLO's claim to being the "sole representative of the Palestinian people." Moreover, the PLO feared that the dismantlement of legal and administrative ties (as opposed to political ties, which the PLO wanted to sever) would bring about a vacuum in the West Bank thereby providing Israel with the opportunity to annex it.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, voices in Israel had already been demanding such action on the part of the government.

The Jordanian disengagement provided Prime Minister Shamir and his Likud bloc an electoral boost, for it fit in with his and the Likud's position that the OPT must not be returned to Arab sovereignty and dealt a blow to Shimon Peres' electoral platform which advocated a "land for peace" formula with Jordan. Nevertheless, despite its seemingly positive impact on the Shamir government's standing and the Likud's electoral prospects, the disengagement also served to – and according to Philip Robins was based, at least in part, on the desire to – sever the East Bank of the Jordan River from the West Bank so as to nip in the bud the "Jordan is Palestine" agenda which had gained popularity in Israel over the years (and received a fresh lease of life in the wake of the 1987 *Intifada*) and which advocated the "transfer" of the Palestinian population to Jordan and the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state there.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, the severance of administrative ties signaled the end of Jordan's payment of the salaries of tens of thousands of Palestinian civil servants in the West

¹⁹⁵ Philip Robins, "Shedding Half a Kingdom: Jordan's Dismantling of Ties with the West Bank," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 16, no. 2 (1989): 168, 172.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

Bank. Until then, the fact that these civil servants were on the Jordanian payroll had exempted Israel from the responsibility of providing for a significant portion of the Palestinian population of the West Bank.

The political gains Israelis – especially hawkish and right-wing policy-makers and advocates – perceived Israel had acquired from King Hussein's decision were offset by the additional economic burden which the country had until then avoided shouldering. Not only that, but any political gains in the form of an Arab state relinquishing its claim to the OPT were counterbalanced by the fact that the Jordanian decision rendered irrelevant the idea, proposed by the U.S. and Jordan, of Israel ceding areas of the West Bank with high Palestinian population concentration to Jordanian sovereignty while maintaining control over the rest of the West Bank as part of a peace agreement with Jordan. This placed Israel in front of a double-edged sword: permanent occupation or formal annexation. Moreover, given that the option for population "transfer" to the East Bank became a practical impossibility precisely thanks to the unraveling of ties between the East Bank and West Bank, any plans for formal annexation now had to take demographic realities into consideration. Thus, the only option Israel was left with short of accepting negotiations with the PLO, territorial compromise, and the establishment of a Palestinian state in all or part of the OPT, was the perpetuation of the occupation.

In view of Jordan's unilateral separation from the West Bank, and pressed by the need to face up to the challenges and vacuum stemming from it, in mid-November 1988 the PNC convened its nineteenth session in Algiers and in a clear challenge to Israeli hopes and expectations (of PLO intransigence) recognized UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as a basis for negotiations, and not only accepted the idea of a state in part of Palestine, but in fact proclaimed, on November 15, the establishment of a Palestinian state based on UN General Assembly Resolution 181. Although the PLO lacked *de facto* control over the land

on which it proclaimed the Palestinian state, the resolutions of the Algiers session and the declaration of independence marked a seminal moment in Palestinian politics and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israeli attempts to scuttle the significance of the moment by insisting that the resolutions of the PNC session in Algiers should be read between the lines (i.e. as an interim tactic for the eventual destruction of the Jewish state)¹⁹⁷, were met with a firm response by the PLO; the response came in the form of a press conference held by 'Arafat in Geneva a month after the declaration of independence, wherein he went even further than the Algiers session in the terminology he used. 'Arafat clearly acknowledged Israel's right to exist in peace and security, and renounced – as opposed to condemned or rejected – “totally and absolutely... all forms of terrorism.”¹⁹⁸ If there was any doubt about the sincerity of the PLO's declarations in November 1988, 'Arafat's December address dispelled it, thereby signalling to the U.S. that the PLO had satisfied all American conditions for dialogue; in this context, the declaration of independence was a symbolic assertion that the PLO was ready to lay the groundwork for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Having thus overcome Israeli hurdles (placed with American acquiescence) in the way of U.S.-PLO dialogue, the PLO turned a new chapter in its relations with the international community and effectively nullified Israeli attempts to prevent and reverse the Palestinianization of the conflict.

Shortly after the political developments of late 1988, in February and May 1989, two Israeli soldiers, Avi Sasportas and Ilan Sa'adon respectively, were captured and executed. The two incidents shaped the course of Hamas' evolution, for Israel responded to the two

¹⁹⁷ “Foreign Ministry Statement on the PNC Decisions, 15 November 1988,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/397%20Foreign%20Ministry%20Statement%20on%20the%20PNC%20Decision> (last accessed: December 2008).

¹⁹⁸ “Statement by Yasser Arafat,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 December 1988: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/419%20Statement%20by%20Yasser%20Arafat-%2014%20December%201988> (last accessed: December 2008).

incidents by arresting a number of Hamas leaders, including one of its founders and most influential figures Sheikh Ahmad Yassin. The crackdown paralyzed Hamas and created a leadership vacuum, resulting in a massive restructuring of the movement in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the transfer of decision-making powers abroad. Hence, for the first time since its emergence, Hamas was subject to decisions from *outside* the OPT.¹⁹⁹

3.5 The Peace Process

The Madrid Conference

In March 1991, shortly after the end of the Gulf War, President Bush spoke of the establishment of a "New World Order," promising the world and the peoples of the Middle East especially that it would be based on justice and fairness, protection of the weak from the strong, security cooperation, and advancement of the Arab-Israeli peace process.²⁰⁰ To this end, the Bush administration announced the convening of an international peace conference in Madrid sponsored jointly by the U.S and USSR that would gather under one roof Israeli and Arab leaders and representatives, and set the framework for future bilateral and multilateral negotiations between the parties to the conflict. The product of an intensive shuttle diplomacy on the part of the Americans, the Madrid Conference was held in the shadow of Israeli insistence on excluding not only the PLO, but any independent Palestinian delegation for that matter. Despite the increase in the PLO's international standing over the years, particularly in the wake of its acceptance of key UN resolutions and Israel's "right to exist", and its renunciation of "terrorism", Israeli reservations were duly accepted and Palestinians were limited to representation within a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

¹⁹⁹ Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 58-59. The most obvious impact of the creation of the inside-outside dynamic was the decision, influenced by the "outside", not to run in the 1996 elections. See Wendy Kristianasen, "Challenge and Counterchallenge: Hamas's Response to Oslo," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 27.

²⁰⁰ Richard K. Herrmann, "The Middle East and the New World Order: Rethinking U.S. Political Strategy After the Gulf War," *International Security* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1991): 42.

Moreover, one of Israel's conditions stipulated that the Palestinian members of the delegation could not have ties to the PLO. This, however, proved to be more difficult to ascertain and to Israel's dismay, the majority of the members of the delegation were linked to the PLO and in particular the Fateh. Thus, although the Madrid Conference, in imposing limits on Palestinian participation, dealt a blow to the PLO by withholding from it formal international recognition and taking away from its stature, Israel inadvertently found itself dealing, albeit indirectly, with the PLO. This was in stark contrast to Israel's position during the Geneva Peace Conference as discussed earlier in the chapter. For its own part, the PLO, as Osamah Khalil points out, accepted the idea of Palestinian representation under the auspices of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and began positioning itself within the Madrid framework,²⁰¹ a decision that was diametrically opposed to its claim and broader Palestinian belief that the Palestinian issue was central to, rather than a mere byproduct of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Israel's delegation to the Madrid Conference was headed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. Prior to his departure to attend the Conference, Shamir sent the U.S. Secretary of State a letter in which he highlighted Israel's positions on a number of key issues. Primary among his concerns was the issue of Palestinian self-determination. Shamir rejected the notion not only of an independent Palestinian state, but also of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation on the grounds that there was no difference between the two. Furthermore, Shamir conditioned his attendance on the basis that the status of Jerusalem was not negotiable and pointed out Israel's preference for the adoption of the components of the ill-fated May 17, 1983 agreement between Israel and Lebanon, which had been hatched under the shadow of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon.²⁰² In his address to the Conference, Shamir went a step further and defined the problem as an existential rather than a territorial one, insisting that emphasis (either primary or exclusive) on the territorial element was a recipe for impasse in

²⁰¹ Osamah Khalil, "Pax Americana: The United States, the Palestinians, and the Peace Process, 1948-2008," *The New Centennial Review* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 20-21.

²⁰² "The Madrid Peace Conference," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 124-125.

the talks.²⁰³ However, rather than being a newly formulated position, this was merely a continuation of Israel's policy of settlement of the Golan Heights and the OPT, and the formal annexation of the former. Indeed, according to *The New York Times*' Clyde Haberman's assessment, one of Israel's goals if not the primary one was "to avoid having to absorb the blame should the conference fall apart." Reporting two days prior to the convening of the Conference, Haberman pointed to Shamir's insistence that "he will never give up any territory captured in the 1967 war", arguing that "there is not the slightest reason to assume that he is merely posturing."²⁰⁴ Shamir's speech in Madrid and its emphasis on intangible parameters rather than tangible issues that could be negotiated, confirmed this assessment.

At the heart of Shamir's speech was Israel's decades-long claim that it merely sought guarantees for its continued existence and the security of the state; in time, these parameters had changed to include the personal safety and security of its citizens. The appropriate question was, what arrangements would guarantee Israel's existence, its security, and the safety of its citizens from external threats of any nature? Israel provided no official and clear answer to this question. The only question it provided a clear answer to was whether it would accept, or allow, the establishment of a Palestinian state or a Palestinian confederation with Jordan. This it categorically rejected. At the same time, its presentation of its security interests as primarily territorial ones – which did not contradict, but rather complemented, Shamir's rejection of the focus on territory in negotiations – was incompatible with the fact that security is a variable rather than a constant, a function of changing technologies, military capabilities, and geopolitical shifts. Given that it was unthinkable that a state would consider its security needs a constant guaranteed by (expanded) territorial boundaries, rather than a variable requiring an appropriate mixture of diplomacy and military capabilities, Israel's refusal to discuss the territorial dimensions of the conflict on the grounds that the "land for

²⁰³ *ibid.*, 131.

²⁰⁴ Clyde Haberman, "Israel's Anxiety," *The New York Times*, 28 October 1991, A12.

peace” formula would not resolve the conflict and parallel to it its contradictory fixation on the territories it had occupied would have appeared contradictory and even sinister, for it was a given that the expansion of Israel’s boundaries would not necessarily provide it security (as was demonstrated in 1973), nor would it necessarily alleviate its perceptions of threat. Moreover, as the peace treaty with Egypt had demonstrated, the contraction of Israel’s *de facto* boundaries as part of a peace agreement would not threaten the security of the state and the safety of its citizens, but would on the contrary safeguard it.

The Madrid Conference set the framework for bilateral negotiations between Israel and its three neighboring countries, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Nevertheless, these negotiations, held under the shadow of Shamir’s premiership and the mandate of his Right-Religious coalition government, failed to achieve a breakthrough. The election of Yitzhak Rabin as Prime Minister in June 1992, ending a six-year Labor drought and marking the return, for the first time since 1974, to a coalition government excluding the Israeli “Right” and “Center,”²⁰⁵ signaled the opening of a window of opportunity for the resumption of negotiations, especially that Rabin had won on a platform that advocated moving beyond peace talks towards actual peace-making, especially on the Palestinian track.²⁰⁶ Between August 1992 and early 1993, negotiations – which included a Palestinian delegation of negotiators from the West Bank, attached to the Jordanian delegation – were held under American auspices but failed to bear fruit. Wendy Pearlman argues that the failure was partly due to the obstructionist tactics employed by ‘Arafat, who felt that the West Bank delegation, despite maintaining constant touch with the PLO leadership in Tunisia and professing loyalty to it, threatened his monopoly on representing Palestinians. In contrast, Avi Shlaim argues

²⁰⁵ The coalition government comprised the left-leaning Labor and Meretz, and the Sephardic religious party Shas; the latter left the government in September 1993. For details, see “Factional and Government Make-Up of Thirteenth Knesset,” The Knesset: http://www.knesset.gov.il/history/eng/eng_hist13_s.htm (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁰⁶ Nevertheless, and contrary to Rabin’s platform promised an agreement on Palestinian autonomy rather than statehood. Avi Shlaim, “The Oslo Accord,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 27.

that it was the fact that Rabin's government represented continuity rather than change that led to the failure of the Washington talks.²⁰⁷ Indeed, Nabil Sha'ath, 'Arafat's close advisor and head of the coordinating committee of the Palestinian delegation to the talks in Washington, while not explicitly enumerating the reasons for the failure of the talks, echoed this argument, pointing out that the U.S model offered the Palestinians a "floating self-rule" with no territorial base and no real authority, and "made no mention of any end to the military government." In short, it did not differ from Shamir's formula of denying Palestinians a territorial base with the purpose of gaining time and cementing full Israeli control of the OPT.²⁰⁸

The tensions between Hamas and the PLO that were present since the founding of the former and which grew over the years, peaked during and after the Madrid Conference. As the PLO edged closer to Israel and Hamas remained firm in its opposition to negotiations, the stage was set not only for open conflict between the two, but also a change in Israeli policy characterized by the cooption of the PLO and crackdown on Hamas. The capture (from inside Israel-proper) and murder in December 1992 of an Israeli border guard, Nissim Toledano, with the express purpose of securing the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin who had been arrested in 1989, presented Israel not only with domestic pressure to retaliate (all the more acute given that Toledano had been captured in Israel rather than the OPT) but also with the opportunity to make a move. The move came in the form of the arrest of thousands of Hamas members or supporters, and the deportation of 415 Hamas political figures/activists to Marj al-Zuhur in South Lebanon, just north of the self-declared "security zone". Israel's justification for the deportation was that it was a necessary blow to the "strategy-setting

²⁰⁷ Avi Shlaim, "The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process," in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ssfc0005/The%20Rise%20and%20Fall%20of%20the%20Oslo%20Peace%20Process.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁰⁸ "The Oslo Agreement. An Interview with Nabil Shaath," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 23, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 5.

backbone” of the organization which not only had killed five Israeli soldiers in recent days, but allegedly also posed a threat to the peace process.²⁰⁹ Far from having a positive outcome, however, the deportation sparked outrage worldwide and was deemed by the deported Hamas activists as free and positive publicity of the cause they had been resisting for. Clearly, the Israeli quest to enhance its deterrence by the highly dramatic nature of its response had backfired. Not only did the deportation bring about criticism (not least of all from the U.S) of Israeli behavior resulting in the reversal of the decision and the erosion rather than enhancement of its deterrence, it also provided the deportees the opportunity to make contacts with both Hezbollah and Iran, the outcome of which was the movement’s edging closer to the latter and its learning, from the former, of new “tricks” that would later be put to use in the struggle against Israel. Indeed, Hamas’ claim of responsibility for a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv in October 1994 would come attached with a note of “thanks” to Rabin for having provided such an opportunity to rub shoulders with Hezbollah and learn from the tactics it had in the past used or continued to use against the Israeli occupation forces and the SLA in South Lebanon.²¹⁰

Oslo I and II

The impasse at Washington and the continuing and even escalating tensions in the OPT meant that Rabin could no longer hold out against the idea of engaging the PLO in dialogue, a position advocated by Minister of Foreign Affairs Peres and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yossi Beilin.²¹¹ Thus, the stage was set for the opening of direct (albeit secret) channels between Israel and the PLO, which took place in January 1993, a month after

²⁰⁹ Clyde Haberman, “Lebanese Deploy to Bar Entry of Palestinians,” *The New York Times*, 18 December 1992, A1, A12.

²¹⁰ Sarah Helm, “Tel Aviv Bombing: Hamas has learnt the lessons of Lebanon: Mass deportation of Palestinians has come back to haunt Israel,” *The Independent*, 20 October 1994: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/tel-aviv-bombing-hamas-has-learnt-the-lessons-of-lebanon-mass-deportation-of-palestinians-has-come-back-to-haunt-israel-1443929.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

²¹¹ Shlaim, “The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process.”

Rabin's annulment of a law prohibiting contact between Israeli citizens and the PLO.²¹² Secret negotiations got underway under Norwegian patronage in Oslo soon thereafter. According to Shlaim, a number of considerations contributed to Rabin's decision to accept the Oslo process and its outcome. First and foremost was the realization that the Syrian track required full territorial withdrawal from the Golan Heights, a possibility that was deemed too costly in every respect. It was therefore necessary to produce a suitable alternative that would serve as a distraction from Israel's refusal to offer Syria any meaningful compromises in return for peace and normalization of relations. Second, the neutralization of local Palestinian leadership in the Occupied Territories and 'Arafat's weak position offered Israel the best opportunity to strike a deal that would be immensely in its favor. Third, the increasing popularity of militant groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad alarmed Israeli military and security chiefs, as well as political leaders including Rabin, and underscored the need for a political solution to the conflict, one that would also salvage the PLO from imminent collapse in the face of growing Palestinian discontent with the situation in the OPT.²¹³

The secret negotiations in Oslo resulted in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Governing Arrangements (DOP, also referred to as Oslo I) which was signed by Israel and the PLO in the White House on September 13, 1993. The agreement was no doubt historic viewed in the context of the cycle of violence that had characterized the history of Zionist-Palestinian and later on Israeli-Palestinian relations. Nonetheless, the significance of the moment was largely symbolic and the fanfare associated with the signing of the accord disproportionate to the actual nature and scope of the agreement. To begin with, although the agreement was hailed as evidence of "mutual recognition", recognition of the right to self-determination and statehood was hardly mutual: whereas Yasser 'Arafat recognized Israel's right not only to exist but to do so in "peace and security", re-confirmed the PLO's

²¹² Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 508.

²¹³ Shlaim, "The Oslo Accord," 31-32.

acceptance of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, renounced “terrorism”, and promised the removal of the articles of Palestinian National Charter that contradicted with these commitments, Israel merely recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and accepted the launching of negotiations with it within the framework of the Middle East peace process. More important, however, was the fact that the DOP was, as Avi Shlaim notes, not a “full-blown agreement” but rather an agenda for further negotiations that would lead to a permanent settlement the contours of which were nevertheless left undefined.²¹⁴ The Palestinian side’s acceptance of such a vague and open-ended agreement was a clear departure from its consistent and firm refusal in the past to consider interim agreements that did not detail the specifics of the permanent settlement.

The first phase of four phases envisioned by the DOP was to be an agreement for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho in the West Bank. Such an agreement would have entailed an IDF redeployment in the Gaza Strip and withdrawal from Jericho. To that effect, a draft of the Gaza-Jericho agreement, known as the Cairo Agreement, was initiated by Israel and the PLO in February; nonetheless, agreement on security arrangements for Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and border crossings was delayed. On February 25, 1994, merely five months after the signing of the DOP, an Israeli settler by the name of Baruch Goldstein massacred dozens of Palestinian worshipers inside the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. The incident could not have come at a more sensitive moment in Israeli-Palestinian relations, and unsurprisingly heightened tensions and prompted clashes between Palestinians in the OPT and Israeli soldiers. The most important outcome of the massacre, however, was that it set the stage for large-scale and devastating retaliation attacks by Palestinians – primarily though not solely by Hamas – in the heart of Israel in the form of suicide bombings, a tactic that would be deployed especially during the second *Intifada*. The

²¹⁴ Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 516.

first such attack took place on April 6, 1994 in Afula, followed a week later by another attack in Hadera, causing dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries and sending shock waves throughout Israel. Undoubtedly, the massacre and the Palestinian retaliation hardened feelings on both sides and increased skepticism of the “peace process”, rendering it ever more fragile. The PLO’s position suffered as a result too; the organization found the “peace process” and its involvement in it increasingly untenable. Indeed, Hamas’ rejectionist stance had greatly increased its popularity at its expense, a development that sparked alarm within its ranks.

However, while the bloody developments caused a delay in negotiations they did not halt them; on May 4, 1994, less than a month after the deadly attacks in Afula and Hadera, Rabin and ‘Arafat signed the “Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area”, which officially established what the agreement referred to as the “Palestinian Authority” (hereafter PA): a 24-member body that would be entrusted running the affairs of the Palestinian population in Jericho and the areas of the Gaza Strip from which Israel was set to withdraw as delineated in the agreement. Crucially, the agreement maintained Israeli responsibility for “defense against external threats” – emanating from Egypt and Jordan – and for the “overall security of Israelis and settlements, for the purpose of safeguarding their internal security and public order.”²¹⁵ This meant the maintenance of effective control over land crossings, airspace and territorial waters. Israel also reserved the right to enter and operate in the areas it was withdrawing from as it saw fit. Not only that, but the number of Palestinian policemen, their locations of deployment, and their capabilities were all subject to Israeli control and approval. Thus, what was marketed as a “self-rule” agreement was in fact an extremely limited form thereof, restricting Palestinians to certain tasks to be performed, in effect, on

²¹⁵ See “Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Agreement+on+Gaza+Strip+and+Jericho+Area.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

behalf of Israel, relieving the latter of the burden of managing the internal affairs of Palestinians without actually ceding control over them.

As Avi Shlaim points out, the significance of the DOP was that it broke the taboo of Arab recognition of Israel and normalization of ties with it.²¹⁶ The fact that the PLO, the recognized “sole” representative of the Palestinian people, had conducted negotiations with Israel and established relations with it meant that Arab states, which had until then (with the exception of Egypt) refrained from recognizing Israel whether out of a sense of solidarity with the Palestinian people or based on internal political calculations and pressures, or a combination of both, could no longer be expected to refrain from negotiating with Israel or establishing diplomatic or economic relations with it. Consequently, the DOP set the stage for Arab states’ opening-up to Israel and culminated in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty in October 1994.

The “Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip”, also known as Oslo II, was signed in Washington, D.C. on September 28, 1995. It divided the West Bank into three areas.²¹⁷ Palestinians were to assume control over, and responsibility for public order and internal security in, Area A, which comprised the major cities and towns of the West Bank (Ramallah, Nablus, Jericho, Jenin, Bethlehem, Hebron, Tulkarm, Qalqilya) making up approximately three percent of the surface area of the West Bank. Area B was a likewise non-contiguous area covering Palestinian villages scattered throughout the West Bank, making up a total of twenty-seven percent of the West Bank. Palestinians were to assume responsibility over the maintenance of public order but not security, which was designated the prerogative

²¹⁶ Shlaim, “The Rise and Fall of the Oslo Peace Process.”

²¹⁷ For the map of the West Bank after Oslo II, see “Oslo II, 1995,” Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs: http://www.passia.org/palestine_facts/MAPS/Oslo-2.html (last accessed: December 2008).

of Israel, “for the purpose of protecting Israelis and confronting the threat of terrorism.”²¹⁸ In contrast, Area C was a contiguous area covering approximately seventy percent of the West Bank; it included Israeli settlements, military zones and expropriated “state” lands, and was to remain under direct Israeli rule.²¹⁹

Both Oslo I and Oslo II were deftly designed to skirt the core issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: the status of Israeli settlements in the OPT, the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian-refugees’ Right of Return, and the borders of the State of Israel, and by extension, the shape of the final settlement that would supposedly put an end to the conflict. Indeed, the policy guidelines document issued by the supposedly “dovish” coalition government headed by Prime Minister Rabin (which notably excluded both centrist and right-wing parties) made no reference to any of these issues with the exception of Jerusalem, which not unlike its predecessors it consecrated “the eternal capital of Israel” to “remain united and totally under Israel sovereignty.”²²⁰ The guidelines merely advocated “self-administration” for the Palestinians in the OPT; although they specifically noted that this was to be an “interim arrangement”, they did not offer any clue about the features of the final settlement as envisaged by the government. As John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt point out, the architect of the Oslo Accords, namely Rabin, was mistakenly believed to have “been willing to allow the Palestinians to have a viable state in almost all of the Occupied Territories.” They go on to note that

“Rabin in fact opposed creating a full-fledged Palestinian state. Speaking in 1995, the year he was murdered, Rabin said, ‘I seek peaceful coexistence between Israel as a

²¹⁸ “The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/THE+ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN+INTERIM+AGREEMENT.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²¹⁹ Mouin Rabbani, “Palestinian Authority, Israeli Rule: From Transitional to Permanent Arrangement,” *Middle East Report* 201 (October-December 1996): 4.

²²⁰ “Basic Policy Guidelines of the 25th Government, 13 July 1992,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Previous+governments/2+Basic+Policy+Guidelines+of+the+25th+Government-.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

Jewish state, not all over the land of Israel, or most of it; its capital, the united Jerusalem; its security border with Jordan rebuilt; next to it, *a Palestinian entity, less than a state, that runs the life of Palestinians...* This is my goal, not to return to the pre-Six Day War lines but to create two entities, a separation between Israel and the Palestinians who reside in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.”²²¹

Less than a month after his speech at the Knesset for the ratification of Oslo II, Rabin was assassinated by a gunman during a rally in Tel Aviv in support of the Oslo Accords. The assassination did not fundamentally alter the course of Israeli-Palestinian relations, in no small part thanks to the smooth transition to a government headed by Shimon Peres. The new government was formed on November 22, 1995, a mere eighteen days following the assassination; its policy guidelines were essentially identical to those of the Rabin government, signaling continuity rather than change. Nonetheless, and despite the fact that the sympathetic public atmosphere in the country would have allowed him to conduct policy in the footsteps of Rabin, Peres opted to call for early elections, a strategic mistake that led to the rise of Likud’s Benjamin Netanyahu.

The 1996 elections were critical not only because they were essentially a referendum on the peace process, but also because it was the first time that a two-ballot system – one for the election of Members of the Knesset and another for the election of a Prime Minister – was being implemented. The system, according to Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, was “intended to strengthen the premiership by diminishing its dependence on the bargaining required to form government coalitions.”²²² Nonetheless, the experiment proved to be a failure, as it led to even greater factionalization, forcing the Prime Minister to put together a cabinet

²²¹ Emphasis added. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 97. See also “Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin: Ratification of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 October 1995: http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1995/10/PM+Rabin+in+Knesset+Ratification+of+Interim+Agree.htm (last accessed: December 2008).

²²² Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, “Israel’s 1996 Elections: A Second Political Earthquake?,” *The Middle East Journal* 50, no. 4 (Autumn 1996): 529.

comprising an even greater number of parties; as a result, instead of enjoying a larger margin of maneuver, the Prime Minister was forced to juggle between the demands of the various parties within his coalition government. Indeed, as Charles D. Freilich notes, “[g]overnance is...a nearly all-consuming exercise in coalition management, including ongoing maneuvering and ideological compromise, in an attempt to keep the coalition together.”²²³ Freilich further notes that “[m]aintaining the coalition often becomes an end in itself...Coalition politics lead to a marked propensity for the cabinet to act as a forum for ironing out the differences dividing its coalition components... rather than as an executive body.” This, he argues, along with “the breakdown in the ‘national consensus’ since 1967, on even the most fundamental issues” impedes the “government’s ability to adopt decisive and more far-reaching policies.”²²⁴ It is in this context that many of Israel’s decisions (and just as importantly, indecisions) and contradictory policies need to be placed.

Netanyahu’s victory in the 1996 elections, albeit by a narrow margin, was not without its reasons; in fact, it was thanks to Israeli policies and military actions undertaken by the Peres government and with Peres’s personal approval – on both the Lebanese and Palestinian fronts, especially the latter – that Netanyahu was able to bridge the wide gap between himself and Peres in terms of public support, which the latter had been able to build up in the wake of the assassination of Rabin. Inspired by the desire to prove his security credentials, Peres ordered not only the assassination of a prominent Hamas military figure and bombs expert Yehya ‘Ayyash in January 1996, but also the launching of a large-scale attack on Lebanon in April 1996. Both would result in a devastating blow to Israel, the first in the form of three suicide bombings in the span of ten days, and the latter in the form of a ceasefire and a written understanding on new rules of engagement favorable to Hezbollah. The assassination of ‘Ayyash was not the first and would not be the last of its kind, for it derived from the

²²³ Charles D. Freilich, “National Security Decision-Making in Israel: Processes, Pathologies, and Strengths,” *The Middle East Journal* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 639.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 646.

Israeli belief – among both the political and military elites as well as the public – that the assassination of resistance figures would deal a blow to resistance movements they would not be able to recover from, or at the very least reduce or altogether eliminate their willingness to continue the struggle.

Despite the negative consequences of the assassination for Israel, it nevertheless also provided it with benefits; in the immediate aftermath of Hamas' retaliatory suicide bombings, an anti-terrorism summit dubbed "Summit of Peacemakers" was convened in Sharm el-Sheikh and attended by thirty-one countries including Arab states, Israel, and the U.S (with the notable exception of Syria, Lebanon, and Libya). The summit, as Azzam Tamimi argues, was akin to a declaration of war on Hamas.²²⁵ It was followed promptly by a joint Israeli-PA crackdown on the movement, characterized primarily by mass-arrests, including ones carried out by the PA.²²⁶ The crackdown by the PA was inspired at least in part by the PLO's competition with Hamas for popularity amongst and domination over the Palestinians of the OPT. In contrast, and despite its opposition to the Oslo process and its derivatives, Hamas had not resorted to physical violence against the PA although it had expressed hostility to it in numerous statements. Arguably, the main reason for such a decision was the fact that at the onset the peace process received popular support and approval and was greeted with optimism by the majority of Palestinians in the OPT. In confronting the PA militarily, Hamas would have risked not only violent intervention by Israel in support of the PA, but also and more importantly near-total marginalization and accusations of harming Palestinian national interests and serving Israeli interests which the movement was already familiar with. In fact, in an interview in 1994, Hamas spokesman Mahmud Zahhar had insisted that the party would "use all possible means not to yield to provocation...our people must be convinced that

²²⁵ Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within* (Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2007), 102. For the statement issued at the summit, see "Documents and Source Material," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 137.

²²⁶ Serge Schmemmann, "Arafat's Police Hunt Bombers, Pushed Hard by Israelis," *The New York Times*, 28 February 1996, A3.

Hamas has controlled itself beyond the limits of the possible...our self-control is therefore not a sign of weakness. Civil war is a “red line” for Hamas that cannot be crossed at any price.”²²⁷ Paradoxically, it was this very “red line” that Hamas had drawn that encouraged the PA to continue with its campaign of repression, with the full knowledge that the movement would not retaliate. The objective was to gradually weaken and “choke” Hamas and strip it of its popular support. This entailed a crackdown not only on the military wing but also the social welfare institutions of the movement, as well as the Islamic University in Gaza, a Hamas stronghold. The 1996 tensions would be repeated nearly a decade later – as will be seen at the end of this section – albeit under different circumstances. In both cases, the main factor that led to the tensions was, arguably, the very fact that Hamas had announced its unwillingness to engage in a civil war.

Whereas the Rabin and Peres governments had not been explicit about their intent vis-à-vis Palestinian statehood and the future of the OPT, let alone the question of the Right of Return, the Netanyahu government was. The policy guidelines of the twenty-seventh government referred explicitly to the question of Palestinian statehood and the Right of Return, outrightly rejecting both:

“The Government of Israel will propose to the Palestinians an arrangement whereby they will be able to conduct their lives freely within the framework of self-government. The Government will oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state or any foreign sovereignty west of the Jordan River, and will oppose ‘the right of return’ of Arab populations to any part of the Land of Israel west of the Jordan River.”²²⁸

Netanyahu had elaborated his vision for the OPT and his views on the peace process in even more explicit terms during an interview on Galatz (the IDF radio station) twenty-five days

²²⁷ “Hamas: Waiting for Secular Nationalism to Self-Destruct. An Interview with Mahmud Zahhar,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1995): 86.

²²⁸ “Guidelines of the Government of Israel-June 1996,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Previous+governments/Guidelines+of+the+Government+of+Israel+-+June+1996.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

before the legislative and Prime Ministerial elections. Responding to a question about the compatibility of the expansion of settlements with the Oslo Accords, he pointed out that the Oslo Accords were “bad agreements” which were “forced on [Israel].” Asked whether he intended to establish new settlements in the event of his electoral victory, he answered in the affirmative, identifying “security and settlement areas” which were “in open and arid areas...[which are] completely empty.” Paradoxically, despite his opposition to the Oslo Accords, Netanyahu’s interview on Galatz demonstrates his keen awareness of the Accords’ legal loopholes, which would have allowed Israel to present new proposals during permanent settlement negotiations with total disregard for the content of the agreements reached with the Palestinians during the interim period. Netanyahu’s closing remarks in the interview were to the effect that it is not words written in an agreement that are important, but rather facts on the ground.²²⁹ Even more significant were Netanyahu’s remarks in another interview with him conducted on May 10, 1996 by the *Jerusalem Post*, to the effect that “whatever the Palestinian entity is, it should not have powers which could endanger our security and our survival.” What these powers were, remained undefined. Nonetheless, Netanyahu clearly defined what he considered a “fair deal”: allowing the Palestinians to “run their lives, but not endanger [Israelis’ lives].”²³⁰ Thus, for Netanyahu, not only would security not necessarily be the outcome of peace, but the mere presence of security – for Israel alone – would entail peace, a conception echoed in his electoral victory address on June 2, 1996.²³¹ Hence, Netanyahu’s electoral promise was the attainment of a “secure peace.” In fact, as Arye Naor notes, Netanyahu was careful not to express opposition to peace per se, but to voice his criticism of the Oslo Accords in terms of the manner in which peace was sought. Peace, according to Netanyahu, would be achieved only through the building and strengthening of

²²⁹ “Documents and Source Material,” op. cit., 148.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 149.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

the Jabotinskian Iron Wall and Arab despair resulting from the inability to penetrate it.²³² Nonetheless, as Netanyahu came to realize, the build-up, projection, and even utilization of military power alone could not ensure that outcome; it was from this realization that his “economic peace” plan would emerge. Furthermore, Netanyahu looked at the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip through two different lenses, and advocated separate policies vis-à-vis each.²³³

The Oslo process, the subsequent security and political developments in Israel and the OPT, the continuing expansion of settlements, and the apparent subservience of the Palestinian Authority to the Israeli occupation authorities and its submission to Israeli political will, led to a decline in Palestinian public support for the Oslo Accords and a simultaneous growth in support for parties and movements that had steadfastly remained outside the Oslo framework. Nonetheless, the damage had been done; as Mouin Rabbani notes, Oslo II had “formalized the fragmentation of the occupied territories into zones of Palestinian and Jewish settlement and the atomization of Palestinian society.”²³⁴ Despite his opposition to the Oslo Accords, Netanyahu had inherited a West Bank that was much easier – and just as importantly, less costly – to control. However, the enclavization of the West Bank and the apparent and even avowed disinterest of successive Israeli governments in recognizing Palestinians’ right to statehood let alone accepting to make it possible, made no dent in the Palestinian Authority’s subservience to the Israeli authorities.

The “Tunnel Uprising”, Hebron Protocol, and Wye River Memorandum

The September 1996 “uprising”, sparked by Israel’s opening of a tunnel underneath the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem, leaving more than fifty Palestinians and

²³² Arye Naor, “Hawks’ Beaks, Doves’ Feathers: Likud Prime Ministers Between Ideology and Reality,” *Israel Studies* 10, no. 3: 177.

²³³ Laura Drake, “A Netanyahu Primer,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1996): 60.

²³⁴ Rabbani, op. cit., 4.

more than a dozen Israeli soldiers dead and saw the spontaneous participation of some Palestinian Authority security personnel alongside Palestinian civilians in clashes against Israeli forces, alarmed the United States and underscored the need for quick action to salvage the peace process. As Lamis Andoni points out, it was this sense of urgency that produced the “Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron” (also known as the “Hebron Protocol”) of January 1997.²³⁵ Although Israeli redeployment in Hebron had been slated for March 1996, the three successive suicide bombings by Hamas in February and March of the same year had provided Israel with the opportunity to postpone redeployment to an undetermined date. Paradoxically, the Likud victory at the polls meant that the burden of redeployment from the city, known to Jews as the “City of the Patriarchs”, would have to be shouldered by Netanyahu’s right-wing/religious coalition government. Hailed by many Palestinians as signaling the “liberation” of the city from the yoke of direct Israeli control and the daily provocations and excesses of militant Jewish settlers, the agreement nevertheless did not entail redeployment *from* Hebron but rather *in* Hebron, and divided the city into two (known as H-1 and H-2) in tune with Israel’s policy of “separation” between Palestinian population centers and Jewish settlements which had been at the core of Oslo II, cementing Israel’s foothold in and legitimizing its control over nearly twenty percent of Hebron – including its Old City and the Ibrahimi Mosque – on behalf of Jewish settlers who did not make up more than 0.4% of the population of the city.²³⁶

Despite his willingness to sign the Hebron Protocol and the agreement’s overwhelming bias in favor of Israeli interests, Netanyahu failed to implement the specified redeployments. The failure to do so was a continuation of Israel’s unwillingness, rather than a break from its willingness, to implement the agreements it had put its signature on. Indeed,

²³⁵ Lamis Andoni, “Redefining Oslo: Negotiating the Hebron Protocol,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 18.

²³⁶ For more about the Hebron Protocol and a critical reading thereof, see Edward W. Sa’id, “The Real Meaning of the Hebron Agreement,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 26, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 31-36.

merely five months after the signing of the Hebron Protocol, Netanyahu leaked his “secret” map depicting his vision for the West Bank.²³⁷ The map was appropriately dubbed “Allon Plus”, for it was inspired by the Allon Plan and expanded on it. If implemented, “Allon Plus” would have divided the West Bank into at least four enclaves which themselves would have been criss-crossed by Israeli roads; although some of these enclaves would have been connected to each other by “corridors” passing through what would have become Israeli territory, the territorial non-contiguity of the Palestinian areas would have rendered the idea of a genuinely independent and, more importantly, *viable* Palestinian state an impossibility, for Palestinian movement would have been severely hampered and subject to Israeli whims; moreover, the annexation of the entire western strip of the West Bank (with the exception of two large Palestinian towns, namely Qalqilya and Tulkarm) overlying the western mountain aquifer that feeds Israel’s coastal aquifer would have meant that Palestinians would lose control over much of their water resources, which in turn would have impacted their ability to establish a viable, let alone prosperous economy. Israel’s interests in the western sector of the West Bank could better be explained by looking at its water consumption trends and needs, as well as the hydrological map of the West Bank; a study conducted by the International Development Research Center reveals that “70% of the groundwater on which Israel is dependent, and more than 40% of its sustainable annual fresh water supply, originate in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, mainly in its aquifers.” This, combined with the fact that more than 90 percent of the recharge source of the Mountain aquifer within the Green Line

²³⁷See “Netanyahu’s ‘Allon Plus’ Final Status Map,” Foundation for Middle East Peace: <http://www.fmep.org/maps/redeployment-final-status-options/netanyahus-allon-plus-final-status-map-nov-1995> (last accessed: December 2008). For an analysis of the map and the timing of the leak, see “Netanyahu Presents His ‘Allon-Plus’ Final Status Map,” *Settlement Report* 7, no. 4, Foundation for Middle East Peace, July-August 1997: <http://www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-7/no.-4/netanyahu-presents-his-allon-plus-final-status-map> (last accessed: December 2008).

is inside the West Bank, has rendered these water sources, and consequently sovereignty over the land overlying them, a strategic goal.²³⁸

On September 25, 1997, Israeli assassins struck again; this time, the assassination attempt was on the life of the head of the Hamas politburo in Amman, Jordan, Khaled Mesh'al. What was intended to be a clean operation leading to the mysterious illness and death of Mesh'al turned into a major embarrassment both for the Mossad and Netanyahu himself and exacted a heavy price, not least of all in its symbolic value, from Israel. The Jordanian price tag for the violation of its sovereignty and security was the release of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin who had been imprisoned since 1989, along with a number of other prisoners. Instead of sending a clear albeit silent message to Hamas to deter the movement from carrying out further suicide bombings, Israeli deterrence had been eroded. More importantly, once again, Israel seemed to be oblivious to the fact that the assassination of those opposed to and resisting its agenda would not necessarily serve as deterrence, that it had in reality proven to provide even more motivation for resistance.²³⁹ Indeed, Israeli policymakers as well as the public appeared to be especially fond of the symbolism of such assassinations, for they often lacked strategic logic; paradoxically, the release of Sheikh Yassin following the failed assassination of Mesh'al was just as symbolic as Mesh'al's assassination was expected to be.

Netanyahu's refusal to implement the Hebron Protocol necessitated the formulation of another agreement specifying the timeline of redeployment. Signed in Washington, D.C. in October 1998, the agreement – known as the Wye River Memorandum – went beyond providing a mere timeline for Israeli withdrawal; it placed significant burdens – in the form of security responsibilities – on the shoulders of the Palestinian Authority. Thus, according to the memorandum, Israeli obligations were to be a function of the Palestinian Authority's willingness and capability to implement its security responsibilities, which included the

²³⁸ Stephen C. Lonergan and David B. Brooks, *Watershed: The Role of Fresh Water in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Ottawa: IDRC, 1994): <http://www.idrc.ca/openebooks/719-1/> (last accessed: December 2008).

²³⁹ For more on the Mesh'al affair and its repercussions, see Tamimi, *op. cit.*, 99-118.

“combat[ing] of terrorist organizations and their infrastructure.”²⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Palestinian side’s implementation of its responsibilities was to be subject to scrutiny, whereas no such measure was required for Israel’s obligations. The fact that Israel’s obligations were contingent on the positive evaluation of the PA’s performance meant that Israel could indefinitely postpone their implementation by pointing to the PA’s failures in abiding by all its responsibilities. Not only were these conditions politically degrading to the PA and, by extension, to the PLO, they were also paradoxical, for at the same time as they demanded that the PA prevent “terrorist” activities, Israel continued to impose restrictions on the deployment of PA forces and the equipment and capabilities at their disposal. Indeed, insofar as Israel was unwilling to part with, or allow for Palestinian national sovereignty over, *any* part of the OPT, it had a vested interest in limiting the already-limited ability of the Palestinian Authority to effectively combat armed resistance against Israeli occupation. Moreover, the outcomes demanded by the agreement were paradoxical, given the fact that even Israel, with its powerful military and intelligence apparatus, had been incapable of preventing suicide bombings and putting an end to armed resistance to the occupation – in fact, Netanyahu’s own term as Prime Minister would see three suicide bombings and a number of other deadly attacks. Thus, despite the memorandum’s claim to “reciprocity”, there was hardly anything reciprocal about the responsibilities outlined in it. Even more significant was the fact that, as Naseer Aruri points out, the agreement recognized “Israel’s territorial needs and security requirements ... as intertwined”, an unprecedented achievement for Israel and a severe setback for the Palestinian liberation movement.²⁴¹ Conveniently alleging Palestinian non-compliance, Netanyahu refused to carry out Israel’s obligations as

²⁴⁰ “The Wye River Memorandum,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/exeres/EE54A289-8F0A-4CDC-93C9-71BD631109AB.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁴¹ Naseer H. Aruri, “The Wye Memorandum: Netanyahu’s Oslo and Unreciprocal Reciprocity,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 2 (Winter 1999): 20.

set out in the memorandum, leading to its failure.²⁴² At the same time, the Wye River Memorandum indirectly resulted, owing in no small part to pressure on Jordan by the PA, in the eviction of Hamas from Jordan where it had been based, and the movement's gradual shift towards Syria. In effect, Israeli policy and PLO hostility to Hamas had provided Syria with a golden opportunity to take Hamas under its wings, thereby providing it with more bargaining chips against Israel.

The failure of the Wye River Memorandum was followed by (but did not necessarily single-handedly cause) the failure of Netanyahu's re-election bid against Labor Party's Ehud Barak. Disappointed by Netanyahu's overall record (not least of all his performance on the Palestinian track) and lured by Barak's promise of withdrawal from South Lebanon, his centrist position on the peace process, his military credentials, and his promises on domestic issues, the Israeli electorate chose Ehud Barak as Prime Minister and handed him the mandate to form a government.²⁴³ If the make-up of Barak's coalition government was any indication, little change in Israeli attitudes and policy on the Palestinian front was to be expected in the wake of the changeover from a Likud-headed coalition government to a Labor-headed one. Moreover, as the Beilin-Eitan Agreement of January 1997 had demonstrated, when it came to Palestinian aspirations for statehood and the status of the OPT, there was consensus between Israel's two main parties.²⁴⁴

²⁴² According to Saul Zadka, Netanyahu's refusal to implement the memorandum stemmed from domestic/party politics considerations, namely his desire to appease the hawkish members of his party. See Saul Zadka, "Israel's New Agenda: Reflections on the 1999 Elections," *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 4 (1999): 468.

²⁴³ For more on the Israeli elections of 1999, see Don Peretz and Gideon Doron, "Sectarian Politics and the Peace Process: The 1999 Israel Elections," *The Middle East Journal* 54, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 259-273. Also see Michael Warschawski, "Reflections on the Recent Elections," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 58-65.

²⁴⁴ For the text of the Beilin-Eitan Agreement, see "National Agreement Regarding the Negotiations on the Permanent Settlement with the Palestinians," The Knesset: http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/bei-eit_eng.htm (last accessed: December 2008).

3.6 The Camp David Summit and the Second Intifada

The failure of the Wye River Memorandum itself gave rise to another agreement. Signed in September 1999 by Prime Minister Ehud Barak, the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum introduced little improvement and reiterated Palestinians' responsibilities as per the Wye Memorandum. Due to the delay in the implementation of all the aforementioned agreements and memoranda, negotiations for a final status agreement, which were slated take place no later than five years after the establishment of interim Palestinian self-government, had been placed in doubt. As a result, in tandem with the push for further practical steps on the ground, the Clinton administration pressured the two sides to reach a permanent status agreement. To this end, President Clinton invited Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO and PA Chairman Yasser 'Arafat to Camp David for a duration of two weeks in July 2000, during which intensive negotiations took place to arrive to a solution acceptable to both parties. Although much hope had been pinned on the summit, the outcome was a failure and the collapse of the peace process that had started at Oslo but which would not have been possible if not for the significant concessions offered by the PLO since at least 1988.

The end of the summit was followed by public speculation about the causes of its failure; however, due to the fact that Israel had refused to have any of the details of the negotiations recorded and moreover had largely phrased its positions vaguely, no concrete information could be provided as to who was to blame and whether Israel had presented a reasonable solution which the Palestinian side could accept. Israel, taking advantage of the lack of documentation, insisted that the blame for the failure fell squarely on 'Arafat's shoulders, for he had allegedly turned down what Barak referred to as his "generous offer". According to the Israeli version, Barak's generous offer comprised more than 90 percent of the West Bank in addition to the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, shared control over the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary in the Old City of Jerusalem, and

withdrawal from a significant number of Jewish settlements.²⁴⁵ The absence of a map depicting the “generous offer” and Dennis Ross’s (head of the U.S negotiating team) account which seemed to corroborate Barak’s claims and accuse ‘Arafat of inflexibility, made it virtually impossible for Palestinians to convincingly argue and defend their case in the court of world public opinion. Nonetheless, shortly after the summit, the Palestinian delegation published a map of the Israeli offer, showing the areas of the West Bank to be handed over to Palestinian sovereignty divided into three enclaves by areas to be permanently annexed to Israel as well as by areas to be leased by Israel on a long term. Furthermore, the map showed East Jerusalem as falling under Israeli sovereignty with the exception of “islands” of Palestinian neighborhoods with no territorial contiguity with the Old City.²⁴⁶

Although it did not take long for insider testimonies challenging the Israeli version to appear, the Israeli version remained dominant – in no small part thanks to the intensive public relations campaign waged by the Israeli government and its representatives worldwide – until August 2003, when, in an interview with the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot*, Barak as a result of coming under intense criticism from right-wing opponents, debunked the myth he himself had created in 2000 and perpetuated ever since. In response to his critics’ claims that he had given away “everything”, Barak said:

“Here's the truth: Barak did not give away a thing. I did not give away a thing. I made clear and I am proud of it that in exchange for an end to the conflict and giving up the right of return, 80 percent of the settlers under Israeli sovereignty, recognition of the

²⁴⁵ Jeremy Pressman, “Visions in Collision: What Happened at Camp David and Taba?”, *International Security* 28, no. 2 (Autumn 2003): 5.

²⁴⁶ PLO Negotiations Affairs Department: <http://www.nad-plo.org/maps/camp/pdf/campdavid.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008). The map was by no means the only one purporting to depict Barak’s “generous offer.” Other versions depicted the Jordan Valley under long-term Israeli control, enclavizing Jericho and separating it from three other Palestinian enclaves in the West Bank.

security needs of Israel and of Israel's affinity to the holy places, we will be ready for painful, defined concessions that lead to a Palestinian state.”²⁴⁷

Thus, three years after the Camp David summit, and after a vicious campaign of defamation against ‘Arafat, Israel’s former Prime Minister had in effect admitted that it was the very fact that he had “not given away a thing” that ‘Arafat had refused the “offer”. In fact, the “defined concessions” that would have, according to Barak, led to a Palestinian state, would have produced a fragmented and non-viable Palestinian entity cut off from Jerusalem, suffering a scarcity of natural resources – most importantly water – and having no right to assert control over its airspace or to establish a military to guarantee its security from any external threats, existential or otherwise.

Preceding the Camp David negotiations was Israel’s hasty withdrawal from South Lebanon. Thus, what had been intended to appear as a unilateral move on Israel’s part appeared and was widely perceived (not without reason) to be a hasty, unplanned withdrawal in the face of Hezbollah’s military advance deeper into the “security zone”. The success of the Lebanese armed resistance in liberating South Lebanon from an occupation that had lasted for twenty-two years was an historic achievement, for it was the first time in the Arab-Israeli conflict that the Arab side had scored a military victory against the seemingly invincible Israeli army, forcing it to unconditionally withdraw from territories it had occupied. To the Palestinians living under occupation, this success, complemented by the failure of the diplomatic option, seemed to confirm that the most (if not the only) effective method for obtaining their freedom and rights was armed struggle. Hence, the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and arguably just as importantly the manner in which it was carried out, inspired the Palestinians in the OPT to pursue violent struggle in their quest for what the peace process had failed to achieve.

²⁴⁷ “Ehud Barak on Camp David: ‘I Did Not Give Away a Thing’”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 2003): 86.

The spark that lit the fires of the second *Intifada* (which became known as *Intifadat al-Aqsa* in reference to al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem) was the September 2000 visit to the Temple Mount of then-opposition leader Ariel Sharon, whom Palestinians widely viewed as responsible for the 1982 massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Initially in the form of rioting and low-level clashes, the uprising soon spiraled out of control and took on a more violent nature. What especially contributed to the deterioration of the situation was the October 12, 2000 lynching, by an unruly Palestinian mob, of two Israeli soldiers who had entered Ramallah by mistake after losing their way and had been escorted to a police station by PA policemen. Less than an hour after the lynching, Israeli helicopters bombed the PA police station where the bloody incident had taken place, as well as other PA police stations in the OPT and a number of other targets. “Symbolic” as the Israelis claimed their reaction was, it was also highly counter-productive albeit largely in tune with the spirit of the Wye River Memorandum; exactly two years after the signing of the memorandum, it was being utilized, though not for the first time, by Israel to blame the Palestinian Authority for the deterioration of the situation on the ground and justify not only its continuation of the occupation and expansion of settlement activities, but also its military attacks against (as the October 12, 2000 air raids demonstrated) and further undermining of the PA, allegedly with the intention to “punish” it for its shortfalls which had in fact been brought about by previous Israeli “punishments” as well as restrictions placed by Israel on the capabilities and deployment of PA forces. Yet if the Israeli intention behind the attack was to force ‘Arafat to stop the violence it had the opposite effect, for the airstrikes on police stations and prisons forced the PA to release prisoners, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists who had been arrested and kept in custody at Israel’s behest.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Deborah Sontag, “Peace Hopes Fade,” *The New York Times*, 13 October 2000, A1, A8.

The uprising gave credence to the predictions and warnings of political “hawks” and security officials as well as of militant settlers and their supporters on the consequences of a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon.²⁴⁹ These elements had maintained that the virus of armed resistance would infect the Palestinians as a result of the events in South Lebanon. Like the first *Intifada*, the second one was viewed as a threat to “Israel’s social fiber and IDF morale”²⁵⁰ and alarmed Israeli politicians and Generals; to the extent that the violence was more intensive than that of the previous uprising and the Israeli death toll it exacted more extensive, the second *Intifada* posed an even greater threat to Israel’s national security as well as to the personal security of its citizens (especially the latter) than the “uprising of stones and slingshots”. At the same time, however, the *Intifada* provided Israel with a new set of opportunities. As Ghazi-Walid Falah notes, “Israel’s military strategy since the outbreak of the second Intifada... has been one not merely of ‘security’ or ‘counter-terror’ but part of a longer-term strategy of spatial demolition and strangulation.”²⁵¹

Netanyahu’s and Barak’s interest in preventing the development of a contiguous space where Palestinians could establish a viable state or at the very least enjoy actual self-rule (as opposed to severely limited rule by leaders appointed or at least approved by Israel) was not a new phenomenon in Israeli political and strategic thinking and policy-making; in fact, it was an old tactic dating back at least to the 1980s, when Ariel Sharon was Minister of Defense. According to Eyal Weizman, Sharon used settlements as an “antidote to uncontrolled Palestinian population growth, placing them as wedges that disturb the consolidation of large metropolitan centers – those most likely to form the cultural

²⁴⁹ Dalia Dassa Kaye cites a 1998 article by Amos Harel in *Ha’aretz* in which the author refers to a consensus in the security community that unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon would be seen as “surrender to terror” and bring about an increase in military activities by Palestinians, particularly Hamas. Dalia Dassa Kaye, “The Israeli Decision to Withdraw from Southern Lebanon: Political Leadership and Security Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 569.

²⁵⁰ Efraim Inbar, “Israeli National Security, 1973-96,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 555 (January 1998): 69.

²⁵¹ Ghazi-Walid Falah, “The Geopolitics of ‘Enclavisation’ and the Demise of a Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 8 (2005): 1341.

demographic and political basis of a viable territorial entity.”²⁵² In Sharon’s view, more important than the act of establishing settlements was the establishment of presence in the areas that were slated to become settlements. It was from this vision that the concept of “outposts” – as distinct from actual settlements – arose. The first outpost was established in 1992, as a challenge to Rabin’s policy of denying permits for the establishment of new settlements. In November 1998, a month after the signing of the Wye River Memorandum, Sharon urged militant settler youth to wage a “battle for the hilltops”. An instrument both of challenge to the Oslo Accords and of assertion of “sovereignty by presence”, outposts multiplied at an alarming pace over the years especially during Sharon’s two successive terms as Prime Minister spanning a period of five years; supposedly illegal under Israeli law, they nevertheless became a permanent feature of the West Bank landscape under the watchful – and protective – eyes of the IDF. Moreover, owing to the growing stature of the settler movement, they largely enjoyed not only immunity from the threat of dismantlement, but also government-provided services.

3.7 9/11 and Operation Defensive Shield

Ariel Sharon’s landslide victory in the Prime Ministerial elections of 2001 paved the way for the formation of a national unity government comprising parties from the right, center, and left of the Israeli political spectrum, as well as from the religious sector. Although Israel’s response to the *Intifada* had been brutal from the start, it was in the wake of the “national unity” government that an especially hardline military stance came to be adopted against the Palestinian uprising, owing in part to the increasing public pressure after four major suicide bombings in 2001. Thus, two days after a Hamas suicide bombing in March 2002 which claimed nearly thirty Israeli lives and dubbed “the Passover massacre”, the Israeli

²⁵² Eyal Weizman, “Strategic Points, Flexible Lines, Tense Surfaces, Political Volumes: Ariel Sharon and the Geometry of Occupation,” *The Philosophical Forum* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 231.

Cabinet issued a communiqué announcing the initiation of military action supposedly intended to root out Palestinian “terror infrastructure.”²⁵³ Labeled Operation Defensive Shield, the operation began by laying siege to the headquarters of the PLO (and PA) Chairman Yasser ‘Arafat. What appeared to have been a spontaneous reaction to a massacre was in fact a military operation long in planning.²⁵⁴ Chief among the military aims was the re-occupation of the areas which had been handed over to the PA as per the agreements signed between the two sides. Furthermore, as the cabinet communiqué issued on the day of the start of the operation indicates, one of the political aims of Operation Defensive Shield was isolating ‘Arafat. In a speech made two days after the start of the operation, Sharon argued that ‘Arafat “operate[d] a strategy of terror” and had for that reason come to be considered an enemy. Furthermore, he insisted that the operation was “a war that was forced on us” – a statement in the spirit of the Israeli concept of “wars of no choice.”²⁵⁵ Tanya Reinhart, citing Israeli newspapers and documents, argues that Israel’s intentions were not limited to sidelining ‘Arafat; they were in fact much broader in scope and included the weakening and eventual dismantlement of the PA, the exile of ‘Arafat, and the destruction of all resistance groups.²⁵⁶ It is therefore in this context that Israel’s unprovoked and more often

²⁵³ “Cabinet Communique – 29-Mar-2002,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2002/Cabinet%20Communique%20-%2029-Mar-2002> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁵⁴ The siege of ‘Arafat’s compound lasted until the hand-over of six suspects in the assassination of Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze’evi in October 2001. Shortly after the assassination, Sharon had announced that in the event of the PA’s failure to comply with Israel’s demand of extraditing the suspects and disarming and dismantling all “terrorist organizations”, his government would “view the Palestinian Authority as an entity supporting and sponsoring terror” and “act accordingly.” See “Cabinet Communique – 17-Oct-2001,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2001/Cabinet%20Communique%20-%2017-Oct-2001> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁵⁵ “PM Sharon’s Address to the Nation – 31-Mar-2002,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches%20by%20Israeli%20leaders/2002/PM%20Sharon-%20Address%20to%20the%20Nation%20-%2031-Mar-2002> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁵⁶ Tanya Reinhart, “Israel: The Generals’ Grand Design,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 4 (Summer 2002): 114-116. Writing for the hawkish Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Hillel Frisch admits that the targeting of the PA was a strategic decision, equating it to Israel’s strategy in Lebanon and against Palestinian guerillas in the Jordan Valley in the 1960s. See Hillel Frisch, “(The) Fence or Offense? Testing the Effectiveness of ‘The Fence’ in Judea and Samaria,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 75 (The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies): 7.

than not ill-timed string of assassinations of resistance figures – especially those associated with Hamas – must be situated. It is also in this context that the sustained campaign against ‘Arafat accusing him of “orchestrating” the *Intifada* must be positioned.

Consequently, what was needed was a spark big enough to justify, in world opinion, the extent of the operation and the devastation that would ensue. While the direct spark was the Passover Massacre, the September 11, 2001 events in the U.S had also rendered Israel’s plans much more implementable, providing it with the opportunity to portray its presence and actions in the OPT as part of the “war on terror.” The timing of the operation was also suspect due to the fact that it came a day after an historic (albeit not unprecedented) gesture towards Israel on the part of Arab states in the form of the “Arab Peace Initiative” proposed by Saudi Arabia during the Arab League summit in Beirut on March 28, 2002. Although it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between the initiative and Israel’s decision to initiate a large-scale military operation, it is possible that the operation was embarked on at that particular juncture in part because the initiative was deemed to pose a challenge (if not a serious threat) to the aforementioned Israeli plans for the OPT. Possibly the main factor contributing to Israel’s decision to refuse to consider the Arab initiative was the fact that it was made from a position of Arab military weakness if not utter impotence in the face of Israel’s powerful military machine, as well as a clear reluctance on the part of Arab states to pursue a military option even in the event of massive intensification of Israeli oppression of and violence against Palestinians, as the developments of the previous decade had demonstrated. Consequently, from an Israeli perspective, the costs of accepting the offer far outweighed its benefits and confirmed, yet again, that Israel would make concessions only when faced with military pressure; this idea was in fact repeatedly emphasized by non-state actors such as Hamas and Hezbollah which were highly skeptical and critical of the “peace

process” and which often repeated the mantra that “Israel understands only the language of force”, an ironic counter-utilization of Israel’s own contention about Arab states and peoples.

“Separation Fence”, “Security Fence”

Operation Defensive Shield was not the only Israeli action that came in the wake of 9/11 and in defense of which the rhetoric of the war on terror was utilized. Although the idea of a separation wall (which Israel would come to refer to as the “security fence”) had been suggested repeatedly by Barak in previous years, it was not until June 2002 that it was turned into policy. Ironically, it was during the premiership of Sharon – who had long opposed the idea of erecting fences around settlements for what it entailed both practically and symbolically – that the decision to erect a separation wall was taken.

Presumably intended to prevent the infiltration of suicide bombers into Israel-proper, the wall was not located on the Green Line. It snaked its way through the West Bank, often surrounding entire Palestinian cities from all sides (effectively isolating them from the rest of the world) and cutting off villages from their agricultural lands and water sources.²⁵⁷ Despite criticism from various quarters and the 2004 ruling of the International Court of Justice branding the wall illegal,²⁵⁸ the Sharon government remained steadfast in its insistence that the “fence” was solely of security value and was not intended to define Israel’s political

²⁵⁷ For an authoritative map of the separation wall see B’Tselem: http://www.btselem.org/Download/Separation_Barrier_Map_Eng.pdf (last accessed: December 2008). See also a report by B’Tselem on the separation wall, “Under the Guise of Security: Routing the Separation Barrier to Enable the Expansion of Israeli Settlements in the West Bank,” B’Tselem: http://www.btselem.org/Download/200512_Under_the_Guise_of_Security_Eng.pdf (last accessed: December 2008). Also see Uri Ben-Eliezer and Yuval Feinstein, “The Battle Over Our Homes’: Reconstructing/Deconstructing Sovereign Practices Around Israel’s Separation Barrier on the West Bank,” *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 171-192.

²⁵⁸ For the text of the ICJ ruling, see “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,” International Court of Justice, 9 July 2004: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?pr=71&code=mwp&p1=3&p2=4&p3=6&case=131&k=5a> (last accessed: December 2008).

borders or serve as an instrument of land grab.²⁵⁹ It was the Ehud Olmert government that, as Jerome Slater points out, “abandoned the fiction of the Sharon government that the purpose of the barrier [was] merely to enhance Israel's security and might only be temporary, for Olmert...publicly stated that the barrier [was] likely to mark the country's final borders.”²⁶⁰ Nonetheless, that the wall was intended to implement Israel's strategy of “separation” while maintaining control of the OPT was merely an open secret. In fact, indicatively, the commonly used Hebrew term for what Israel insisted was a “security fence” was *Geder ha-Hafrada*, literally translating to “separation fence.”²⁶¹ The idea that redrawing the state's hitherto vague political boundaries would not necessarily satisfy its security interests was in fact suggested by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol after the 1967 war, giving rise to a distinction between two concepts: *political* and *security borders*.²⁶² Thus, the fact that even Israel's upgraded political borders might not coincide with its desired security borders necessitated the demand for the demilitarization of the territories that would be relinquished. In reality, the separation wall would not mark Israel's security borders, but rather, its political borders. These political borders would also ensure effective control over the Palestinian-inhabited areas beyond the wall by virtue of the creation of isolated cantons or at the very least the demilitarization of any future Palestinian contiguous entity which would also be economically subservient to the neighboring Jewish state; in either case, the outcome would bear stark resemblance to South Africa's *Bantustans* and their relationship to the apartheid South African government.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ This sentiment was repeated by Sharon in his April 14, 2004 letter to President George W. Bush in which he also presented the contours of the “disengagement” plan. See “The Sharon Unilateral Disengagement Plan,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (Summer 2004): 86-87.

²⁶⁰ Jerome Slater, “Muting the Alarm over the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The New York Times versus Haaretz, 2000-06,” *International Security* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 105.

²⁶¹ Notably, “apartheid” was the Afrikaans word for “separateness.”

²⁶² Jerome Slater, “Opinion: Netanyahu, A Palestinian State, and Israeli Security Reassessed,” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Winter 1997-1998): 685.

²⁶³ For a comparison between South African apartheid and Israeli rule over the OPT, see Leila Farsakh, “Independence, Cantons, or Bantustans: Whither the Palestinian State?,” *The Middle East Journal* 59, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 230-245.

The Road Map and the De-'Arafatization of the PA

As the construction of the wall progressed, the Bush administration unveiled what it called the Road Map, an outline of the steps to be taken for ending the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Although the plan envisaged a “two-state solution”, it nevertheless based that outcome on the “performance” of the Palestinians. At the same time, however, it also called for a freeze to all settlement-building activity in the OPT – including construction that fell under the rubric of natural growth of settlements – and called for the dismantling of outposts established since Ariel Sharon’s election as Prime Minister.²⁶⁴ The Road Map was nevertheless viewed with reservation by Israel and the obligations assigned to it – particularly the freeze in settlement construction – were violated. Not only did settlement construction continue, it was in fact often dramatically increased. Notably, whereas in the past Israel had demanded that the PLO, and the Palestinians more generally, recognize Israel’s “right to exist”, it now demanded that they recognize Israel’s “right to exist *as a Jewish state*”, a requirement that Israel argued was not included in the Road Map.²⁶⁵ Faced with an increasingly untenable situation as a result of heightened external pressure to end the occupation, this requirement became a near-permanent feature on Israel’s list of demands, used as an instrument to deflect criticism of its continuing colonization and creeping annexation of the West Bank. It was in fact in line with Israel’s decades-long policy of demanding concessions from the PLO by dangling the carrot of the continuation or resumption of peace talks. Six years after the unveiling of the Road Map, Israel remains in firm control of the OPT; it has sought to delay or altogether prevent final status negotiations

²⁶⁴ For the full text of the Road Map, see “A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/A+Performance-Based+Roadmap+to+a+Permanent+Two-Sta.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁶⁵ “The Road Map,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 86.

by demanding precisely such a recognition from not merely the PA but “the Palestinians” in general.²⁶⁶

While Operation Defensive Shield was a success in that it once again brought Palestinian cities and villages under direct Israeli control thereby rolling back Oslo I and II, it was a failure in the sense that it did not deter Palestinian factions from carrying out additional suicide bombings. Indeed, if anything, suicide bombings intensified and became far more lethal after the end of the operation. The attacks were often in response to Israeli assassinations of Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants. Two incidents that took place in 2003 demonstrate clearly the counter-productive nature of Israel’s assassination policy and the fact that it made a dent in Israeli national security and personal safety rather than enhancing it. The first incident was the failed assassination of Abdel ‘Aziz al-Rantissi, a prominent Hamas figure and one of its founders, provoking a Hamas suicide bombing. The second incident was the successful assassination of Isma’il Abu Shanab, one of the main advocates within Hamas of a ceasefire with Israel.

Commenting on the assassination of Abu Shanab in the *Guardian*, Chris McGreal pointed out that “Ariel Sharon could not have been in any doubt that killing Abu Shanab would wreck the ceasefire [declared by Hamas and Islamic Jihad seven weeks earlier].”²⁶⁷ Indeed, Israeli officials admitted that the assassination was intended to bring the conflict with Hamas “to full boil, in order...to end it.” They went on to warn the PA that unless it took action to crack down on the movement, Israel would “continue hunting the Hamas leadership,

²⁶⁶ According to *Ha’aretz*, in April 2009, newly-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu informed U.S. envoy George Mitchell that “Israel expects the Palestinians to first recognize Israel as a Jewish state before talking about two states for two peoples.” See “Netanyahu demands Palestinians recognize ‘Jewish state’”, *Ha’aretz*, 16 April 2009: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=1078827> (last accessed: April 2009). Under pressure, Netanyahu backtracked on his remarks; nonetheless, the issue of Palestinians’ (and Arab states’) recognition of Israel as a “Jewish state” remains part of the Israeli strategy and/or agenda.

²⁶⁷ Chris McGreal, “Killing of Hamas leader ends truce,” *The Guardian*, 22 August 2003: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/aug/22/israel3> (last accessed: December 2008).

even at the risk of stepped-up suicide bombings.”²⁶⁸ These remarks made abundantly clear that Israel’s and in particular Sharon’s main concern was not the security situation and the need to protect Israeli civilians (as demonstrated by the remark about stepped-up suicide bombings) but rather the threat that Hamas’ acceptance of a ceasefire posed to its political agenda and its unwillingness to make compromises which would have been inevitable in light of the unveiling of a U.S peace initiative known as the Road Map. Indeed, a second (and successful) attempt on Rantisi’s life and the assassination of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, in March and April 2004 respectively, took place in the wake of Israel’s announcement of its unilateral withdrawal plan from Gaza in late 2003, which will be discussed shortly. If one is to assume that Or Honig’s claim that the logic of the announced unilateral withdrawal plan was the strengthening of Palestinian “moderates”, it follows that Israel’s policies would have had to be carefully chosen to provide moderates the chance to govern the territory it was planning on withdrawing from rather than provoking extremists into retaliation that would set into motion a cycle of tit-for-tat violence that would strengthen extremists at the expense of moderates.²⁶⁹ Instead, however, Israel opted for a strategy of provocation, and, as indicated above and throughout this chapter, a seemingly calculated one at that.

The announcement of the Road Map was preceded by intense American pressure brought on ‘Arafat on behalf of Israel, contributing to the latter’s efforts at isolating the PLO Chairman which had started with Operation Noah’s Ark (whereupon Israel leveled an accusation at the PA alleging that it had attempted to smuggle weapons to the OPT aboard a ship called “Karine A”²⁷⁰) and Operation Defensive Shield. At first defiant, ‘Arafat

²⁶⁸ James Bennet, “2 Militant Groups Abandon Promise of Mideast Truce,” *The New York Times*, 22 August 2003, A1.

²⁶⁹ Or Honig, “Explaining Israel’s Misuse of Strategic Assassinations,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 6 (June 2007): 568.

²⁷⁰ For an analysis of the Karine A affair, see Brian Whitaker, “The Strange Affair of Karine A,” *The Guardian*, 21 January 2002: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/jan/21/israel1> (last accessed: December 2008).

eventually succumbed to the pressures and threats;²⁷¹ the outcome was the appointment of Mahmoud 'Abbas – who had in late 2002 called for the de-militarization of the *Intifada*²⁷² – as Prime Minister of the PA and the transfer of some of the Presidential powers to the Prime Minister. As Graham Usher argues, “the overall purpose [of the pressure on 'Arafat] was...the cultivation of a new, ‘moderate’ Palestinian leadership more attentive to Israel’s security demands, the U.S. regional ‘war on terror,’ and ultimately, perhaps, a final agreement in line with Israeli prerogatives.”²⁷³ The sidelining of 'Arafat, however, meant that the U.S and Israel could no longer hold off elections. In fact, President George W. Bush welcomed just such an eventuality in a speech on June 24, 2002, when he called on Palestinians to “elect new leaders, leaders not compromised by terror.”²⁷⁴

Having been elevated to the position of Prime Minister and facing obstacles imposed by a resentful 'Arafat, 'Abbas sought to satisfy the demands of the U.S and other external actors, hoping to garner their support and receive much-needed help to improve the situation in the OPT and boost his credentials among the Palestinian electorate. To do so, not only did he have to pledge adherence to the Road Map, he also had to convince the various Palestinian factions – including and especially Hamas – to declare a unilateral ceasefire, a move that would have allowed for the resumption of negotiations. Nonetheless, the attainment of this goal was not enough; for the ceasefire to last and negotiations to resume, both the U.S and Israel had to attach value to it and contribute to the positive atmosphere with confidence-building measures of their own. Such a response, however, was not forthcoming; although Israel publicly welcomed the ceasefire, it nevertheless actively sought to undermine it by

²⁷¹ According to Graham Usher, “Quartet representatives had bluntly told Arafat that unless he agreed to the creation of the position of prime minister, there were no assurances that Israel would not do to him what the United States was planning to do to Saddam Hussein.” Graham Usher, “Letter from the Occupied Territories: The Palestinians after Arafat,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 48.

²⁷² See “Mahmud Abbas’s Call for a Halt to the Militarization of the Intifada,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 74-78.

²⁷³ Usher, op. cit.

²⁷⁴ Anthony N. Celso, “The Death of the Oslo Accords: Israeli Security Options in the Post-Arafat Era,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 67.

arresting militants and assassinating political and military figures as pointed out above. Not only that, but it was also slow to ease the movement of Palestinians and to release even a small fraction of the thousands of prisoners it held. The latter two gestures would have rewarded 'Abbas and his "moderate" line with a much-needed boost in public support. The U.S, for its own part, declined to pressure Israel into loosening its closures policy and respecting the ceasefire, despite transferring "aid" to the Palestinian Authority, which Israel had consistently – whether deliberately or inadvertently – undermined. Despite attempts to sideline 'Arafat, elections were not held until after his death in November 2004, which itself ended a long and eventful chapter in Israeli-PLO relations. The first elections since the presidential and legislative elections of 1996, the 2005 presidential elections handed 'Abbas a landslide victory. Nearly two years after being sworn in as Prime Minister, 'Abbas had become the President of the Palestinian Authority and doubled as the Chairman of the PLO, inheriting "authority" over a series of cantons he had little control over.

3.8 The Disengagement Plan, Palestinian Elections, and Operation Summer

Rains

In conjunction with his violent crackdown on the *Intifada* and the building of the separation wall, Sharon worked on formulating a new strategy that would take into consideration regional realities created by the U.S "war on terror" and the invasion and occupation of Iraq; at the same time, the new strategy would have to take into consideration demographic realities, Israel's economic situation, and its security interests. It was from this effort that the Disengagement Plan was born. The plan, which was first unveiled in an address by Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference in December 2003, proposed withdrawal from certain areas – mainly the Gaza Strip in its entirety – on the grounds that it would increase Israeli security by reducing "friction".

Despite Sharon's insistence that the disengagement plan was not in pursuit of a political agenda and was by no means a permanent arrangement, the reality was much different; the plan was the product of a number of factors, interests, and objectives. First and foremost, faced with budget cuts, the allocation of valuable funds and military resources for the control of a tiny strip of land overcrowded with a hostile population in the midst of whom some 8,000 settlers lived, was no longer deemed justifiable.²⁷⁵ In fact, the Israeli economy had been under increasing strain in no small part thanks to high defense allocations and expenditures over preceding years and decades, necessitating not only a re-thinking of the financial benefits of remaining an occupying power in Gaza, but also the introduction of cuts to defense expenditures.²⁷⁶ Second, the political benefits of withdrawing from the Strip far outweighed the benefits of maintaining the occupation over it. Faced with increasing pressure to return to the negotiations table and accept, and work towards, a two-state solution as per the Road Map, Sharon unveiled his timely plan for unilateral withdrawal with a view towards dictating the direction of negotiations and the shape of a permanent agreement. Thus, unilateralism was viewed as an instrument for diverting external pressure away from Israel and onto the Palestinians, and was a continuation of the policy of *faits accomplis* which began with the colonization of the West Bank. Third, the more than a million Palestinians of the Gaza Strip posed a demographic threat to its Jewish majority. This threat perception derived from Israeli fears of a growth in the popularity of proposals calling for a "one-state solution" (an outcome advocated by the PLO in the late 1960s and early 1970s), especially

²⁷⁵ In fact, when presenting his plan to the public for the first time, Sharon pointed out to his audience that it would "help strengthen the Israeli economy" and "relieve the pressure on the IDF and security forces in fulfilling the difficult tasks they are faced with." See "Address by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 December 2003: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2003/Address+by+PM+Ariel+Sharon+at+the+Fourth+Herzliya.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁷⁶ The change in the nature of threats and the decline in their level and scope over the years could also have contributed to the decline in defense expenditures. Thus, in 2001-2002, defense expenditure as percent of GDP was at its lowest since 1956. See the graphs on defense expenditure as percent of GDP, Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications/security/pdf/97_grafs.pdf (last accessed: May 2007). See also Zelman F. Shiffer, "The Debate Over the Defense Budget in Israel," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1: 193-214.

since the demise of apartheid in South Africa. Fourth, by withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and a few settlements in the West Bank, Sharon intended to “strengthen Israel’s hold over territory... essential to [its] existence” and believed that it “[would] be welcomed and appreciated by those near and far, reduce animosity, break through boycotts and sieges.”²⁷⁷

That it was “welcomed and appreciated” there was no doubt about; for, merely months prior to his speech in the Knesset, at a meeting in the White House during which he presented his Disengagement Plan to President George W. Bush, Sharon received a letter from the President in which the latter not only reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to Israel’s security, but also stressed his realization that “[i]n light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949.”²⁷⁸ Moreover, soon after the plan was unveiled and prior to Sharon’s remarks during the Knesset vote on the plan, many observers noted that one of its planned outcomes was the cementing of Israel’s hold over considerable parts of the West Bank. Fifth, as Sharon himself noted, “the Palestinians [would] receive much less through the [unilateral] Disengagement Plan than they would have received through direct negotiations.” Nadav Shelef argues that this admission “suggests that the logic of unilateral disengagement runs deeper than short-term security concerns...over time, [disengagement] will determine the contours of the final settlement.”²⁷⁹

Sixth, given the Jewish historical and religious connection to the West Bank and the absence of an equivalent connection to Gaza (notwithstanding settlers’ ideological

²⁷⁷ “Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s Address to the Knesset - The Vote on the Disengagement Plan,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 October 2004: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2004/PM+Sharon+Knesset+speech+-+Vote+on+Disengagement+Plan+25-Oct-2004.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁷⁸ “Letter from US President George W. Bush to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 April 2004: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Exchange+of+letters+Sharon-Bush+14-Apr-2004.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁷⁹ Nadav Shelef, “Testing the Logic of Unilateral Withdrawal: Lessons from the History of the Labor Zionist Movement,” *The Middle East Journal* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 460.

commitment to settling the Gaza Strip and their insistence that it is an inseparable part of the “Land of Israel”), the maintenance of hegemony over the former was more crucial than maintaining control over the latter. In order to maintain its hold over all or part of the West Bank, however, it was necessary to first neutralize the threat of a binational or one state solution. This could be effectively achieved by placing the 1.5 million Palestinians of the Gaza Strip outside the overall equation. In fact, a plan advocating just such an eventuality had been proposed as early as 1979 by Avraham Katz-Oz a member of the opposition Labor Party. The Labor proposal was primarily intended as a measure to forestall the possibility of linkage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in a future peace deal, which would have resulted in the “creation of a bridge between the two concentrations of Arab population for whom a solution needs to be found.”²⁸⁰ Instead, it had proposed rendering the Strip and its inhabitants the responsibility of Egypt; at its heart was the realization that whereas the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had by virtue of their geographical separation undergone different socio-political experiences and levels of development, the Israeli occupation had for the first time since 1949 united the two entities and facilitated the formation of a common experience. Furthermore, the plan was critical of the “dipping fingers” concept, a reference to the policy of building settlements in and near areas of Palestinian population concentration which had been adopted by the first Likud-headed government in Israeli history. Labor’s “final” solution for Gaza was thus the transfer of responsibility for it and its inhabitants to Egypt, and “a closed border and neither workers nor buyers passing through it.”²⁸¹

Carried out a year later in September 2005, the disengagement ended Israeli civilian and military presence within the Gaza Strip. It did not, however, put an end to Israel’s occupation of the Strip: Israel remained in control of all three of its links to the outside world. It maintained direct control over its airspace and territorial waters and indirect control over

²⁸⁰ “A Labor Solution for Gaza,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1980): 164.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 164-165.

the border between the Strip and Egypt, known as the Philadelphi Corridor. The Corridor, although under PA control, was nevertheless subject to Israeli veto power through European Union monitors stationed at the Rafah crossing. EU monitoring of and official PA control over the land border, however, diluted accusations of Israel's ongoing occupation of the Strip.

The Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006 were held in the shadow of the disengagement for which both the PLO and Hamas had claimed credit. Hamas' decision to take part, for the first time, in legislative elections was a significant step but must be seen in the context of the Israeli decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Hamas' perceptions that the time was ripe to convert its military achievements into political currency. Moreover, the fact that the Oslo Accords were thoroughly delegitimized in the eyes of the Palestinian public encouraged the movement to take part in the elections, as that would no longer have translated into support for Oslo and its derivatives.

Hamas' victory at the polls was as unexpected as it was unwelcome for Israel, the U.S, and the PLO. Whereas until 2006 the PA had been synonymous with the PLO, the results of the elections signalled the end of its monopoly over the PA, an outcome that was a source of great worry in Israel in no small part thanks to the PLO's (relatively recent) record of subservience to, and inability to challenge, Israeli whims, actions, and interests, let alone pursue Palestinian national (and national security) interests. Furthermore, a Hamas government would have forced Israel and its allies to either abandon the charade that the "peace process" was and which had until then provided Israel with an open-ended window of opportunity for the continuation of its colonization activities in the West Bank, or recognize the Hamas government and engage it in dialogue. Neither outcome was deemed satisfactory by Israel, not merely out of ideological rigidity but out of crude political calculation. On the one hand, the abandonment of the "peace process" could have prompted calls for a one-state solution and produced a grassroots movement in pursuit thereof, inspired by and adopting the

methods of the anti-apartheid movement. On the other hand, the possibility of dialogue with Hamas – even if Israel were not to be a party to it – would have painted a different portrait of the Islamist movement than Israel had attempted to present (arguably with little effort thanks to the suicide bombings carried out by the movement); furthermore, the cooption of the main and militarily most capable advocate of armed resistance would have stripped Israel of a key component of its rejectionist stance on compromising and, ultimately, Palestinian statehood. Nonetheless, these fears proved unfounded as international and especially American disregard for the democratic choice of the Palestinian people translated into support for the PLO and a crippling economic boycott by the international community and Israel of the Hamas-led PA characterized by a reduction of funding and humanitarian aid, as well as Israel's withholding of Palestinian tax revenues.

Five months after Hamas' victory at the polls, on June 25, 2006 Gaza militants captured an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, along the Israeli-Gazan border, demanding a prisoner exchange. Four days later, in the worst crackdown to have hit Hamas since its founding, Israel rounded up its Members of Parliament and Cabinet ministers, and launched a large-scale military operation against the Gaza Strip, code-named Operation Summer Rains. The objectives of the operation were the unconditional return of the captured soldier, the cessation of rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, and the "determination of new rules of conduct vis-à-vis the Palestinian Authority and the Hamas government."²⁸² Notably, although Qassam rockets had been launched at Israel long before the disengagement notwithstanding Israeli control over the Gazan border with Egypt, it was only after its withdrawal from the Strip that Israel chose to place so much emphasis on the threat of rocket attacks. Arguably, this was inspired by the desire to portray the firing of rockets as the Palestinian response to the alleged end of the occupation of the Gaza Strip. Similarly, dubious arguments would emerge later to

²⁸²“Cabinet Communique 9 Jul 2006,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Cabinet+Communique+9-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

the effect that any future withdrawal from the West Bank would bring rocket fire on Israeli cities. The military operations took on various forms, but the most notable of them was the bombardment, once more, of Gaza's sole power plant as well as a number of bridges. Commenting on the targeting of infrastructure, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert argued that "[Israel's] aim is not to mete out punishment, but to apply pressure so the soldier will be freed. [Israel] want[s] to create a new equation - freeing the abducted soldier in return for lessening the pressure on the Palestinians."²⁸³

This clear attempt at changing the rules of the game, however, failed. The intensive bombardment and shelling did not pressure Hamas into releasing Shalit. The only available options were the renewal of military activities, the tightening of the siege with the hope that it would achieve what military force did not, or negotiate with Hamas for a prisoner exchange, or a combination of the three. Israel attempted all three – albeit the third only half-heartedly. Thus, shortly after Operation Summer Rains it launched Operation Autumn Clouds. In June 2007, American military support for Fateh and incitement to a coup led to a mini-civil war and resulted in the former's takeover of, and the latter's ouster from, the Gaza Strip, the territory's political separation from the West Bank, and 'Abbas' dismissal of the Hamas-led government.²⁸⁴ Taking the opportunity to pressure Hamas through economic means, Israel introduced a crippling blockade of the already-impooverished Strip on the grounds that it had become a "hostile entity."²⁸⁵

Significantly, three days after the capture of Shalit, Israeli jets overflew Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's residence. The overflight was intended as a warning to Assad in line with Israel's complaint – heard often since at least 1999 following the expulsion of

²⁸³ Chris McGreal, "Israeli tanks turn screw on besieged Gaza Strip," *The Guardian*, 29 June 2006: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/jun/29/israel> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁸⁴ David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair*, April 2008: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804> (last accessed: December 2008).

²⁸⁵ Heather Sharp, "Guide: Gaza under blockade," *BBC News*, 11 November 2008: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7545636.stm (last accessed: December 2008).

Hamas from Jordan and its relocation to Damascus – that Syria not only hosted a “terrorist” organization thereby providing it with a base from which to oversee its political as well as military activities against Israel, but also provided it with training, funding, and weaponry. Moreover, both Syria and Iran were and continue to be viewed as benefiting from this arrangement, given that both are, according to Israel, “[employers of] terrorism as a main tool for promoting their strategic goals.” Thus, an aptly titled document “Iran and Syria as Strategic Support for Palestinian Terrorism” released by the IDF and Military Intelligence in 2002 advances the argument that both Iran and Syria pursue a “strategy of encouraging the Intifada and fully supporting the terrorist attacks in Israel.” This is allegedly done by “inflaming and escalating the Intifada, disrupting any cease fire attempts and extending the confrontation dimensions into Israel.”²⁸⁶ Clearly, however, despite the gravity of these accusations and the level of threat that Israel argues Hamas poses (which it claims justified the massive assault that cost the lives of nearly 1,400 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip between late December 2008 and mid-January 2009), Israel has yet to change its policies vis-à-vis the two countries based on these accusations, even if it has consistently demanded the eviction of Hamas from Damascus and the cessation of support both to it and to Hezbollah in the context of a peace treaty with Syria.

The chain of events that started with the disengagement concluded with the convening, with much fanfare, of the Annapolis Conference. However, hopes for progress on the peace track were short-lived. Not only was there no significant headway in negotiations, Israel’s response to Annapolis came in the form of increased settlement activity rather than a

²⁸⁶“Iran and Syria as Strategic Support for Palestinian Terrorism,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The+Iranian+Threat/Support+of+terror/Iran%20and%20Syria%20as%20Strategic%20Support%20for%20Palestina> (last accessed: December 2008). See also “Iranian activities in support of the Palestinian intifada,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The+Iranian+Threat/Support+of+terror/Iranian%20activities%20in%20support%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20i> (last accessed: December 2008).

settlement freeze.²⁸⁷ Thus, what in 2006 appeared to have been a step toward Palestinian statehood resulted in a situation comparable in many ways to the pre-1967 situation: crucially, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank had been separated once more, not only geographically, but also, and most importantly, politically. Most important of all, however, was the fact that the Palestinian Liberation Organization, once an umbrella organization of Palestinian political and military factions – first seeking the liberation of all of Palestine by armed struggle and then a negotiated solution that would preserve at least some of the national interests and concerns of the Palestinian people – had become a willing instrument in the hands of Israeli politicians and generals for the manipulation of the course of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle for hegemony over all of, or from the perspective of the Palestinians what remained of, Palestine. Hamas, for its own part, has over the years faced a number of challenges and survived a number of onslaughts, leading up to its unexpected victory in the 2006 elections which was a result of the PLO's failures just as much if not more than than any successes achieved by Hamas. The movement has faced immense challenges in the past three years, mounted both by its sworn enemy, Israel, as well as its Palestinian competitor the PLO. On the third anniversary of Hamas' electoral victory, the mood was particularly somber in Gaza, where, only a few weeks earlier, the Israeli army had wreaked death and destruction. That episode, however, will be discussed in the next section, given that it is linked to another event, namely the July 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Suffice it to say that albeit Israel failed to destroy the PLO, it succeeded in coopting it. Having coopted the PLO, it is in Israel's interest to push Hamas towards extremism in much the same way that it had attempted to do with the PLO in Lebanon.

²⁸⁷ "Summary of Israeli Road Map Violations Since Annapolis: 28 November 2007 - 27 November 2008," PLO Negotiations Affairs Department: <http://www.nad-plo.org/news-updates/IsraeliRoadMapViolations-FINAL.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008).

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter catalogued Israeli leaders' and generals' attitudes towards the PLO and Hamas, their perceptions and definition of the political and security challenges posed by each, and the manner in which these challenges have been addressed; in addition, Israel's past and present interests in the arenas within which the two non-state actors have functioned and continue to function were discussed at some length. The manner in which realist, domestic, and idiosyncratic variables interact and the manner in which the interplay between them shapes Israel's foreign policy and its relationship with the aforementioned non-state actors, were related.

While Israeli policies towards the PLO prior to the end of the Cold War were characterized by outright hostility, the new geopolitical realities instituted a transformation in Israeli strategy towards it, and by extension also Hamas. Hence, for example within the span of a decade or so, the PLO moved from one extreme end of the spectrum to the other in its relationship with Israel, whereas Hamas was subjected to a number of brutal onslaughts despite Israel's tacit approval and encouragement in the past of the welfare institutions of its predecessor, the Muslim Brotherhood, as a counter to the influence of the PLO. While the PLO's movement on the spectrum was also facilitated by significant change in attitudes within the PLO itself, it was nevertheless primarily the result of changing Israeli strategies.

Whereas in the early years of the PLO's existence Israel perceived it as a mere instrument for furthering Arab states' interests, following the Egyptian and Syrian defeat in the 1973 war and what it entailed for the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and especially since 1974, the year the PLO rose to international prominence, Israel gradually began to see the PLO as an actor in its own right, one that posed a grave threat to its political agenda, particularly its quest to maintain its hold over the OPT and its plans to impose a non-territorial autonomy plan for the Palestinian inhabitants of said territories. This, in turn, along

with the PLO's cross-border harassment of previous years, inspired the invasion of Lebanon, aimed at destroying the PLO's institutional base, political clout, and military capabilities. In contrast, after 1992, sensing its advantageous position, Israel sought to coopt the PLO through negotiations which it hoped would achieve its plan of limited autonomy for the Palestinians. Hamas was and continues to be viewed as a strategic threat, albeit the degree of the threat it is perceived to pose has increased dramatically. At the same time as it is seen as a threat, however, Hamas is also viewed as an opportunity for the achievement of the same agenda that Israel has coopted the PLO for. The twin policy of brutal armed force that has incited further violence rather than put an end to it, and negotiations for peace that are as circular as they are ineffective, has provided Israel with ample and precious time in pursuing its objectives in the OPT.

Chapter 4: Israel and Hezbollah *A Quarter Century of Enmity and Warfare*

4.1 Introduction

What began as an invasion with the objective of eliminating PLO military presence in South Lebanon and destroying its political and social infrastructure in Beirut ended up leaving Israel in occupation initially of more than one third of the country and later on of (increasingly smaller) parts of it. The occupation, in turn, gave rise to a protracted low-intensity conflict between Israel on the one hand and Lebanese guerillas on the other. While initially a number of factions took part in resistance activities, over time the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon-Hezbollah emerged as the dominant force in the resistance to the occupation of South Lebanon. Indeed, and paradoxically, Hezbollah was a product of Israel's Operation Peace for the Galilee, and its rise to prominence a result, in part, of its armed resistance to the status quo that ensued in South Lebanon in the wake of the withdrawal of the PLO. This, however, is not to say that the invasion and subsequent occupation of South Lebanon was the only factor that led to the rise of Hezbollah to prominence. Due attention must also be paid to the socio-economic and political predicament of the Lebanese Shi'ite community.

The politicization of the Shi'ites of Lebanon was a product of many factors. Often, and mistakenly, the rise in Shi'ite political awareness and activism is attributed to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. While the Revolution did have an impact, and was indeed one of the factors in the effective mobilization of the Shi'ites, the developments in Iran took place at a time when Shi'ites had already become politically mobilized. One of the major factors leading to the mass-mobilization of the Shi'ites was their socio-economic marginalization in South Lebanon and the Beqa'a Valley. This factor is of special significance, for in addition to its armed struggle against the occupation, it was through its network of social services that Hezbollah has garnered the support it commands today. Modernization gave rise to cracks in

the traditional structures and the domination of zu'ama: migrants who had relocated to the city were the primary targets of a number of parties, such as the Lebanese Communist Party.¹ However, arguably the single most important contributor to the transformation of Shi'ite political consciousness from a fatalistic and quietist to an activist and even revolutionary one, was Imam Musa al-Sadr, under whose guidance political consciousness and communal solidarity flourished. In effect, by the time the Iranian Revolution took place, the bases for organized political activism had been laid. Such transformation was aided by the Palestinian armed presence in South Lebanon (especially after the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in 1970) and the retaliatory attacks by Israel that its operations elicited. The deteriorating security situation in the South since the late 1960s and especially during the 1970s confirmed the necessity of resorting to an activist approach. This approach soon materialized as the Amal Movement, which played an important role during the Lebanese civil war and Lebanese politics, although in coming years its influence would gradually wane in favor of Hezbollah.

The impact of the Iranian Revolution was far-reaching. First and foremost, it demonstrated that an unjust regime, despite its immense power and abundance of resources and the powerlessness of the oppressed could be overthrown. Second, although al-Sadr had provided a revolutionary interpretation of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, it was the Iranian Revolution that provided the spiritual and religious backbone and impetus to the mass-mobilization of the Shi'ites. Third, Iranian financial and military aid was a major factor in the establishment of Hezbollah and the sustenance of the resistance against Israel. The Israeli invasion of 1982 was a watershed in Lebanese Shi'ite mobilization and indeed the course of

¹ Augustus Richard Norton discusses the effects of modernization and urbanization on the Shi'ites of Lebanon, as an essential element of the social mobilization which set the stage for political mobilization. See Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 20-25, 29-32. For more on the transformation of Shi'ite politics in Lebanon, see Lise Jean Herbert, "From the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council to Amal: Shi'i Politics in Lebanon from 1969-1984" (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1999).

the Lebanese war and the Palestinian cause. The Shi'ites in the south of the country, having born the brunt of Israeli retaliation to PLO actions, and opposed to its continued presence and activity as a result, initially tacitly welcomed the Israeli commitment to the organization's removal from South Lebanon; this was the case, however, to the extent that it would have put an end to PLO harassment of the South Lebanese and meant the end of Israeli attacks on South Lebanese villages and towns.

The fledgling Islamic Republic of Iran saw in the continuation of Israeli occupation and the overall situation in Lebanon, and more specifically the grave socio-economic conditions plaguing the Shi'ite community, the perfect opportunity for exporting the revolution. Amal's passive and accommodationist stance towards Israel gave rise to accusations of collaboration with Israel, and eventually led to a split within its ranks.² The offshoot *Amal al-Islami*, or Islamic Amal, was supported by Iran, and with the approval of Syria, Iranian Revolutionary Guards were dispatched to provide training in the Beqa'a. It is during this period, and from the Islamic Amal, that Hezbollah emerged and received training from the Pasdaran. Thanks to Iranian funding, Hezbollah was able to spread its influence in the impoverished Shi'ite community, not least of all by the provision of welfare services. Gradually, the influence reached the Shi'ite-populated southern suburbs of Beirut. More important, however, was the movement's gradual penetration of the South, which was facilitated by the establishment in South Lebanon of Sheikh Ragheb Harb³ and Amal's attempt, especially in the late 1980s, at reaching a *modus vivendi* with the occupation.⁴ While an exact date cannot be set for the establishment of Hezbollah, its emergence could be approximated to have taken place in late 1982.

² Norton points out that in July 1982 Hussein Mussawi, a member of the Command Council of Amal, leveled the accusation of collaboration against Amal. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 88.

³For more on Sheikh Ragheb Harb's contributions, see: <http://www.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?cid=4904&cjd=206> (last accessed: November 2008).

⁴ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 38.

4.2 Israel and Hezbollah Between 1982 and 1992

Two Unilateral Withdrawals: 1983 and 1985

On November 11, 1982, a Shi'ite youth named Ahmad Qassir drove a bomb-laden truck into the Tyre Headquarters of the Israeli army and intelligence apparatuses, killing more than seventy Israeli soldiers and intelligence agents. Although Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for the attack or divulge the name of the perpetrator until the Israeli withdrawal from the area in 1985, the suicide bombing marked its first major attack against Israeli forces in South Lebanon, and dealt a devastating blow to Israel. The significance of the attack lay not only in its deadliness, but also in the fact that it underscored Israel's vulnerability to a new method of resistance far deadlier than any of those utilized in the past by the PLO, and just as importantly, more difficult to foil. Moreover, the difficulty of identifying the culprits meant the non-existence of an address to which retaliation could be directed. Even in the event of successful identification of Hezbollah responsibility, however, difficulties would likely have arisen due to the fact that the organization was a non-state actor and a loosely organized guerilla force, leaving Israel without any fixed, known, or verifiable, bank of targets. This dilemma was repeated again almost exactly a year later, when another suicide bomber drove a truck into the military headquarters in Tyre, killing dozens of Israeli soldiers. Israel's traditional policy of retaliating for attacks not only on its soil but also against its soldiers and civilians in territories it had occupied, meant that it felt obliged to retaliate in one way or another, for not doing so would signal weakness and impotence and encourage an increase, rather than a decrease, in similar attacks. Indeed, as Avner Yaniv notes, Israeli reprisals were designed to be

“deliberately far worse than the provocation, since an underlying Israeli assumption, first articulated by Moshe Dayan in 1955, was that a simple tit for tat leaves the Arabs with an advantage...lead[ing] [them] to continue their attacks...In the Israeli

perception, the Arabs' main advantage is in their *staying* power, that is, their ability to sustain endless little battles and even sizeable defeats, whereas Israel's only advantage is in its *moving* power, its ability to win decisively short but ferocious campaigns."⁵

Such a decision, however, proved to be more difficult to take than it had at first seemed; an attempt at placing the blame for the second attack on Syria – for lack of a clear address – proved disastrous as it gave rise to tensions, threats, counter-threats, and inevitably, economic costs due to mobilization. At the same time, instead of achieving the intended objective, namely boosting the image of an Israel determined to strike back, the toothless accusation harmed Israeli deterrence by portraying it as unable or unwilling to take action against the “culprit” it had pointed the accusative finger at.

Between the first and second Hezbollah operations in Tyre was the May 17 Accord of 1983. The Accord, a peace treaty in all but name, was an attempt by Israel to translate the PLO's defeat at its hands into political capital, making use of the opportunity to neutralize Lebanon as a front in the struggle against Israel. Israel's hegemony over more than one-third of the country meant that the treaty's articles would reflect that reality. Hence, the Accord conditioned the establishment of a security zone on Lebanese territory with no equivalent zone on Israeli territory. It also placed restraints and responsibilities on Lebanon in its exercise of sovereignty over its own territories. The restraints were in the form of restrictions on armed and security forces' deployment in the zone as well as on the weaponry they could deploy and employ; the responsibilities were, in effect, policing the border with Israel, with a force effectively hand-picked by Israel, in order to ensure the Jewish state's security.⁶

⁵ Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 224-225.

⁶ For the full text of the Accord, see “Text of the Lebanese-Israeli Troop Withdrawal Agreement,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 4 (Summer 1983): 91-101. The Accord was in tune with the distinction Prime Minister Levi Eshkol had in the past placed between Israel's political and security borders. Thus, even in the case of Israel's disinterest in expanding its political borders at Lebanon's expense, its interest in Lebanon and its quest for influencing the course of events in that country would remain unchanged. Moreover, the differentiation between the two concepts has not prevented Israel from deliberately conflating its political interests with its security interests with the intention of justifying its politically-motivated actions (as in the case of the PLO in Lebanon). The fact that much of Israel's activities – direct or indirect – beyond its internationally recognized

As the chances of the survival of the Accord in the face of Syrian opposition and pressure grew slimmer, and faced with an increasing rate and intensity of armed resistance and loss of lives in the ranks of the IDF, Israel entertained the possibility of carrying out a unilateral withdrawal. In doing so, however, it faced a dilemma about the extent of such a withdrawal, as well as the signals it would send to its enemies in Lebanon, especially Syria. Geographically, three possibilities were considered: withdrawal from the Beirut area and the Shouf, withdrawal from the Beqa'a, or withdrawal from both; politically and militarily, however, none of the three options would have spared Israel the embarrassment of retreat. The "security zone" described in the May 17 Accord had as its northern boundary the Awwali River, and it was to this line that Israel eventually decided to withdraw its forces. The withdrawal, which was finalized in September of the same year, was followed exactly two months later by the second Hezbollah operation in Tyre, an area that had remained under Israeli occupation. The attack appears all the more devastating for Israel when viewed in the context of its redeployment, for the withdrawal was aimed in part at extricating the IDF from an increasingly hostile area and redeploying it along a more secure and strategically favorable line. Indeed, the withdrawal was followed by the construction of a defense line supposedly aimed at preventing "infiltration".⁷ In striking the Israeli occupation at its supposedly most secure position, Hezbollah had not only highlighted its vulnerability, but also forced Israel into a situation whereby the deterrence it had worked hard to build was damaged. Israel's failure to take action against Syria or Syrian forces stationed in Lebanon and what it meant

boundaries (including the OPT) have been described in security terms even when they were overtly political in nature, has inspired little confidence in its repeated assurances that its motives are purely security-oriented and in the spirit of "self-defense." That Israel's security doctrine has traditionally been offensive rather than defensive in nature has contributed to suspicions, as have statements and past actions on the part of Israeli leaders and Zionist organizations, such as the World Zionist Organization's lobbying attempts in 1919-1920 in favor of including the Litani River within the borders of the British Mandate of Palestine. Hussein A. Amery, "The Litani River of Lebanon." *Geographical Review* 83, no. 3 (July 1993): 233. For a map of the World Zionist Organization's demands, see Gideon Biger, "The Boundaries of Israel-Palestine Past, Present, and Future: A Critical Geographical View," *Israel Studies* 13, no.1: 77.

⁷ Samir Kassir, Meredith Martin Rountree, and Jim Paul, "The Resistance Front in South Lebanon," *MERIP Reports* 133 (June 1985): 23.

for its deterrent image provided it with the incentive to carry out a massive retaliatory strike – not unlike its retaliatory strikes against al-Samu‘ and Qibya – against a target of dubious military value – allegedly a Hezbollah training camp – leaving close to a hundred civilians dead.⁸

Contrary to Israeli expectations, the withdrawal to the Awwali line did not provide the IDF with a sense of security. The Tyre operation was but one in a series of attacks against Israeli forces and SLA fighters, necessitating, from the Israeli perspective, a harsher crackdown on all forms of resistance as well as on “incitement” of the local population to resist. The assassination of Sheikh Ragheb Harb – who had been on the frontline of the awareness battle against collaboration and in favor of resistance, and who had been arrested by Israeli occupation forces a year earlier on account of his activities and released following intense popular pressure – was in tune with this new policy. It was also the first in a string of assassinations of Hezbollah figures and leaders over the years, and stemmed from Israel’s mistaken belief that the assassination of resistance figures would pose a severe setback, and even put an end, to resistance activities.

The events in late 1983 and early 1984 increasingly gave the impression that Israel was getting bogged down in a long-term war of attrition in an area that was, as Avraham Sela points out, topographically ideal for guerilla warfare. Such a turn of events, Sela notes, was brought about by the fact that the Israeli government “was captive of its own grandiose political aspirations in Lebanon which substantiated the IDF’s continued deployment in large parts of the country.”⁹ Yet large as the initial area of the IDF’s deployment was, it was in fact contracting, steadily albeit slowly. This was in part the result of the growing human and financial cost of maintaining the occupation: between June 1982 and January 1984, more than

⁸ Joseph B. Treaster, “16 Israel Bombers Raid Lebanon City; 100 Dead, 400 Hurt,” *The New York Times*, 5 January 1984, A1.

⁹ Avraham Sela, “Civil Society, the Military, and National Security: The Case of Israel’s Security Zone in South Lebanon,” *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 61.

600 Israeli soldiers had lost their lives – according to some estimates more than 40 percent of whom had been killed after the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut¹⁰ – and the annual cost of maintaining the occupation had reached 240 million dollars.¹¹ This, combined with the abrogation of the May 17 Accord in March 1984, inspired little confidence in the country's ability or willingness to police its border with Israel and, together with Israel's mistrust of the UNIFIL which had been deployed in the south of the country since 1978, seemed to vindicate the view that Israel should act unilaterally in pursuit of its interests. Indeed, as early as February 1984, and sensing the abrogation of the Accord looming on the horizon, Prime Minister Shamir issued a stern warning to Lebanon to the effect that its abrogation of the pact would be understood as "an expression of the giving up of her independence" and would force Israel to "take care of [security] arrangements unilaterally with the aid of other parties."¹² This it did in January 1985, when the government took the decision (albeit by a margin of one vote) to withdraw IDF forces in three stages from the Awwali line to the 1978 "security zone" following the failure of talks with Lebanon on military arrangements for withdrawal. Although the zone – which was defined as a security belt for the prevention of infiltration into Israel by "terrorists" – was to be manned primarily by Israel's local allies (funded, trained, and armed by the IDF) and despite the official reference to IDF withdrawal to the international border, the IDF was also to maintain direct presence in the zone.

While the decision to embark on another unilateral withdrawal was significant in and of itself, the adherence to the concept of the security zone demonstrated the rigidity of Israeli political perceptions and policies in the face of changing political and security realities on the

¹⁰ Scott MacLeod, "Israel's 'Iron Fist'-Deterrence or Revenge?", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 185.

¹¹ Sela, "Civil Society, the Military, and National Security", 61.

¹² David K. Shipler, "Shamir Declares Army May Act on Its Own to Police Border Areas," *The New York Times*, 12 February 1984, 1. Some two years earlier, Ariel Sharon had in fact gone a step further and suggested the annexation of a part of South Lebanon as a buffer zone on the grounds that it was "clear that the Lebanese government will do nothing to stop terrorism." See Chris Mowles, "The Israeli occupation of South Lebanon," *Third World Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (October 1986): 1351.

ground, and the stubborn adherence of generals to obsolete and ineffective security concepts. What Israeli policymakers – both political and military – had paid little attention to or failed to grasp, was the fact that policies that may have appeared reasonable and were moreover effective vis-à-vis Palestinian fighters in Lebanon, would not necessarily be reasonable or effective when applied to Lebanese Shi'ite fighters. While the former had embarked on military activities with the express purpose of the liberation of Palestine, the latter had taken up arms with the objective of liberating occupied South Lebanon. This distinction, however, appeared to carry little or no weight in the IDF worldview, according to which all those who opposed Israel's policies and resisted its actions militarily were "terrorists" irrespective of their motivation. Moreover, the decision to hold on to the security zone – and as shall be seen, the military tactics Israel would utilize against Hezbollah in the years to come – failed to take into account the fact that whereas for the Palestinians Lebanon was a sanctuary state (and the last one abutting Israel at that) this was not so for the Shi'ites, who were, in addition, a demographic majority in South Lebanon.

Furthermore, if the rationale of the security zone was the prevention of the return of the PLO to South Lebanon and its resumption of armed activities against Israel from there, it was largely futile, for the increased armed Shi'ite presence in South Lebanon would have prevented such an outcome in light of local grievances against the PLO and its past behavior. Indeed, then-Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin observed that "there is reason enough to assume that the Shi'ites will do their best to prevent the PLO from regaining control over the area..." Nevertheless, as *Ha'aretz* columnist Re'uven Pedatzur cynically pointed out in a June 30, 1985 column, "in some mysterious way, the manner in which the defense minister verbally instructs the security forces in the north contradicts the ideas he has mentally

formulated.”¹³ While Pedatzur did not go as far as criticizing the political leadership and the military establishment for their decision to maintain control over the security zone, his reference to Rabin’s claims to the effect that he sought “co-existence with the Shi’ites”, combined with Rabin’s aforementioned awareness of the near-impossibility of a PLO return to the area, demonstrates the futility of the security zone. Not only that, but the fact that the security zone was deep enough to possibly prevent infiltration but not deep enough to prevent rocket attacks against towns and villages in northern Israel, meant that it was of dubious strategic value. Equally importantly, as Avraham Sela argues, Israeli policymakers seemed oblivious to the fact that the commitment of Shi’ite fighters to the liberation of the “security zone” would not waver or wane, even in the face of harsh military responses;¹⁴ Israeli ignorance of this fact is demonstrated by Rabin’s threats to the effect that if Shi’ite fighters continued their struggle Israel would have to confront them.¹⁵ Lastly, if the security zone was intended as a bargaining chip to force Syria to accept Israel’s desired security arrangements with Lebanon, it was counter-productive, for Israel’s very presence in the security zone provided Syria with a golden opportunity to wage a proxy battle against it – without facing the military consequences of such action – with the objective of pressuring it into relinquishing the occupied Golan Heights.

Insecurity Zone

The start of the first phase of the withdrawal coincided with the appearance of the first official document published by Hezbollah. Titled “Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World” and published on the occasion of the first anniversary of the assassination of Sheikh Ragheb Harb, it offered Hezbollah’s worldview, summarizing its

¹³ Re’uven Pedatzur, “Coexistence with the Shi’ites,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 15, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 149.

¹⁴ Sela, “Civil Society, the Military, and National Security”, 63.

¹⁵ Pedatzur, *op.cit.*, 150.

basic positions on a host of issues. Sheikh Na'im Qassem, presently Deputy Secretary-General of Hezbollah, points out that the two-year period between the movement's birth and the publishing of the letter provided it with enough time to crystallize a vision.¹⁶ Qassem also observes that the party's announcement of its ideological, political, and social vision marked the beginning of a new phase in its history, characterized by a movement away from secret resistance work devoid of any contact with the media or various political sides, toward public political work accompanying its armed resistance and giving expression to its vision and approach.¹⁷ Chief among the issues addressed in the letter was Israel: pointing to its illegal and usurping nature, the letter called for its elimination and refused to recognize any peace treaty, truce, or even ceasefire agreement with it. Furthermore, the concept of "land for peace" was strongly denounced as capitulationist and the idea of recognition of or coexistence with Israel considered anathema.¹⁸ However, the party has since come a long way; as Giles Trendle observes, despite these grand slogans which characterized the early rhetoric of the organization, the party and its leaders gradually became "aware of the checks and balances operating in both Lebanon and the region" and came to a "pragmatic, albeit begrudging, recognition" that the destruction of Israel was not to be "imminently realized."¹⁹ One of the most significant victims of this pragmatism was the party's firm refusal, initially, to consider the idea of a ceasefire agreement with Israel, even if it was to be mediated by a third party. Although it has vehemently refused and continues to refuse to conduct direct negotiations with Israel on any issue, in recent years it has welcomed third-party understandings with Israel on its behalf, and has not shied away from engaging in indirect negotiations over exchange of prisoners, two issues that will be discussed at some length in this section.

¹⁶ Na'im Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi, 2005), 89.

¹⁷ Na'im Qassem, *Hizbullah: al-Manhaj..al-Tajribah..al-Mustaqbal* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2002), 143.

¹⁸ For an English translation of the letter, see Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 167-187.

¹⁹ Giles Trendle, "Hizballah: Pragmatism and Popular Standing," in *Lebanon on Hold: Implications for Middle East Peace*, ed. Rosemary Hollis and Nadim Shehadi (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1996), 63.

The end of the first phase of Israel's unilateral withdrawal was accompanied by the introduction of the Iron Fist policy, whereby Shi'ite villages were placed under curfew, violators were shot, villages raided, houses demolished, villagers arbitrarily arrested, and civilians shot and killed under dubious circumstances. Furthermore, Israel imposed a closures policy that not only made travel from and to the zone difficult and lengthy, but also had severe repercussions for local agriculture. This was accompanied by the flooding of the South Lebanese market with Israeli goods.²⁰ The Iron Fist policy was introduced in response to an increase in the number of attacks since the end of the first phase of the withdrawal, and particularly in retaliation for the killing of two Israeli officers. Just as importantly, the policy was a reaction to its adversaries' claims of having forced Israel, through armed resistance, to retreat, and the undeniable fact that it was the first time in its history that Israel had unilaterally withdrawn its forces from occupied territory without setting conditions or forcing its adversaries into an agreement. In addition, the regime of closures that was part of the policy was intended as a measure of safeguarding Israeli economic interests in South Lebanon. Paradoxically, for Israeli policymakers – not least of all Rabin – these policies did not seem contradictory to their expressed desire for arriving at a *modus vivendi* with Shi'ites in general and the Amal Movement in particular, which they sought to extract without having to abandon the security zone.²¹ Nonetheless, and unsurprisingly, the new policy, the continuing occupation, and the successes achieved by Hezbollah (albeit initially limited), had

²⁰ For an analysis of Israeli economic interests in Lebanon, see Kamal Hani, "Why Israel's Economy Needs Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1983): 194-198.

²¹ Thus, Rabin could, in April 1985, say that by withdrawing to the international border and maintaining the security zone jointly with the SLA, "those elements in Lebanon - Shiites and others - that claim all their struggle against Israel was not against Israel but against the Israeli occupation of their territories, their land: [This is] now over." In other words, Rabin considered that the 1985 withdrawal was enough for the Lebanese to consider themselves "liberated." See "Press briefing by Defense Minister Rabin, 21 April 1985," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/62%20Press%20briefing%20by%20Defense%20Minister%20Rabin-%2021%20Ap> (last accessed: January 2009). Norton describes attempts by Uri Lubrani, the coordinator for Israel's policy in Lebanon, to strike an agreement with Amal. See Augustus Richard Norton, "Israel in the Grip of the Insecurity Zone," in Hollis and Shehadi, op. cit., 38.

the cumulative effect of driving the local population into the arms of Hezbollah. This, however, was not an overnight phenomenon; it stretched over the course of many years, marked not only by advances, but also by setbacks. One of the major setbacks was spurred by the 1988 kidnapping of Lt. Col. William Higgins. Amal, which at the time had itself been seeking to tacitly reach out to the U.S and Israel, set up roadblocks in search of Higgins. What followed were clashes the outcome of which was the assertion of Hezbollah's hegemony over the southern suburbs of Beirut – aided by Iran – and Amal's strengthening of its grasp over South Lebanon, aided by Syria.

The next five years were marked by a steady pace of attacks against both the IDF and the SLA. These were hit and run operations, not entirely spontaneous in their timing and circumstances. As Sheikh Na'im Qassem pointed out in 2002, two years after the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, the method of guerilla warfare adopted by Hezbollah, unlike classical strategies of war, involved striking at specific targets in specific circumstances.²² Although they were typically small-scale and did not exact large numbers of casualties, their combined effect was the steady demoralization of the SLA. Indeed, eventually, this was to be the primary cause of the collapse of the security zone and the hasty, earlier-than-planned withdrawal of Israeli forces.

The Ta'ef Agreement and the end of the civil war in Lebanon signaled the start of a new period for Hezbollah, and by extension its struggle against the occupation. Not only was it characterized by Syrian hegemony, it also solidified rather than eliminated, at least for an indefinite transitional period, the confessional system and political sectarianism.²³ More importantly, it raised the dangerous prospect of disarmament, to which the party responded in 1991 by launching a political and public relations campaign which was rewarded by the

²² Eyal Zisser, "Hizballah and Israel: Strategic Threat on the Northern Border," *Israel Affairs* 12, no. 1 (January 2006): 102.

²³ See Article II.G of the Ta'ef Agreement: <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cahier/proche-orient/region-liban-taef-en> (last accessed: December 2008).

government's recognition of it as a resistance movement and thereby the granting of official approval for it to keep its weapons. Despite its success in gaining the party a special status in post-war Lebanon – which would not have been possible had Hezbollah's interest in the liberation of South Lebanon not coincided with Syria's interest in using its struggle for liberation to its benefit – the campaign signaled the first step in the direction of the party's Lebanonization, for it demonstrated its willingness to shape its discourse according to the demands of the system rather than outside it. This opening-up culminated in the party's decision to participate in the parliamentary elections in 1992. The decision to take part in the parliamentary elections of a state the structure of which it had branded as oppressive only seven years earlier was not an unproblematic one, for it brought to the fore the dilemma of sacrificing principles for the sake of interests. Nonetheless, the rationale was that participation in the political system entailed, in the words of Sheikh Na'im Qassim, the "consideration of interests within the scope of preserving the principles."²⁴ Undoubtedly, Hezbollah's main priority and interest at that particular juncture was the liberation of occupied South Lebanon. Thus, participation in elections was deemed as providing it with the ability to defend that interest without necessarily entailing the espousal of the idea that the structure of the state was inherently just and fair.²⁵ For Israel, the end of the civil war meant that it could, from then on, demand that the Lebanese government not only assert its sovereignty over the areas that had been evacuated by the IDF since 1985 by dispatching the Lebanese Armed Forces, but also work actively to prevent attacks (against not only northern Israel, but also the IDF and the SLA in the "security zone") and the setting out of attackers from those areas, a demand that was rejected by the Lebanese government which, for its own part, insisted that Israel adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 425.

²⁴ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 187-191.

²⁵ For more on the transformation of Hezbollah, see A. Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," *Third World Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1993): 321-337.

Assassination of Sayyed 'Abbas al-Mussawi

The first major incident following the end of the civil war was the assassination, on February 16, 1992, of Hezbollah's Secretary-General Sayyed 'Abbas al-Mussawi along with his wife and son. Not unlike the assassination of Sheikh Ragheb Harb and PLO figures in the past, the assassination was predicated on the belief that it would contribute to Israel's national security and add to its deterrence and significantly reduce the ability and willingness of resistance groups and liberation movements to continue their struggle. Indeed, this belief was reflected in the fact that Israeli officials saw a causal relationship between the appointment of al-Mussawi as Secretary-General and the escalation of resistance activities.²⁶ Thus, commenting on the assassination in an interview on Israel Television on the same day, then-Minister of Defense Moshe Arens pointed out that al-Mussawi was "responsible for the murder of a number of IDF soldiers...a man with a lot of blood on his hands" and expressed conviction that his assassination was "a damaging strike to the organization ... a message to all terrorist organizations, that whoever opens an account with us, the account will be closed by us." Arens went on to note that one of the lessons Israel had learned was that "terrorist organizations such as the Hizballah understand one language – force."²⁷

Yet if the events that ensued proved anything, it was that Hezbollah did not "understand the language of force", for it was undeterred by the assassination and responded to it – and to simultaneous Israeli artillery attacks – by escalating its attacks not only in the "security zone" but also beyond it, firing Katyusha rockets at towns in northern Israel for

²⁶ Immediately following the assassination Israeli officials were quick to point out that over the course of a year and a half prior to the appointment of al-Mussawi as the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, only sixteen attacks had been recorded against the IDF and the SLA resulting in the death of two soldiers. In contrast, in the five months following his appointment, the number had jumped to fifty-one attacks and ten fatalities. See Chris Hedges, "Killing of Sheik: Israel Waited for Months," *The New York Times*, 22 February 1992, 1.

²⁷ "Interview with Defense Minister Arens on Israel Television, 16 February 1992," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1988-1992/265%20Interview%20with%20Defense%20Minister%20Arens%20on%20Israe> (last accessed: January 2009).

days.²⁸ Israel's response to the escalation came in the form of a large-scale incursion into two villages north of the "security zone", described as the first of its kind and scale since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Nonetheless, Israel failed to achieve the stated purpose of the operation, namely the location of missile launchers and guerilla strongholds,²⁹ a dubious objective in itself. The withdrawal of the IDF from the two villages was immediately followed by the entry of Hezbollah fighters to the village and the firing of rocket salvos which killed an Israeli child, paradoxically the first Israeli fatality since the escalation that followed the assassination of al-Mussawi. The message behind the continuation of rocket fire following the Israeli withdrawal could not have been clearer; the IDF's response to this clear challenge was mainly in the form of a warning to the effect that Israel would "find the time and place" to strike back.³⁰

The assassination of al-Mussawi was in fact a strategic blunder, for not only did it fail to undermine Hezbollah's resolve, it rather enhanced it greatly. Moreover, the immediate appointment of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah as the next Secretary-General of Hezbollah meant that Israel's expected and hoped-for leadership vacuum within the organization – and the collapse of discipline within its ranks and disintegration of the party that was expected to have come about as a result³¹ – would not come to fruition. Furthermore, Nasrallah's election marked the beginning of a new chapter in Hezbollah's resistance activities, its strategy and

²⁸Others – including Israelis – have claimed that Hezbollah was also behind the 1992 and 1994 attacks in Argentina against the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish community center respectively. This claim, while unsubstantiated, is popular in light of the fact that, as Or Honig points out, by assassinating al-Mussawi, Israel sought to change the "tacit rules of deterrence." Belief in Hezbollah's responsibility for the attacks is predicated, at least in part, on the gravity of the threat – in terms of a change in the rules of the game – this attempt represented for Hezbollah. See Honig, *op. cit.*, 566-567. It is important to note here that the attempt to pin the blame for the attacks on Hezbollah in the absence of evidence to that effect (and indeed much controversy regarding the politicization of investigations and testimonies by individuals of suspicious background – such as membership in the MKO) is also inspired by the desire to portray the organization as a "terrorist" group responsible for the targeting and killing of civilians.

²⁹"Shiite Attacks are Cited – Raid Is Called Largest Since 1982," *The New York Times*, 21 February 1992, A10.

³⁰"Israeli Army Ends 24-Hour Incursion in South Lebanon," *The New York Times*, 22 February 1992, 1.

³¹Clive Jones argues that at the heart of Israel's policy of targeting resistance personalities and leaders – be it the PLO, Hamas, or Hezbollah – lies the "belief [dating back to the Cold War era] that the removal of key individuals from an insurgent organization will induce neuralgic atrophy, leading to the structural implosion in all or part of an insurgent organization." Clive Jones, "'A reach greater than the grasp': Israeli intelligence and the conflict in south Lebanon 1990-2000," *Intelligence & National Security* 16, no. 3 (2001): 5-6.

tactics, and just as importantly, its political orientation. The most important change came in the form of, as Sheikh Na'im Qassem puts it, a political decision to use rockets against northern Israel only in retaliation for the targeting of Lebanese civilians, cities, villages, or civilian infrastructure by Israel,³² what amounted to, in the words of Simon Murden, a "policy of retaliation" rather than a "policy of resistance."³³ The decision was significant, for it signaled the adoption of a new strategic outlook which aimed at creating parity between Israeli and Lebanese civilians. The cumulative effect of tit-for-tat rocket attacks would, it was hoped, create a "balance of terror", which in turn would serve as deterrence against Israel, preventing the latter from carrying out further attacks against Lebanese civilians and civilian targets, thereby keeping the struggle in the military realm where Hezbollah – despite being inferior in terms of capabilities, manpower, and resources – had an edge owing both to its nature as a guerilla force and to a terrain well-suited to the type of struggle it was conducting. Furthermore, the sum total of small and seemingly relatively harmless attacks would, it was believed, provide Israel with incentive to end its occupation by increasing the cost of maintaining it to a level above that of the benefits derived from it. Part of that formula was the ability to convince Israel – and the Israeli public – of the inefficacy of the "security zone" in obtaining "peace for the Galilee" let alone in safeguarding it. The most cost-effective and strategically smart and sound tools for achieving this end were, in fact, surface-to-surface rockets such as Katyushas. By virtue of their relatively unsophisticated launching mechanism, high mobility and even portability, and the possibility of implementing a timer or trigger mechanism on launchers, not only were they largely immune to being spotted and destroyed by the Israeli Air Force, but also less costly in terms of loss of fighting manpower than infiltrations.

³² Qassem, *Hizbullah: al-Manhaj..al-Tajribah..al-Mustaqbal*, 158.

³³ Simon Murden, "Understanding Israel's Long Conflict in Lebanon: The Search for an Alternative Approach to Security during the Peace Process," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 1 (May 2000): 37. This, however, did not mean the non-utilization of rockets within the "security zone."

4.3 Operation Accountability

Hezbollah's unrelenting quest for the establishment of a "balance of terror" as an alternative to an unattainable symmetry of power and its intensification of attacks in the "security zone", combined with the concern of Israeli politicians and generals at these developments, set the stage for an escalation of unprecedented scale. Grappling with an increasingly untenable situation, Israel found it imperative to take major action to reverse Hezbollah's recent gains and change the situation in its favor; to do so, however, it required a *casus belli* which nevertheless was not readily available in light of Hezbollah's strict adherence to the "policy of retaliation" in the usage of its rockets against communities in northern Israel. A series of deadly attacks on Israeli soldiers in the "security zone" in early July leaving half a dozen dead – three of them in a rocket attack – provided Israel with the opportunity to issue a stern warning in preparation for the launching of an operation at the next opportunity that would arise.³⁴ This came not long thereafter, in the form of Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israel in response to the shelling of Lebanese villages north of the "security zone." The stage was set for a major escalation that would mark the beginning of the decline and ultimately the end of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

On July 25, 1993, Israel launched a large-scale operation against Lebanon, purportedly in response to the attacks against its soldiers throughout the month and the latest volley of rockets fired at northern Israel, in fulfillment of the warning it had issued earlier. Labeled Operation Accountability and referred to as the largest operation since the 1982 invasion, the operation began in the form of air strikes against Lebanese villages and towns as well as civilian infrastructure. The reasons for the attack were laid bare not long after the

³⁴ Then-IDF Chief of Staff Ehud Barak had spoken of the inevitability of a major operation weeks earlier. See Clyde Haberman, "Clashes Intensify in Lebanon Zone," *The New York Times*, 23 July 1993, A5. See also Clyde Haberman, "Damascus Warned by Israel on Raids," *The New York Times*, 12 July 1993, A4.

launch of the operation. As Noam Chomsky observes, Rabin was quick to point out that Hezbollah had attempted to change the rules of the game whereby in retaliation for Israeli attacks north of the “security zone”, it would strike northern Israel rather than carry out attacks in the zone.³⁵ This was a stark admission that the operation was in fact inspired by the pattern that emerged since the assassination of al-Mussawi.

Despite public recognition of Hezbollah’s policy of, and rationale behind, the targeting of northern Israel, the official objective of the operation – intended just as much for domestic as for external consumption – was defined as putting an end to rocket fire on northern Israel. Thus, shortly after the start of the operation, Prime Minister Rabin would announce that “if there will be no quiet and safety for the northern settlements, there will be no quiet and safety for south Lebanon residents north of the security zone.”³⁶ Not only did this public pronouncement present an inaccurate timeline of the events that led up to the launch of the operation, it also contradicted other statements made during the campaign. For example, three days after the start of the operation, Rabin would boast of IDF successes that had allegedly prevented infiltration of Hezbollah fighters into Israel and caused it a “resounding failure within the Security Zone”; so overwhelming were these successes, Rabin claimed, that they had forced the organization into directing its activities against Israeli territory, an attempt at “transfer[ring] the war from Lebanon to the home of infants in northern communities.”³⁷ If the paradoxical statement demonstrated anything, it was the dissonance between official Israeli pronouncements and the reality on the ground. For, not only had Hezbollah never crossed into Israel – despite having reached the border fence a

³⁵ Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel, and the Palestinians* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1999), 516.

³⁶ Joel Greenberg, “Israeli Jets, in Answer to Attacks, Bomb Guerilla Bases in Lebanon,” *The New York Times*, 26 July 1993, A1.

³⁷ “Statement in the Knesset by Prime Minister Rabin on Operation Accountability, 28 July 1993,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1992-1994/93%20Statement%20in%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Rabi> (last accessed: December 2008).

number of times in previous years – its firing of rockets at northern Israel were not a result of its successes or failures, but rather, a matter of policy. Just as importantly, the

The public pronouncements by Israeli leaders, while made with seemingly genuine conviction, nevertheless did not necessarily reflect ignorance of Hezbollah's tactics and strategy, let alone actual belief in the success of the operation. Aware of Hezbollah's goal of establishing equivalence between the targeting of Israeli and Lebanese civilians and civilian infrastructure, and keen on preventing a change in the rules of the game, Rabin and his government opted to unleash massive firepower on more than seventy villages in South Lebanon, causing a flood of refugees fleeing northward towards Beirut. In fact, Israel made no secret of the deliberate targeting of villages and the rationale behind it. Shortly after Israel began its attacks, Rabin "vowed to flood Beirut with displaced people until the Lebanese and Syrian governments intervened to rein in the ... guerilla forces." The demand for reining in the guerilla forces, however, did not mean merely preventing them from launching rockets at Israel. It also meant, as Rabin himself confirmed after the ceasefire that put an end to the operation, an end to the organization's targeting of IDF soldiers and SLA forces in the "security zone." As Minister of Foreign Affairs Shimon Peres warned, "if they try to plot against our forces there, or the South Lebanon Army forces there, we will take measures against them."³⁸

The tactic of creating a refugee problem to put pressure on the Lebanese government or Syria was in itself ill-advised, for it was based on a fundamentally mistaken perception of the ability of the Lebanese government to rein in Hezbollah or the willingness of Syria to put an end (let alone being coerced into doing so) to Hezbollah activities in the "security zone" and its rocket attacks on northern Israel. Inaccurate, too, was the belief that Hezbollah and its actions were a mere function of Syrian interests, for while it was true that Syria had a

³⁸ Chris Hedges, "U.S. Brokers Truce to Halt Fighting in South Lebanon," *The New York Times*, 1 August 1993, 12.

significant degree of leverage over the organization by virtue of its provision of weaponry to it and the its hegemony over Lebanon, this leverage did not necessarily amount to total control over the organization and its decisions, especially in what pertained to its strategy of liberation. In addition, in describing the creation of a refugee problem in terms of pressuring the Lebanese authorities and Syria to take action rather than as an attempt at coercing Hezbollah into halting its activities, Israel demonstrated its inability to see or unwillingness to recognize Hezbollah as a local force deeply rooted in South Lebanon, enjoying the popular support of the South Lebanese themselves, and genuinely interested in their welfare. This was a fine example of the age-old tactic of demonizing liberation movements by portraying them as foreign implants pursuing a struggle that is fundamentally at odds with the interests of the local population. It was in fact an emulation of its rhetoric toward the PLO from its founding until the peace process. With the PLO's movement away from the struggle of liberation toward negotiations over, in effect, the shape of Palestinian capitulation to Israeli interests and objectives, and the simultaneous rise of Hamas as a threat to said interests, the latter replaced the former as the target of such demonization.

Hezbollah, for its part, remained defiant in the face of the Israeli campaign, insisting that it would halt its rocket attacks only if and when Israel put an end to its shelling of Lebanese villages, civilians, and infrastructure, an offer that Israel predictably dismissed. Israel's refusal, however, did not fundamentally alter the outcome. After seven days of continuous bombardment and continuing rocket fire, a ceasefire based on an oral "understanding" put an end to the fighting on July 31, 1993. The fact that the understanding was unwritten left Israel with enough room to maneuver and claim victory. Thus, on the day the ceasefire took effect, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman could declare the achievement of the two goals of the operation: "an end to indiscriminate Hizballah rocketing of northern Israeli towns" and the elimination of "the ability of Hizballah, and other

rejectionist groups, to veto the peace process.” Moreover, in the face of criticism for having deliberately created a humanitarian crisis, and in direct contradiction to previous official statements to the effect that Israel’s utilization of its firepower against South Lebanese villages was designed to create a colossal refugee problem for the Lebanese authorities with the purpose of pressuring them into reining in Hezbollah – in effect an admission of “terrorism” – the spokesperson would point out the proportionate nature of the operation and the fact that it was “designed to avoid civilian casualties as much as possible”, alleging that the operation took the course it did “only when Hizballah escalated with rocket fire against Israeli towns.” Indeed, Israel would go on to place the blame for the displacement of the South Lebanese squarely on Hezbollah’s shoulders. Notably, aside from concluding that the operation had brought calm and quiet to northern Israel, the spokesperson would go on to state, matter-of-factly, that “rejectionist” Hezbollah had been weakened and that its ability to “veto the peace process” had been curtailed.³⁹ This was arguably an attempt to deflect attention from the actual root cause and nature of the struggle Hezbollah had been conducting against Israel in South Lebanon, respectively the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon and a protracted war of liberation, portraying it instead as a struggle between those that seek peace and those that “reject” it.

Nonetheless, the declaration of victory was not in tune with the actual outcome of the operation. If the objective was to put an end to the rocket attacks on northern Israel, it could have been achieved by a decision to refrain from targeting South Lebanon. Such a decision, however, was unthinkable for an Israel intent on maintaining its hold over the “security zone”, for it would have meant accepting a new reality, one that would have placed severe restrictions on the utilization of its firepower to its utmost, and by extension, a decline in its

³⁹ “Foreign Ministry Spokesman’s Statement on the Conclusion of Operation Accountability, 31 July 1993,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1992-1994/96%20Foreign%20Ministry%20Spokesman-s%20Statement%20on%20the%20C> (last accessed: December 2008).

coercive capacity. Notwithstanding Israel's refusal to cede much of its coercive capacity against Hezbollah in return for the "peace of the Galilee", Operation Accountability demonstrated the limits of its military power; it also demonstrated the absurdity of the continuing occupation of the "security zone"; indeed, the lack of reasonable objectives behind the persistence clearly illustrated the prioritization of blind political stubbornness over strategic and security considerations.

The understanding required both parties – Israel and Hezbollah – to refrain from targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure. However, while the Lebanese side insisted – correctly – that the understanding did not extend to guerilla activities in the "security zone," Israel insisted that it did. In effect, the oral nature of the agreement and the contradictory interpretations it gave rise to, paved the way for another, and this time decisive, round of fighting.

4.4 Operation Grapes of Wrath

Nearly three years after Operation Accountability and the oral understanding it gave rise to, on April 11, 1996 Israel launched another military campaign which it labeled Operation Grapes of Wrath.⁴⁰ The justification for the operation was Hezbollah rocket fire on northern Israel on two separate occasions, both of which were in fact in retaliation for the killing of Lebanese civilians by Israeli shelling. Nonetheless, the actual timeline of events was of less (or no) importance to Israeli policymakers than the fact that northern Israel had, once again, become the target of Katyusha rockets. Prime Minister Shimon Peres, faced with mounting criticism in the dying weeks of his premiership from the public, generals, and political opponents – not least of all his chief rival Benjamin Netanyahu – seeking to turn the

⁴⁰ Paradoxically, the operation was initiated in the shadow of the "Summit of Peacemakers" in Sharm el-Sheikh.

“plight” of the communities in northern Israel into an electoral issue,⁴¹ and fearing a decline in his electoral chances as a result of inaction against Hezbollah which would undoubtedly portray him as “soft on security”⁴², decided to initiate the fiercest campaign against Lebanon since 1982. The decision was aided, in part, by the public mood in the country which had experienced two suicide bombings only a month earlier.⁴³

The declared objective of the operation – described by Peres as an operation “of no alternative”⁴⁴ – was to “put an end to attacks on Israeli citizens, residents of Southern Lebanon and IDF and SLA personnel,” strike Hezbollah at every possible location, and “hit those who fire Katyusha rockets into Israel.”⁴⁵ On more than one occasion, Israeli leaders and IDF Generals also stated that Israel would not halt its attacks unless and until its objectives were met. Not only did Israel demonstrate once again its unwillingness to accept the strategic logic behind Hezbollah’s utilization of its missile capabilities, it also seemed to be ignorant of Hezbollah’s determination to achieve its objective of placing Lebanese civilians outside the equation in the struggle between its fighters on the one hand, and the IDF and SLA on the other. Indeed, whereas Hezbollah sought to distinguish between attacks on civilians and attacks against soldiers, Israel sought to group them together, as was evident from the statement of the objective of the operation: attacks against IDF (and SLA) personnel were deemed to be as unacceptable as attacks on Israeli civilians. This was in fact in line with the

⁴¹ Joel Greenberg, “An Attack on Israel Brings Woe to Peres,” *The New York Times*, 10 April 1996, A7.

⁴² Serge Schmemmann, “Israeli Aircraft Strike Guerillas in Beirut Suburbs,” *The New York Times*, 12 April 1996, A6.

⁴³ For more on the domestic political and ideological considerations that contributed to the launch of Operation Grapes of Wrath, see Marwan Bishara, “Acting Tough: Israel’s Domestic Imperatives,” in Hollis and Shehadi, *op. cit.*, 47-51.

⁴⁴ “Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Peres on Operation ‘Grapes of Wrath,’ 22 April 1996,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1995-1996/Statement%20to%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Peres%20o> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁴⁵ “Remarks by OC Northern Command Levin on Operation ‘Grapes of Wrath,’ 14 April 1996,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1995-1996/Remarks%20by%20OC%20Northern%20Command%20Levin%20on%20Operation> (last accessed: December 2008).

idea, which had taken root in the IDF and Israeli political circles since late 1982 following the intensification of resistance activities, that IDF soldiers needed to be defended, and that the defense of soldiers was just as important as the defense of civilians. Hence, in this vein, then-Minister of Defense Rabin would in 1985 declare that “the IDF will defend its troops until the last soldier leaves Lebanese soil.”⁴⁶

What the campaign clearly demonstrated was Israel’s failure to recognize the limits of its own deterrence as well as of its coercive power. Clearly, the lessons of Operation Accountability had not been learned. Indeed, in pursuit of its declared and undeclared objectives, Israel put into practice the same exact tactic, tried and failed, of unleashing massive and indiscriminate firepower and causing an influx of refugees from South Lebanon to Beirut. Compared to the previous operation, however, Operation Grapes of Wrath was marked by more brutality, which Israel defended by pointing out that Hezbollah had taken advantage of the 1993 understanding to set up bases in civilian areas;⁴⁷ notably, it targeted Beirut suburbs for the first time since 1982, imposed a naval blockade and crippled the country’s electric grid. Significantly, and reminiscent of the terminology used by Israel to refer to PLO presence and activity in South Lebanon in the years preceding Operation Litani (Fatehland), Peres referred to unoccupied areas of South Lebanon as “Hizballahland” and “Iranian-occupied territory within Lebanon.”⁴⁸ If its characterization of Hezbollah was intended to turn the Lebanese against the organization and its resistance activities, Israel’s military actions had the opposite effect of rallying the Lebanese – of all sects and from across the country – behind Hezbollah. Moreover, notwithstanding multiple pronouncements by Israel to the effect that it would not halt its activities until Hezbollah accepted its demands,

⁴⁶ “Statement in the Knesset by Defense Minister Rabin, 13 March 1985,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1984-1988/56%20Statement%20in%20the%20Knesset%20by%20Defense%20Minister%20Ra> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁴⁷ Serge Schmemmann, “Israelis Blockade Ports in Lebanon and Shell South,” *The New York Times*, 14 April 1996, 10.

⁴⁸ “Statement to the Knesset by Prime Minister Peres on Operation ‘Grapes of Wrath,’ 22 April 1996,” op. cit.

the situation on the ground indicated that the outcome would not differ markedly from that of Operation Accountability. The disparity between the outcome of the operation and Israel's initially bold statements and overly confident position would in fact serve to diminish Israeli deterrence, a mistake that Israel would fail to learn from and correct in the coming years, as will be seen at the end of this chapter.

Diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire, led by the U.S, began a few days into the operation. Although initially intended to be the continuation, by other means, of Israel's war on Hezbollah, the latter's ability to absorb Israel's "grapes of wrath" and maintain its rocket fire against northern Israel, together with a massacre on April 18 at a UN base in Qana sheltering hundreds of refugees fleeing bombardment, meant that efforts at drafting an unbalanced agreement favoring Israel would have little chance of being translated into reality. In effect, the two, especially the latter, set the stage for an historic "understanding" that would, in the words of then-Minister of Domestic Security Avigdor Kahalani, effectively turn IDF soldiers into "sitting ducks" for Hezbollah attacks.⁴⁹ Announced on April 26, 1996, the understanding established in writing, at long last, the new rules of confrontation that Hezbollah had long sought. While it prohibited Hezbollah's use of rockets against Israel-proper, it also prohibited Israeli fire against civilians and civilian targets, including industrial and electrical infrastructure.⁵⁰ After two deadly and highly-destructive operations within the span of three years, Hezbollah succeeded in obtaining a "restraining order" against an enemy that had traditionally acted "on the conviction that, in order to be understood, it must hit back many times harder than the blows delivered by its opponent."⁵¹ It had furthermore spoiled Israeli attempts at gaining "immunity for Israeli forces in the 'security zone.'"⁵² In light of this unwavering commitment on Israel's part to securing the security of its soldiers and the

⁴⁹ Sela, "Civil Society, the Military, and National Security", 67.

⁵⁰ For the full text of the understanding, see "Documents and Source Material," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 25, no. 4 (Summer 1996): 138.

⁵¹ Richard W. Murphy, "The Costs of Wrath: An American Perspective," in Hollis and Shehadi, op. cit., 7.

⁵² Patrick Seale, "'The Address Is Syria,'" in Hollis and Shehadi, op. cit., 20.

continuity of its occupation regime in South Lebanon, Operation Grapes of Wrath could be said to have been a decisive moment in the by then decade-long struggle for the liberation of South Lebanon, and by extension Syria's interests vis-à-vis Israel, its position in Lebanon, and its prestige in the Arab world.

4.5 Ending the Occupation

Despite the two major campaigns in less than three years and the gradually increasing death toll in the ranks of the IDF in South Lebanon, prior to 1997⁵³ the Israeli public was largely oblivious of the situation in the "security zone" and there was little debate on the efficacy of the concept of the "security zone" both in political circles and the public realm. This was in part the result of, as Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer argue, a calculated IDF policy aimed at preventing public criticism of and objections to the continuation of the occupation, whereby IDF reservists were not stationed in the "security zone" since 1985. Instead, only regular military units were stationed in the zone, in stark contrast to the policy of deploying reservists in the OPT.⁵⁴

That it was not until 1997 that public debate on the occupation commenced in earnest, however, is not to say that Operation Accountability and Operation Grapes of Wrath, and their outcome, had no impact on Israeli public opinion, but rather, that a change in the nature of the debate on the "security zone" was naturally a function of the *cumulative* effect of experiences and shocks which the Israeli public found increasingly difficult to absorb and the IDF to alleviate or market as necessary for Israeli security. Thus, while neither the two operations nor the helicopter incident and the grassroots campaign it gave rise to ("Four Mothers") would have prompted public debate about the occupation by themselves, the

⁵³ In particular the helicopter collision in February of that year that killed seventy-three soldiers on their way to South Lebanon.

⁵⁴ Oren Barak and Gabriel Sheffer, "The Study of Civil-Military Relations in Israel: A New Perspective," *Israel Studies* 12, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 14.

combination of events over the past four years did. Underscoring the urgent need for public debate too was the calculated Hezbollah ambush, in September 1997, of an elite Israeli commando unit in the town of Ansariye north of the “security zone” that left twelve Israeli soldiers dead and their remains in the hands of Hezbollah. Although not the result of a Hezbollah attack, the helicopter incident nevertheless underscored the senseless loss of Israeli soldiers for a security zone the costs of which appeared to outweigh the benefits, for while the number of Israeli civilian casualties between June 1985 and September 1997 had dropped in comparison to the twelve years prior to the 1982 invasion, this drop had been offset by an increase in the number of Israeli soldiers killed in the “security zone” since 1985.⁵⁵ More significant than the helicopter crash was the Ansariye ambush, which sent shock waves throughout Israel; it demonstrated the unshakeable determination of Hezbollah in continuing the struggle for the “security zone” and proportional to it an increase in the sophistication of the means at its disposal and the deadliness of its attacks, as well as the shocking failure of Israeli intelligence in forestalling the bloodshed.⁵⁶

The intensification of public debate in Israel about the efficacy of the “security zone” concept and the fate of the occupation prompted the Netanyahu government to present, in a last-ditch effort, an initiative that would have extricated the IDF from the Lebanese quagmire. The initiative offered Lebanon an agreement according to which Israel would have withdrawn from the “security zone” in return for Lebanon’s acceptance of preventing cross-border attacks from its territories. While the initiative was an improvement on previous Israeli diplomatic efforts on the Lebanese front, notably the May 17 Accord, it would

⁵⁵ Between June 1985 and September 1997, 212 Israeli soldiers had been killed (not including the 73 who lost their lives in the helicopter incident) and 677 injured, while 6 Israeli civilians had been killed and 170 injured. In contrast, in the twelve years preceding the Lebanon War, 54 Israeli soldiers had been killed and 297 injured, while 40 Israeli civilians had been killed and 380 injured. See Sela, “Civil Society, the Military, and National Security”, 65.

⁵⁶ So severe was the blow the Ansariye ambush dealt to the image (and just as importantly, self-image) of the IDF, its elite units, and intelligence apparatus, that ten years after the incident it remained fresh in the minds of policymakers and commentators and continued to spark debates about what had really transpired. See for example, Firas Khatib, “Kamin ‘Ansariye’ la yazal yu’arriq Isra’il” (Ansariye ambush continues to haunt Israel), *al-Akhbar*, 1 September 2007: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/45522> (last accessed: December 2008).

nevertheless have committed Lebanon to what a full-fledged peace agreement would have committed it to – namely preventing attacks against Israel from its territories – without at the same time satisfying its demands and concerns which a peace agreement may have addressed. Just as importantly, it would have isolated Syria and stripped it of its bargaining chip in negotiations for the return of the Golan Heights. Thus, and not unexpectedly, the initiative was rejected by the Lebanese government, on the grounds that it would accept an agreement with Israel only as part of comprehensive peace agreements including Syria.

Parallel to the continuation of Hezbollah resistance activities and the rejection of Netanyahu's initiative, was an increase in Israeli public support, or at the very least tolerance, of the idea of a unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon. Sensing a change in the public mood in the country Ehud Barak based much of his electoral campaign on the promise of withdrawing the IDF from Lebanon with or without an agreement with Lebanon and Syria.⁵⁷ The result was a victory at the polls, the formation of a left-center-religious coalition government, and a popular mandate to at long last put an end to Israel's occupation of Lebanon. The elections in fact coincided with the retreat of the SLA from Jezzine under Hezbollah pressure; inadvertently, Barak's electoral promises, his government's platform, and subsequent references to an imminent withdrawal had caused, along with Hezbollah psychological pressure, the demoralization of Israel's proxy militia and a tide of defections that would, not long thereafter, result in the collapse of the entire "security zone."

In February 2000, purportedly in retaliation for the assassination of SLA second-in-command 'Aql Hashem and the killing of five Israeli soldiers, the IAF bombed three power

⁵⁷ Kaye cites a belated change in Netanyahu's views on the occupation; in early 1999 he would say: "Rocket attacks cannot be prevented by territorial occupation, because Katyushas can have a longer range...The only thing we can do to prevent missile attacks on our territory until suitable technology is developed...is to deter." Kaye, *op. cit.*, 579.

plants in Lebanon (for the second time since Operation Grapes of Wrath⁵⁸). Arguably, the targeting of the electrical grid was inspired by the realization that with the IDF's withdrawal fast approaching, the window of opportunity for correcting the mistake that the 1996 understanding was perceived to be, was closing fast, as was the opportunity for the rebuilding of Israeli deterrence to offset perceptions of Israeli weakness that the unilateral withdrawal might have produced. Thus, as the flare-up subsided, the IDF Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz would declare that "the aims of the operation in the realm of deterrence have been achieved" and boast that "Israel's strategic deterrence has been strengthened."⁵⁹

Israel's quest for boosting its deterrence prior to departing from South Lebanon can better be understood when viewed in the context of the situation within the "security zone" in the last few years of the occupation: the ratio of Hezbollah casualties to SLA and IDF casualties had nearly reached parity and the situation had become so intolerable that IDF soldiers had, as Augustus Richard Norton notes, become captives of the fear of becoming targeted and as a result practically imprisoned themselves in fortifications, instead entrusting most of the duties of occupation to the SLA.⁶⁰ Thus, not only was IDF presence in the "security zone" ineffective in protecting northern Israeli communities from rocket fire, it would likely also have been ineffective in the prevention of infiltration into Israel by Hezbollah, had the latter taken a decision to conduct such activities. In effect, the IDF presence in South Lebanon had become an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Ehud Barak had gone even further and described the preservation of the occupation of Lebanon as being the result of a dilemma, such that "when the pressure was on, there would be no Israeli

⁵⁸ The first bombardment of Lebanese power plants since Operation Grapes of Wrath took place on June 24, 1999 and was initiated by departing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. See Deborah Sontag, "Lebanon Guerillas and Israel Trade Rocket and Air Strikes," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1999, A1, A3.

⁵⁹ Joel Greenberg, "Lebanon Fighting Ebbas in Claims of Victory," *The New York Times*, 11 February 2000, A10. Hezbollah's viewed the bombardment of civilian infrastructure as an attempt at changing the rules of the game which it had successfully changed in 1996.

⁶⁰ Augustus Richard Norton, "Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 30. Clive Jones also cites the Hezbollah storming of the IDF-manned Dabshe outpost in the "security zone" in 1994 and the flight of IDF soldiers as an example of the fear of Hezbollah that had taken hold of Israeli combat units. Jones, *op. cit.*, 19.

withdrawal from Lebanon because Israel doesn't give in to military pressure. And at times of little or no pressure, there would be no reason to even discuss Israel's continued presence in Lebanon."⁶¹

The demoralization of the SLA and the desertion of its members in great numbers, especially following the assassination of its second-in-command, led to the collapse of the "security zone", forcing Israel to make a hasty and unplanned departure on May 24, 2000, leaving behind equipment and ammunition. What had been intended as an orderly unilateral withdrawal scheduled to take place by July, wound up appearing as a retreat in the face of Hezbollah advances. The deterrence that Israel had sought to acquire in February 2000 was offset by the developments on the ground and the manner in which the withdrawal was carried out. On May 24, 2000 with the last Israeli tanks rolling out, Hezbollah's eighteen-year struggle for the liberation of South Lebanon appeared to have come to a close. On May 26, 2000, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah would stand in liberated Bint Jbeil and declare that Israel was weaker than a spider's web.⁶² This statement was in effect a declaration of Hezbollah's perception of Israel's inability to withstand protracted armed struggle against a well-trained and dedicated guerilla force struggling for liberation. Indeed, in the course of its struggle, Hezbollah had become, in the words of Eyal Zisser, "one of the most professional guerilla forces in the world,"⁶³ and in so doing was branded not only the liberator of South Lebanon, but also its chief defender from any future Israeli aggression. This rhetoric, in turn, gave Hezbollah's weapons a new lease on life, as did the party's insistence that the total liberation of Lebanon had not been achieved due to the continued presence of Israeli forces in the Sheba'a Farms.

⁶¹ Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 20.

⁶² See the full text of the speech in Arabic: <http://www.mogawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=2041&cid=141> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁶³ Zisser, *op. cit.*, 92.

Aside from the fact that the occupation had become militarily untenable especially in its last years, the unilateral withdrawal was also inspired by a number of political considerations. First, given Syria's utilization of the Hezbollah card to link the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425 to that of UN Security Council Resolution 242, it was believed that withdrawal from Lebanon would deal Israel a new hand and weaken Syria's bargaining position. Second, the implementation of UN SCR 425 would boost Israel's international diplomatic standing. Third, the end of the occupation would render irrelevant Hezbollah's justifications for keeping its weapons, or at the very least increase pressure on the organization to disarm. Fourth, the implementation of the Resolution would legitimize in the eyes of the international community Israel's reaction to any future attack emanating from Lebanon.⁶⁴

4.6 Strategy of Containment

In a statement at a cabinet meeting on the day Israel ended its occupation of South Lebanon, Barak had gone so far as to declare that "any firing on IDF soldiers or civilians within Israel's borders would be considered as an *act of war* which would be met with appropriate action."⁶⁵ Notwithstanding this and subsequent warnings about the dire consequences of any attack launched from Lebanese territory following its withdrawal, the first test of Israeli determination to retaliate came not long thereafter – in October 2000 – in the form of a Hezbollah attack in the occupied Sheba'a Farms which resulted in the capture

⁶⁴ A background paper issued by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs sheds light on the political rationale behind the withdrawal. See "Foreign Ministry background paper on Lebanon, 24 May 2000," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1999-2001/117%20%20Foreign%20Ministry%20background%20paper%20on%20Lebanon-> (last accessed: January 2009).

⁶⁵ Emphasis added. See "Statement at the cabinet meeting by Prime Minister Barak regarding Lebanon, 24 May 2000," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1999-2001/118%20%20Statement%20at%20the%20cabinet%20meeting%20by%20Prime%20Min> (last accessed: January 2009).

of three Israeli soldiers. Nonetheless, Israel's reaction to the capture of its soldiers was markedly reserved; military activity was focused almost entirely on the operative goal of reaching to the captives before their traces disappeared. Also restrained was Barak's verbal reaction; the harsh-worded warning and the threatening tone that had characterized the post-withdrawal statement were replaced by a mellow reminder that Israel reserved the right to respond.⁶⁶

Arguably, the main reason for this change of tone in such a short period of time lies in Israel's formulation of a limited form of what the Winograd Commission would some six years later refer to as a strategy of containment vis-à-vis Hezbollah. This strategy stemmed in part from Israel's unwillingness to be provoked into a return to South Lebanon especially that the disastrous decades-long occupation was still fresh in Israeli politicians', generals', and public's mind. The strategy was made all the more crucial in the wake of the eruption of the Second *Intifada*, which Israel hoped to put a quick end to. Furthermore, the violence in the OPT raised the dangerous possibility of the opening of a second front, a development that would have harmed Israel's ability to crush the Palestinian uprising at the same time as preventing it from performing effectively on the Lebanese front. Indeed, the timing of the Hezbollah operation had been based on exactly such a consideration. Furthermore, the fact that the attack had been directed at a military post in what the international community considered occupied territory meant that Israel would have had a more difficult time justifying a large-scale retaliation than it would have had if the attack had been directed at Israeli territory. Thus, the Israeli strategy of containing the threat posed by Hezbollah oscillated between diplomatic activity, verbal warnings, and limited – often merely symbolic – attacks.

⁶⁶ "Statements by Prime Minister Barak and UN Secretary-General Annan, 10 October 2000," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Foreign%20Relations/Israels%20Foreign%20Relations%20since%201947/1999-2001/177%20%20Statements%20by%20Prime%20Minister%20Barak%20and%20UN%20Sec> (last accessed: January 2009).

The fact that Israel had declined to consider Hezbollah's capture of its soldiers and the escalation of attacks in the Sheba'a Farms a *casus belli* was significant. The inclination to avoid major confrontations was the result not only of Israeli political and strategic considerations, namely prioritizing the OPT, but also of the decline, in recent years, in Israel's relative material power and coercive capacity vis-à-vis Hezbollah, an increase in the latter's deterrence against it, and as Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff point out, Israel's reluctance both to open a second front and to "broadcast to the public that its unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon had resulted in an escalation of violence on the northern border."⁶⁷ The Israeli experience in South Lebanon had practically shell-shocked the IDF and created the complex of the "Lebanese quagmire."⁶⁸ It was therefore only natural that Israeli politicians would seek to avoid – up to a certain level of escalation/provocation – a return to Lebanon.

Nonetheless, the first signs of an attempted change in policy came a month after the election of Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister. On two occasions, in response to attacks on IDF posts in the Sheba'a Farms, the IDF responded by targeting Syrian radar stations in Lebanon, refraining from targeting Lebanese infrastructure. Clearly, Hezbollah had successfully deterred Israel, but paradoxically, it had done so at Syria's expense. Nonetheless, while the initial counter-attack did not elicit a response from Hezbollah, the second did. The explicit message behind the Hezbollah response was that it would not accept an attempt at changing the rules of engagement between it and Israel in the Sheba'a Farms. The attempt at breaking out of the strategy of containment was, as a result, aborted. The strategy of containment was

⁶⁷ Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 40.

⁶⁸ The IDF's predicament in Lebanon was best described by Zeev Schiff in 1983: "It is not just a different Lebanon. It is first of all a different Israeli Army. It is astonishing and painful. What the people who have initiated this war have done to the Israeli Army is unforgivable. You no longer talk about "what the Israeli Army is defending" but about "who will defend the Israeli Army." You see the change first of all in the eyes of the soldiers. It's a look which reminded me of the look in the eyes of the American soldiers I saw in the final stages of Viet Nam. It is the look of soldiers and officers who know that their chances of winning in Lebanon are less than negligible. In Lebanon you can see an army that has experienced firsthand how military might is rendered impotent." Yaniv, *Dilemmas of Security*, 254.

tested once more in 2002, at the height of Israel's Operation Defensive Shield. Having again sensed that Israel's pre-occupation with military action in the OPT would prevent it from opening a second front in response to relatively minor incidents on the Lebanese-Israeli border and in the Sheba'a Farms, and feeling the need for a show of solidarity with the Palestinians, Hezbollah escalated its attacks in the Sheba'a Farms. Moreover, a number of rockets were fired from Lebanon by an unidentified party and landed on Israeli communities. The rocket attacks, minor as they were, nevertheless confronted Israel with the dilemma of whether to respond, and if so how and against whom. Although a significant number of ministers supported the idea of retaliation, there were just as many who did not. Despite his personal support for the idea of a harsh response, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon nonetheless decided against it, citing the lack of a clear majority.⁶⁹ Thus, the strategy of containment was able to withstand the temptation of being drawn into a confrontation that would not have served Israeli strategic, or for that matter, security interests.

The above clearly demonstrates how a negative change in a state's relative material power does not necessarily prompt an immediate use of force to restore it to previous levels. A state's preferences – whether long-term objectives vis-à-vis the actor whose relative power has increased or immediate interests on another front – can and often do override interim concerns regarding relatively minor shifts in military power. This, however, does not entail the abandonment of the military option against the adversary. Indeed, the fact that the increase in the threat posed by Hezbollah was met with a containment rather than confrontation strategy did not mean the cessation of military planning in preparation for a possible escalation on the Lebanese front. On the contrary, as Harel and Issacharoff expose, it was not long after the withdrawal from South Lebanon that the IDF Northern Command

⁶⁹ Nicholas Blanford, "Fears of a Second Front: The Lebanese-Israeli Border," *Middle East Report* 223 (Summer 2002): <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero042302.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

started “planning in detail a possible operation in Lebanon.”⁷⁰ The secret plan, labeled Defense of the Land, was prepared in late 2002, and not surprisingly relied excessively though not solely on air power. However, the fact that the plan, if implemented, would have represented major escalation and possibly erupted into a regional conflagration, combined with the absence of a serious provocation, meant that it would remain ink on paper for some time to come. In the meantime, however, Prime Minister Sharon’s refusal to carry out a large-scale attack against Lebanese targets in retaliation for the escalation in March-April 2002 was arguably offset by the seemingly exaggerated reaction to Lebanon’s pumping of water from the Wazzani springs, such as Sharon’s announcement that it represented a *casus belli*. While the exaggeration may have been, as Nicholas Blanford argues, partly inspired by Israel’s concerns regarding, and deterrence against, the possibility of future Lebanese water projects in contravention of its hydrostrategic interests,⁷¹ it ought also be viewed in the context of its response to the challenge Hezbollah had mounted against it during Operation Defensive Shield, and an attempt at restoring whatever deterrence may have been lost in that episode.

The assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri on February 14, 2005 and the ensuing upheaval in Lebanon, culminating in Syria’s withdrawal nearly two months later, presented both opportunities and setbacks for Israel. On the one hand, it was believed that the Syrian withdrawal would weaken Hezbollah and force it to weather the storm of a supposedly massive popular objection to its weapons, alone. Moreover, to the extent that the dominant Israeli view of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon had been that it provided Syria with a better bargaining position on the return of the Golan Heights, the withdrawal was viewed as having robbed Syria of most if not all its cards against Israel. However, the optimistic view of Syrian withdrawal was based on a number of false assumptions about the nature and dynamics of the relationship between Hezbollah and Syria as well as the former’s domestic position in the

⁷⁰ Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 61.

⁷¹ Nicholas Blanford, “Heightened Israeli-Lebanese Tensions Over Jordan’s Headwaters,” *Middle East Report* 225 (Winter 2002): <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero093002.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

wake of the withdrawal of its patron. On the other hand, although Syria's presence in Lebanon was viewed with concern in light of the proxy war of attrition it was deemed to be "commanding" prior to the Israeli withdrawal and the build-up of Hezbollah following it, its presence had provided Israel with the opportunity to pressure Hezbollah through it, an opportunity Israel was stripped of by the Syrian withdrawal. As Harel and Issacharoff put it, with Syria's exit Israel "lost a vital fulcrum for pressuring Hezbollah."⁷² Consequently, the plan devised in 2002, and which had included air strikes on Syrian forces in Lebanon, had to be redrawn. The new plan, approved by the IDF Chief of Staff in May 2006, would become the basis of Operation Change of Direction a month later.

4.7 Operation Change of Direction: Israel as "the Crazy Country"

On the morning of July 12, 2006, nearly six years after the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon and the capture of three Israeli soldiers in the Sheba'a Farms, Hezbollah announced that it had captured two Israeli soldiers in a cross-border operation. Unlike the October 2000 operation, however, the attack had taken place on Israeli soil. It had also come nearly two weeks after Gaza militants had captured an Israeli soldier, an incident that Israel had used as justification for launching a large-scale operation in the Gaza Strip. Despite the parallel situation on the Gazan-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli fronts, there was little indication that Israel would react to the developments on the latter in the same manner that it had done on the former, for whereas Hamas had been unsuccessful in establishing an effective deterrence against Israel over the years especially in the wake of the disengagement, there was a long-established relationship of mutual deterrence between Hezbollah and Israel and rules of engagement that, while occasionally bent by both sides, had never been broken. While the Hezbollah cross-border raid and capture of soldiers represented a significant

⁷² Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 61.

bending of the rules, it nevertheless was perceived by Hezbollah and other observers not to have trespassed any “red lines”, not least of all due to Israel’s past behavior in nearly identical circumstances.

Contrary to all expectations, however, Israel did interpret the incident as an unacceptable violation of the rules. Not only that, but it initiated a large-scale offensive in retaliation, combining air strikes (including the targeting of civilian infrastructure), naval and aerial blockade, and ground incursion. Operation Change of Direction, as it was initially called, was launched on the grounds that the developments on both the northern and the southern fronts had “create[d] a new and complex reality that compel[led] [Israel] to deal with it.”⁷³ Israel was thus seeking a “change of direction” – a change in the rules of the game – on the northern front. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert explicitly referred to this objective halfway through the war, pointing out that “this is almost a one time opportunity to change the rules of the game in Lebanon.”⁷⁴ What was alleged to have been a response provoked by the capture of soldiers gave way to explicit references to more ambitious aims. A cabinet communiqué issued on July 12 not only held the Lebanese government responsible for the capture of the soldiers, but also for their return, further demanding its implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559 – an ironic demand given that Israel itself has since its founding refused to implement over sixty resolutions passed against it.⁷⁵

In an address to the Knesset on July 17, Olmert pointed out that Israel’s enemies had “misinterpreted [its] willingness to exercise restraint as a sign of weakness,” a clear reference to the fact that Israel’s deterrence had been shattered and was thus in urgent need of extensive

⁷³“Special Cabinet Communique - Hizbullah attack,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/Special+Cabinet+Communique+-+Hizbullah+attack+12-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁷⁴ “Prime Minister Ehud Olmert addresses meeting of heads of local authorities,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2006/Address+by+PM+Olmert+to+the+Mayors+Conference+31-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁷⁵ “Special Cabinet Communique - Hizbullah attack,” op. cit.

repair; also notable was the emphasis on the fact that Israel had returned to the internationally recognized boundary in 2000, an attempt at pinning the blame for the escalation on its adversaries and justifying its actions to the court of world public opinion as an act of self-defense. Olmert also stated the goals of the operation: the return of the soldiers, a ceasefire, deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in all of South Lebanon, expulsion of Hezbollah from the area, and the fulfillment of UN Security Council Resolution 1559. Although demands had previously been voiced and intentions stated by a number of leaders and generals, this was the first official declaration of Israel's objectives since the start of the war. Crucially, the enumeration of the objectives was concluded with the firm refusal to suspend military activities before they were accomplished.⁷⁶

That Israel was expecting, in ironic contradiction to its own warnings of a worrying enhancement in Hezbollah capabilities in previous years, that the offensive would achieve its covert and overt objectives in a very short period was evident. Indicative of its misplaced expectations were the overconfident tone of its leaders and generals in the early days of the war and the ambitious goals of the operation on the one hand, and the fact that it appeared unprepared to cope with Hezbollah's defiant stance and deadly blows (particularly but not solely on its Home Front) on the other. With the unfolding of the military confrontation in South Lebanon, the quick, decisive operation Israeli generals were undoubtedly rooting for – in so many words re-instilling in the IDF the spirit and confidence of the IDF of 1967 when Israel defeated three Arab armies in six days – began to look more like an endless nightmare. Indicatively, some seven months after the ceasefire that put an end to Operation Change of Direction, Israel officially labeled the operation the “Second Lebanon War.”

Not unlike previous occasions, with the beginning of hostilities, Israel hurried to point out that the war was a “war of no choice.” This mantra was repeated on July 31 by Minister

⁷⁶ “Address to the Knesset by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2006/Address+to+the+Knesset+by+PM+Olmert+17-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

of Defense Amir Peretz who asserted that “this is a war that was forced on [Israel] after [it] did everything to prevent it.”⁷⁷ The notion that a war Israel had *chosen* to launch was “forced” on it demonstrated Israel’s adoption of a loose and fluid definition of “choice,” such that its decision to launch a war against Lebanon in 2006 in response to the capture of two soldiers⁷⁸ could be placed in the same category as the surprise attack against it by Egypt and Syria in 1973. The absurdity of Peretz’s assertion stemmed from the fact that even if developments on the ground had *forced* Israel into action in the absence of any reasonable or acceptable alternative, these developments were nevertheless the direct result of previous decisions and actions which Israel had taken in the presence of feasible, more reasonable, and less myopic alternatives. Public statements to this effect, however, did not and do not necessarily indicate Israeli policymakers’ belief in such a black-and-white dynamic between Israel and its enemies. They are arguably a function of Israeli leaders’ need to re-assure the Israeli public that they had not embarked on a meaningless war based on personal whims, but rather out of necessity, namely to secure the security of the state and safeguard the personal safety of its citizens. Israeli public opinion, initially overwhelmingly supportive of the war, soon began to experience cracks. The cracks were in large part due to the ongoing shelling of northern communities, the unpreparedness of the authorities to cope with the emergency situation on the Home Front, the unexpectedly high civilian death toll, and the IDF’s poor performance as well as its apparent inability to prevent or put an end to rocket attacks contrary to generals’ assessments and statements in the first days of the war that more than forty percent of Hezbollah’s rocket capability had been decimated by the IAF. Also

⁷⁷ “Excerpts from statement by Defense Minister Amir Peretz to the Knesset,” Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2006/Excerpts+from+statement+by+Defense+Minister+Peretz+to+the+Knesset+31-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁷⁸ In fact, the “war of no choice” could have been avoided had Israel accepted to include Samir al-Quntar in the prisoner exchange that took place in 2004. Hence, the fact that Israel described the July 2006 war as a “war of no choice” indicates that it wished to gloss over the fact that its myopic policies and inflexibility had brought about the situation which it complained of.

contributing to the decline in public support was the public's sensitivity to IDF casualties (which had been heightened since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon) and the fear that a large-scale ground incursion would exact a heavy human price from the IDF. A public opinion poll conducted shortly after the end of the war by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University demonstrates a decline in the public's confidence in the IDF and the strengthening of the belief that the government was responsible for weakening Israel's deterrence against the Arab world.⁷⁹

Israel's military impotence in South Lebanon had the effect of not only luring it into abandoning its traditional adherence to the concept of "quick wars" but also forcing it to show flexibility and abandon most of the goals it had waged a full-scale war to achieve. In stating the goals of the operation in Lebanon and adopting an uncompromising stance, the Israeli government and its strategists had fallen into the trap that Israel Tal warns against in his book on Israeli national security, namely, "taking aggressive, uncompromising positions and then showing flexibility", an observation echoed by the Winograd Commission which was set up to study the war and its failures and the lessons to be drawn from it.⁸⁰ The only achievement that Israel came out with from the war in terms of its stated objectives was a complete ceasefire and the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in South Lebanon. As for the unstated but implied objective, namely the restoration of deterrence, while the sheer enormity of destruction in Lebanon might have succeeded in making Hezbollah think twice about embarking on such "adventures" and in placing it in a delicate position domestically, the very fact that initial Israeli statements did not correspond to the reality on the ground and

⁷⁹ "Peace Index: August 2006," The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research (August 2006): http://www.spirit.tau.ac.il/xeddexcms008/download.asp?did=peaceindex2006_8_3 (last accessed: December 2008). For comparison, see the results of the poll at the beginning of the war. "Peace Index: July 2006," The Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research: http://www.spirit.tau.ac.il/xeddexcms008/download.asp?did=peaceindex2006_7_3 (last accessed: December 2008).

⁸⁰ Israel Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience*, trans. Martin Kett (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 56; "Winograd Commission submits Interim Report," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2007/Winograd+Inquiry+Commission+submits+Interim+Report+30-Apr-2007.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

to the ceasefire agreement that put an end to the fighting, had the effect of wearing away at least some of the deterrence that its destructive power may have achieved. Not only that, but the massive destructive force unleashed by the IAF, instead of coercing Hezbollah into putting down its weapons to avoid a repeat battering of Lebanese infrastructure and of the villages and towns that comprise its support base, has arguably convinced it of the urgent necessity of acquiring and deploying anti-aircraft capabilities, an outcome that would greatly upset the balance of power between it and Israel. Indeed, Israeli politicians and Generals have since the end of that war, expressed concern and aired warnings about precisely such an outcome.⁸¹

The war signaled a break from the strategy of containment and marked a return to a strategy of confrontation. It demonstrated, first and foremost, Israel's willingness to go to extreme levels in the exercise of its military might in response to relatively minor incidents along its borders. In effect, it marked the beginning of an era whereby Israel would, in an attempt to restore the deterrence it had lost in Lebanon in the 1980s and arguably as a measure of revenge for its ignominious exit from South Lebanon in 2000, act as – in the words of Israeli commentator Ofer Shelah – “a crazy country.”⁸² However, while the “crazy country” doctrine may have been successful in deterring Hezbollah from carrying out cross-border raids in the future, in particular in the Sheba'a Farms area,⁸³ it nevertheless failed to

⁸¹“Isra'il tukathif al-tahdid...wal-'UNIFIL' tutarid al-muqawimin” (Israel intensifies its threats...and UNIFIL chases resistance fighters), *al-Akhbar*, 21 August 2008: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/87643> (last accessed: December 2008); and Yehya Dabuq, “Qalaq Isra'il min al-intikhabat: satunshar al-sawarikh al-muhaddida li-ta'iraatina” (Israeli concern regarding [Lebanese] elections: the missiles that threaten our aircraft will be deployed), *al-Akhbar*, 27 May 2009: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/137929> (last accessed: May 2009).

⁸² Shelah used the term in reference to Operation Cast Lead launched in December 2008 against the Gaza Strip. Nonetheless, the concept was first put to use in Lebanon in July 2006. Paul Wood, “Analysis: Operation Miscast Lead?”, *BBC News*, 13 March 2009: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7940624.stm (last accessed: April 2009).

⁸³ It is doubtful that Hezbollah would have been interested in a cross-border raid into Israel-proper if not for its quest to force Israel to release Samir al-Quntar, whom it had been holding since 1979. Indeed, securing Quntar's release was a promise that Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah had made during his historic speech in Bint Jbeil on May 26, 2000. It is also doubtful that, in the event of an Israeli withdrawal from the Sheba'a Farms Hezbollah would conduct further military operations against Israel. Thus, whether inadvertently or by design, Israeli policies provide Hezbollah with the incentive to continue its military activities even while Israel seeks to deter the organization from doing so.

remove the strategic threat posed by Hezbollah. Moreover, to ascertain whether or not Israel succeeded in boosting its deterrence against Hezbollah to a satisfactory level, post-war scenarios that would otherwise have been expected to prompt a response by Hezbollah have to be weighed against the overall context, namely domestic political and other considerations likely at play. Hence, for example, Hezbollah's reluctance since the ceasefire that took hold on August 14, 2006 to launch any offensives in the occupied Sheba'a Farms does not necessarily stem from the fact that it has been deterred; it could, and likely is, a function of domestic and regional calculations albeit ones that may be intricately related to considerations of the possible nature and scale of an Israeli retaliation. In fact, the war itself had clearly demonstrated that Israel's use of massive force had failed to deter the party. Shmuel Bar argues that "[i]n the Israeli case vis-à-vis both the Palestinians and Hizballah, the main source of the 'power of the weak' ['the relative power that the weaker side maintains vis-à-vis the stronger party'] is Israel's commitment to international norms and conventions."⁸⁴ This claim, however, is dubious, for short of utilizing Weapons of Mass Destruction Israel has over the years unleashed its full military might against Lebanon as well as the Palestinians of the OPT, more often than not in contravention of International Humanitarian Law.

In its interim report, the Winograd Commission concluded that one of the main shortcomings of the Israeli government during Operation Change of Direction was its failure to entertain an array of possible responses to the capture of the two soldiers, including a continuation of the policy of containment or the launching of limited military strikes. This failure, the Commission argued, "reflects weakness in strategic thinking which derives the response to the event from a more comprehensive and encompassing picture." Furthermore, the Commission found that the government had initiated a campaign without having devised

⁸⁴ Shmuel Bar, "Israeli Experience in Deterring Terrorist Organizations," Herzliya Conference, 21-24 January 2007: <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Uploads/2609IsraeliExperience.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008), 7-8.

an exit strategy and had moreover specified objectives which were not only too ambitious, but also unattainable through the military strategy that had been adopted.⁸⁵ As is noted by Daniel Helmer of the Combat Studies Institute in Fort Leavenworth, USA, the dissonance between strategic goals and tactical means can (and often does) have disastrous consequences. Helmer in fact points out that it was precisely this dissonance that had led to Israel's failure in South Lebanon between 1982 and 2000.⁸⁶ The mistake was repeated in 2006.

Israel's excessive reliance on air power and its focus on causing as much material damage in Lebanon as possible was misguided.⁸⁷ Firstly, it was based on the mistaken belief that Hezbollah's willingness to fight would be directly proportional to the amount of damage caused to Lebanese civilian infrastructure. This was based on the idea that the unrelenting battering of the country would ultimately defeat Hezbollah on the grounds that sooner or later it would "lose its will to fight because it has arrived at the conclusion that it will not gain anything from continuing to fight and the price it will pay for fighting will increase." As Shlomo Brom points out, while such a strategy may have its desired outcome in classical wars involving regular armies, it is ineffective in the face of guerilla forces.⁸⁸ Secondly, it was believed that the destruction (and possibly also the death toll) would turn Lebanese public opinion into a pressure valve against Hezbollah and induce it to surrender or at the

⁸⁵ "Official English summary of the Winograd panel's report on the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah fighting," *Wall Street Journal*: <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/winogradreport-04302007.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁸⁶ Daniel Isaac Helmer, "Flipside of the COIN: Israel's Lebanese Incursion Between 1982-2000," *The Long War Series Occasional Paper 21* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2007): <http://cgsc.leavenworth.army.mil/carl/download/csipubs/helmer.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008), 2.

⁸⁷ The over-reliance on air power was the result of a combination of factors. First and foremost, pressure from Chief of Staff Dan Halutz who, owing to his Air Force career was more familiar with and inclined to use air power. This was combined with Defense Minister Amir Peretz's deficiency in military knowledge and the IDF's quest to minimize loss of lives in its ranks. Throughout their book, Harel and Issacharoff cite discussions held during the war between high-ranking politicians and Generals about the deliberate targeting of infrastructure. See for example, Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 78-82, 100, 138.

⁸⁸ Shlomo Brom, "Political and Military Objectives in a Limited War against a Guerilla Organization," in *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Perspective*, ed. Shlomo Brom and Meir Elran (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2007): [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)1196773316.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1196773316.pdf) (last accessed: December 2008), 15.

very least retreat. This was a woefully inaccurate assessment, for the indiscriminate fire was bound to, and indeed did, rally the majority of the the population around Hezbollah rather than against it. Thirdly, as the war progressed and it became clear that Hezbollah could not be defeated or forced to retreat, the idea that the outcome of the war could be measured by the damage the country sustained as a result of the capture of the two soldiers gained popularity amongst Israeli decision-makers as well as the public. This, too, was misguided, for while the ability to destroy could serve as deterrence against the target guerilla force, it cannot – with the exception of the use of WMD – be used as a yardstick to measure victory or defeat. Indeed, the fact that Hezbollah had a clear and limited objective – namely surviving the onslaught – and the fact that it did, meant that it could consider itself “victorious.” This was in stark contrast to Israel’s predicament: aside from its inability to coerce Hezbollah – a humiliating failure in and of itself for a country that often boasted of the invincibility of its army or attempted to portray it as such – the fact that most of the objectives it had specified were not met meant that, unlike Hezbollah, Israel had lost the war. The experience was rendered all the more bitter due to the fact that it was a war of choice initiated at a time and in a manner of Israel’s choosing.

Parallel to the developments on the ground, a diplomatic war was being waged behind the scenes. For Israel, this war was just as important as the military confrontation, for in the absence of a military strategy that would have allowed it to crush Hezbollah, it was Israel’s only hope for extracting political gains from the war. Moreover, the growing awareness that it had failed to score military achievements against Hezbollah proportionate to the magnitude of the operation and the losses the IDF had incurred underscored even further the importance of diplomatic efforts. Initially highly ambitious, Israel’s demands were, in time, reduced given that the discrepancy between its demands and the reality on the ground was too great to be

accepted by Hezbollah.⁸⁹ As the deliberations over a ceasefire came to a close and only three hours prior to the vote on the draft ceasefire resolution, which came to be known as UN Security Council Resolution 1701, Israel launched a large-scale invasion in an attempt to reach the Litani River prior to the ceasefire on August 14. While the operation has been described as an attempt – and an allegedly successful one at that – to influence the content of the final draft to be voted on, it was more likely a last-ditch attempt at a symbolic victory that would have boosted Israeli deterrence and possibly saved the political and military decision-makers of the war from public disgrace that would have inevitably followed the ceasefire.⁹⁰ The operation was a military disaster, however, resulting in the death of thirty-three soldiers, and causing a decline rather than an increase in deterrence. Crucially, throughout the war, Israel failed to put an end to or even reduce Hezbollah rocket fire on northern Israel. In fact, on the last day of the war Hezbollah fired more rockets than on any other day during the war. This was not coincidental, but rather necessary from Hezbollah's perspective, for by demonstrating its ability to fire more rockets per day than ever before and do so in spite of a surge of IDF troops through South Lebanon, it was seeking to repair its deterrence vis-à-vis Israel after it had failed to prevent Israel's large-scale operation on July 12.

On August 18, 2006, four days after the ceasefire that appeared to be holding, Israel launched a daring commando raid deep in the Beqaa' Valley. From a military perspective, the operation was a failure. So, too, politically. It brought about criticism of Israel for a flagrant violation of the ceasefire. Israel justified the operation on the grounds that it was in response to a violation of the ceasefire by Hezbollah in the form of the smuggling of arms. Citing the failure to satisfy the requirement to halt smuggling, Israel declared that it reserved the right to

⁸⁹ See, for example, Israel's list of demands halfway through the war in return for a ceasefire: Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 158.

⁹⁰ For an account of the final push, see Yaakov Katz, "Security and Defense: The story of 'Changing Direction 11'", *The Jerusalem Post*, 10 January 2008: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?apage=1&cid=1199964893710&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull> (last accessed: December 2008).

act in a similar manner as the need arose.⁹¹ This, however, it did not do. Arguably, the raid was of deterrence value and was the belated response to Hezbollah's record number of rocket attacks on the last day of the war. It was also an attempt at establishing new rules of engagement. Nonetheless, the overall failure of the operation meant that neither deterrence would be enhanced nor new rules of engagement established by such limited actions.

From the very first days of the war, Israel referred to Hezbollah's capabilities and agenda as a function of Syrian and Iranian sponsorship. On at least two occasions, it stated that the three formed an "axis of terror and hate." It also argued that "for all practical purposes, Hizbullah [was] merely an arm of the Teheran Jihadist regime" and was "operated by Iran and Syria," further asserting that

"Syria and Iran support these groups, not only because they support their ideology, but also because they provide Damascus and Teheran with a tool to strengthen the influence of their own regimes and to divert attention from other issues which have exposed them lately to international pressure."⁹²

Clearly then, Israel saw the invisible hand of Syria and Iran in the growing strategic threat that Hezbollah represented for it. At the same time, however, constrained by the limits of its own power and the unwillingness to risk a regional conflagration, it was unable to translate this conviction into policy. Syria's presence in Lebanon until 2005, while often viewed with concern in Tel Aviv, was nevertheless beneficial to Israel, for, as mentioned

⁹¹ "IDF Bekaa operation in response to violation of cease-fire," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2006/MFA-IDF+Bekaa+operation+in+response+to+violation+of+cease-fire+20-Aug-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008). Israel incorrectly claimed that SC Resolution 1701 proposed or demanded the deployment of international forces or observers on the Lebanese-Syrian border. In fact, this had been an idea formulated and publicized by Israel on July 31, without being incorporated into the Resolution. See "PM Olmert speaks with UK PM Blair," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/PM+Olmert+speaks+with+UK+PM+Blair+31-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

⁹² "Statement by Foreign Ministry Deputy DG Gideon Meir," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2006/Statement+by+Foreign+Ministry+Deputy+DG+Gideon+Meir+13-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008). See also "PM Olmert meets with German FM Steinmeier," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2006/PM+Olmert+meets+with+German+FM+Steinmeier+23-Jul-2006.htm> (last accessed: December 2008).

earlier, it provided it with the option of putting pressure on Hezbollah through Syria. The assassination of Hariri and the subsequent Syrian withdrawal stripped Israel of this option. At the same time, it allowed it to pursue other options in Lebanon should the need have arisen. No longer was Israel restrained by the fear of risking a confrontation with Syria in Lebanon. Arguably, it was precisely this that allowed it to wage a war against Lebanon in July 2006 and it was doubtful that, had Syrian forces remained in Lebanon, it would have embarked on such an option.

References to the Iranian-Syrian-Hezbollah connection since the early 1990s – with a marked increase during the six-year period preceding the July 2006 war – indicated that Israel increasingly (albeit not entirely) viewed Hezbollah through the prism of its own relations with and animosity toward Syria and Iran.⁹³ On the one hand, Syria's presence in Lebanon until 2005, the fact that it was perceived to be using to its benefit Hezbollah's struggle against the occupation of South Lebanon until 2000 and of the Sheba'a Farms since then, combined with the fact that the Lebanese-Syrian border was and still is viewed as Hezbollah's main weapons lifeline, meant that Syria would feature regularly in Israel's statements on Hezbollah. On the other hand, that Iran had been instrumental in the founding of Hezbollah and the provision of money, weapons, and training to it, coupled with Hezbollah's religious connections to the Iranian Supreme Leader (which is wrongly believed to translate to political subservience to Iran), the effects of the U.S invasion and occupation of Iraq – namely the strengthening of Iran's position in the region – and most importantly, Iran's nuclear ambitions, rendered it an increasingly central feature of Israeli rhetoric on developments not

⁹³ See for example a document prepared by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1997 on Iran-Hezbollah ties: "Iran and Hizbullah," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 1997: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The+Iranian+Threat/Support+of+terror/IRAN%20AND%20HIZBULLAH%20-%2012-Feb-97> (last accessed: December 2008). Israel also highlighted what it called Iranian "complicity" in the July 2006 war. See "Iranian complicity in the present Lebanese crisis - July-Aug 2006," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/The+Iranian+Threat/Support+of+terror/Iranian%20complicity%20in%20the%20present%20Lebanese%20crisis%20-%20July-Aug%202006> (last accessed: December 2008). For an assessment of the Hezbollah-Iran-Syria relationship, see Abbas William Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," *The Middle East Journal* 62.1 (Winter 2008), 32-53.

only on its northern front, but also its southern one. In fact, in the past number of years Iran has topped Syria as the target of Israeli discourse on the threat presented by non-state actors. The above is not to say that Israel's agenda against Hezbollah is dictated solely by its perception of the party's links to Iran and Syria and its hostile relationship with the two countries. Rather, it was one factor among others, including its loss of deterrence in Lebanon owing to its experiences between 1982 and 2000 and its willingness to repair it, as well as the desire to avenge the humiliating exit in 2000.⁹⁴ Hence, the war cannot be reduced to having been an alternative to a strike on Iran or Syria.

A History of Prisoner Exchanges

A day after the capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit by militants in Gaza, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced that Israel would not consider the option of a prisoner exchange, warning that the failure to unconditionally release him would result in an attempt to free him by force. The rationale behind the announcement was that Israel would no longer allow "terrorists" to benefit from the capture of IDF soldiers.⁹⁵ The prevalent view in Israel was that its enemies were abusing the fact that the Israeli government and public care about the welfare of every soldier and would therefore be willing to make tremendous sacrifices – in the form of accepting the release of Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners – and that this phenomenon had to be ended. At the same time, Israel increasingly viewed the capture of its soldiers as a blow to its self-image as well as to its deterrence. Less than three weeks after Olmert's speech and the Israeli operation in Gaza that followed it, in a press conference held on the afternoon of July 12, Olmert repeated essentially the same position albeit with more

⁹⁴ This was clearly evident from the heavy emphasis placed throughout the war on scoring a symbolic "victory" in the form of the planting of the Israeli flag at the location where Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah had given his notorious liberation speech in 2000. As Harel and Issacharoff expose, "the operation was given the bombastic name Web of Steel, a belated response to Nasrallah's "spider's web." Harel and Issacharoff, *op. cit.*, 138. See also Harel and Issacharoff, 176.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

precise terminology. Israel, he said, “will not give in to blackmail or negotiate with terrorists on any aspect of the lives of IDF soldiers.”⁹⁶ Yet this was all too familiar a statement, for on almost every occasion that Israeli soldiers had been captured, Israeli governments’ reaction had been a demand for unconditional release of the captured soldier(s) and a refusal to negotiate with the “terrorists” holding them, followed by negotiations via third-party mediators resulting in a prisoner exchange.⁹⁷

Commenting on a prisoner exchange with the PLO in May 1985, military analyst Ze’ev Schiff argued that “[f]rom Israel’s viewpoint, [the] agreement damages security,” and pointed out that the phenomenon of releasing prisoners with blood on their hands would have negative consequences, for not only was there a high probability that the released would return to their previous [resistance] activities, the exchange would be interpreted as “concessions to terrorist organizations” and instead of contributing to putting an end to the conflict, would “provok[e] the other side to terrorist actions and further pressure on Israel.”⁹⁸ This view, while skewed in terms of its mistaken belief that the refusal to release prisoners would eliminate the incentive to capture Israeli soldiers, was nevertheless the dominant line of thinking. At the same time, however, successive Israeli governments felt the need to negotiate and exchange prisoners, for while the capture of Israeli soldiers in itself was a severe blow to Israel, the possibility of abandoning them to their fate – especially in the presence of proof of life – was almost unthinkable. Moreover, it was felt that leaving captured and killed soldiers behind rather than returning them home in exchange for enemy prisoners would convince the Israeli public and even more crucially IDF regular soldiers and

⁹⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁷ The first major exchange between Israel and a non-state actor took place on November 24, 1983, following secret but direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO, albeit with Austrian mediation. Six Israeli soldiers were exchanged for nearly 5,000 Palestinians and Lebanese, most of whom had been held in the notorious Ansar camp in Lebanon. James Dorsey, “The Prisoner Exchange,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1984), 182-184. A year and a half later, on May 20, 1985, in exchange for two Israeli soldiers held by another Palestinian faction, Israel released 1,150 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners.

⁹⁸ Ze’ev Schiff, “The Prisoner Exchange,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 14, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 176-177.

reservists that their government cared more about holding enemy prisoners than about saving the lives of its own citizens, especially those that had placed themselves in the way of harm for the defense of the country and the safety of its citizens. The effect that this was believed would have on the military and its performance was worrisome, particularly in the context of the increasing number of IDF casualties in South Lebanon since late 1982.

The first prisoner exchange negotiated between Israel and Hezbollah came in the wake of the capture of two Israeli soldiers in South Lebanon in February 1986.⁹⁹ A second exchange took place in June 1998 and involved the remains of an Israeli soldier who had been killed in the Ansariye ambush in 1997. A third exchange took place in January 2004 and returned the remains of three Israeli soldiers captured in 2000 along with an Israeli businessman in exchange for a number of Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners as well as remains of Hezbollah fighters. Chief among the released were Sheikh Abdel Karim Obeid and Mustafa al-Dirani who had been kidnapped in July 1989 and May 1994 respectively. Both kidnappings had been justified by Israel on the grounds that they were aimed at securing information on the fate of an Israeli aviator, Ron Arad, who had been captured in Lebanon in 1986. In reality, the intention was to use them as bargaining chips in negotiations with Hezbollah over the release of soldiers (or the return of their remains) – at their forefront Arad – who had been Missing in Action. Significantly, despite Hezbollah's insistence on securing the release of Lebanese prisoner Samir al-Quntar (who had been imprisoned by Israel since 1979), Israel refused to sever the link between Quntar and Arad. The result was, contrary to Schiff's prediction about the outcome of refusal to release prisoners, the capture of two more soldiers only two years after the exchange. The exchange of prisoners, which took place over two rounds in 2007 and 2008, dealt a blow to Israel. After years of refusing to release Quntar

⁹⁹ The first round of exchange, which took place soon thereafter, involved the release of prisoners and the return of the remains of Hezbollah fighters in return for information on the fate of the Israeli soldiers. The second round, however, was delayed for ten years as a result of Israeli refusal to release prisoners in return for the remains of the soldiers.

as part of previous exchanges of prisoners, it was forced to do so. Not only that, but the fact that it negotiated for the return of its two soldiers was contrary to its initial rejectionist stance and served to shatter its image as a state with a solid and coherent strategy for dealing with such situations, and consequently weakened its deterrence. Combined with the fact that the government and the military had bungled the war, it made a significant dent in Israel's self-image.¹⁰⁰

4.8 Lessons of the Lebanon War: The "Dahiye Strategy" Adopted?

While it is not within the scope of this chapter to catalogue the findings of the Winograd Commission, a number of its conclusions, as they appeared in the interim report, must be referred to, for they are relevant to Israel's past, present, and future strategic thinking, security doctrine, and more importantly, conduct. The Commission's focus was on analyzing the war and pinpointing Israel's failures to better prepare the IDF – and the Home Front – for a future confrontation. In its final non-classified report, it pointed out that the July 2006 war was "a serious missed opportunity", without explicitly referring to what the missed opportunity was. Presumably, it was the elimination of Hezbollah or, at the very least, pushing it away from the Lebanese-Israeli border, or robbing it of its appetite for any form of future confrontation with Israel. The Commission went on to note that Israel had initiated a war without at the same time adopting any of the two strategies available to it: namely a short campaign albeit one that would be extremely painful to Hezbollah; or a possibly longer-lasting campaign involving a large-scale ground operation. Instead, Israel had alternated between the two, initiating a long war but putting off a large-scale invasion until a ceasefire

¹⁰⁰ According to a survey conducted by the Institute for Policy and Strategy for the 2007 Herzliya Conference, "pride in the defense forces" had dropped from 88% of the surveyed representative sample to 64% in 2007. The drop is attributed primarily to the IDF's poor performance in Lebanon. The survey also reported a "very strong decline in confidence in the government and in the Knesset." See "Patriotism and National Strength in Israel after the Lebanon War," Institute for Policy and Strategy: [http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/Uploads/1856patriotismeng\(4\).pdf](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/Uploads/1856patriotismeng(4).pdf) (last accessed: December 2008).

loomed on the horizon. Crucially, the Commission argued that despite the air force's "impressive achievements", several high-ranking politicians and generals were driven by an excessive and baseless hope that the "capabilities of the air force could prove decisive in the war." It pointed out that not only were the air force's achievements limited, their impact was weakened as a result of the poor overall performance of the IDF.¹⁰¹

The main dilemma facing the IDF and of concern to the Israeli public after the July 2006 war is possibly the problem of Hezbollah's rocket arsenal and the party's ability to effectively put it in the service of establishing both a tactical and strategic deterrence against Israel. The effectiveness of the rocket threat lies primarily in Israel's inability to find a technological solution to it; the interception range of the anti-ballistic systems Israel has at its disposal – including ones it has developed in recent years, such as the Arrow (or Hetz) – are above the range of most of Hezbollah's rockets. This failure – which may have been contributed to by Israel's refusal to pool more resources into defensive Research & Development rather than the acquisition of offensive technology – meant that Israel would have to come up with an offensive military strategy that would minimize rocket fire by engaging in what Uzi Rubin describes as a "launcher-hunting campaign."¹⁰² This was in fact the prevailing doctrine, until the end of the July war, to deal with the rocket threat. It was futile, costly, and time-consuming, given the high mobility of medium and short-range rockets, or at the very least the ability to conceal them as Hezbollah had done during the July 2006 war. Indeed, the ability to seek and destroy short-range rocket launchers is a near-impossible task as the IAF belatedly discovered in that war.

In tandem with its attempts at "hunting" rocket launchers, Israel undoubtedly attempted to halt the rocket fire by pressuring Hezbollah at its (by Israeli admission) weakest

¹⁰¹ "English Summary of the Winograd Commission Report," *The New York Times*, 30 January 2008: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/30/world/middleeast/31winograd-web.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

¹⁰² Uzi Rubin, "The Rocket Campaign against Israel during the 2006 Lebanon War," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 71 (The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies): 23.

point: the indiscriminate bombardment and destruction of infrastructure as well as private property which would have inevitably (and possibly also deliberately) resulted in civilian casualties. Discussions held during the war between political elites and generals often revolved around the question of deliberately targeting infrastructure as well as residential areas, including the acceptability of targeting them with the full knowledge of civilian presence. Chief among the proponents of this strategy was the IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz.¹⁰³

Hezbollah's unchecked rocket campaign demonstrates the party's successful pinpointing of one of Israel's weak points¹⁰⁴ as well as its understanding – not newly-found – of Israeli security and military doctrine according to which the army's ability to take the war to enemy territory was of vital importance. What the rocket campaign in fact did was to carry part of the war to Israeli territory, just as had been done during the occupation of South Lebanon, especially during the 1993 and 1996 campaigns. Indeed, the party's ability to withstand the assault owes in large part to the twin achievements. Israel's defeat, for its own part, stemmed in part from its inability to understand and put to its advantage Hezbollah's weaknesses. The belief, dominant on both the political and military levels throughout the war, was that Hezbollah's weakest point was its inability to deter or militarily stop Israel from attacking vital civilian infrastructure and property at its whim. It was believed that targeting these sites would shorten the war by forcing Hezbollah to re-evaluate the costs and benefits of fighting and reconsider its decision to do so. This, however, never took place, for Hezbollah was disinclined to accept new rules which it felt were not reflective of the reality

¹⁰³ Harel and Issacharoff, op. cit., 78, 80, 100.

¹⁰⁴ A study prepared by the Reut Institute addresses the question of national resilience and points out that the Home Front is a weak link in Israeli national security. See "National Resilience: Victory on the Home Front," The Reut Institute, November 2008: <http://reut-institute.org/data/uploads/Articles%20and%20Reports%20from%20other%20organizations/20081130%20national%20resilience%20final.pdf> (last accessed: December 2008).

on the ground and which did not sufficiently challenge its belief in Israel's inability to confront and defeat it.

On October 3, 2008, *Yediot Ahronot* published an interview with IDF Northern Command Chief Gadi Eisenkott focusing on the Hezbollah threat. The interview introduced to the military lexicon a new term: the Dahiye Doctrine. The doctrine as described by Eisenkott features the use of disproportionate force against "every village from which Israel is fired on" with the express purpose of causing damage and destruction.¹⁰⁵ This announcement – arguably intended to send a deterrence signal to Hezbollah – was followed days later by an op-ed in the same newspaper by Yaron London in praise of the "new" doctrine. London described the doctrine as essentially putting an end to Israel's distinction – according to him artificial – between "good guys" and "bad guys" in Lebanon. Thus, all the Lebanese "are" Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and must be treated as such, on the grounds that they must be held "accountable for their leaders' acts." Doing so would supposedly ensure that the civilians under fire would begin to fear Israel more than they allegedly fear their own leaders [i.e. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah], and would presumably not only refuse to rally around Hezbollah, but in fact stand up against it.¹⁰⁶ Eisenkott's comments and London's commentary were preceded by an op-ed by Giora Eiland, the former head of the Israeli National Security Council, who argued that "the only good thing that happened in the last war was the relative damage caused to Lebanon's population. The destruction of thousands of homes of 'innocents' preserved some of Israel's deterrent power." Eiland was in fact the first to publicly point out the futility of the distinction between the "good guys" and "bad guys" in Lebanon, arguing that Israel had failed to win the war because it had declared war on the

¹⁰⁵"Israel warns Hizbullah war would invite destruction," *Yediot Ahronot*, 3 October 2008: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3604893,00.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

¹⁰⁶ Yaron. London, "The Dahiya strategy," *Yediot Ahronot*, 6 October 2008: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3605863,00.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

wrong enemy; in other words, that it should have declared war on Lebanon as a whole, and the Lebanese government in particular.¹⁰⁷

Although marketed as a “new” strategy developed in light of the lessons learned from the July 2006 war, the Dahiye Doctrine is better described as a new-old doctrine. As Yehya Dabuq sarcastically asked in the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar* in response to Eisenkott’s threats, “did military and political sources in Israel which every now and then launch their threats...all of a sudden discover a “magic potion” for winning against the resistance in Lebanon through the targeting of civilians? As if Israel, in its wars, has refrained from targeting them.”¹⁰⁸ However, the sarcastic remark misses the point that, while Israel did indeed thoroughly target Lebanese infrastructure – including its only international airport – and private property, as well as the Lebanese Armed Forces, it did not target governmental compounds and ministry buildings, as well as all the power plants in the country. It is these, presumably, that will be on the receiving end of Israel’s wrath in the next confrontation between it and Hezbollah.

With the end of the July 2006 war, a consensus emerged in Israeli political, military, and national security sectors and indeed in Israeli society as a whole that victory in the next confrontation against Hezbollah requires the use of disproportionate force surpassing that used during the last war. The main rationale behind the concept is that, as Gabriel Siboni puts it, “striking a serious blow at the assets of the enemy” would “shorten the period of fighting.” This, however, Siboni is quick to note, might not put an end to rocket fire, and the only solution, in the short run, to this problem is not to give the public false hopes about the end to

¹⁰⁷ Giora Eiland, “Who’s the real enemy?”, *Yediot Ahronot*, 24 July 2008: <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3572777,00.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Yehya Dabuq, “Tahdidat Isra’il li-Lubnan wal-dhakira al-mathquba” (Israel’s threats against Lebanon and the pierced memory), *al-Akhbar*, 10 November 2008: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/102077> (last accessed: December 2008).

rocket fire or present it as central to the achievement of victory.¹⁰⁹ What this entails, then, is that a future war with Hezbollah would feature high-level destruction but little military confrontation, arguably an attempt at creating a parallel, albeit a disproportionate one at that, between air strikes and rocket attacks, countering what Israel views as a long-lasting war of attrition with a quick war of destruction. The adoption of such a strategy is, in effect, an admission, long due, of the limits of the usefulness of air power in damaging a guerilla force's ability to fight. Instead, it seeks to focus almost exclusively on causing extensive dents in its *willingness* to fight. At the same time, the Dahiye Doctrine also demonstrates the strengthening of the unwillingness to involve ground troops in any genuine military confrontation, if not a growing awareness of the impossibility of defeating or even weakening Hezbollah through such confrontation.

The effects of the July 2006 war are too far-reaching to be offset or reversed in such a short period of time as three years. Israel's behavior since the end of the war arguably demonstrates an awareness of the limits of its own power and consequently even more willingness than before to take the struggle with Hezbollah to an entirely new level, one that would be characterized by massive and indiscriminate use of firepower against civilian infrastructure, government institutions, the Lebanese Armed Forces, and real estate; in addition, emphasis has been placed on, and actions taken to conduct, intensive intelligence-gathering mainly for the assassination of top Hezbollah figures, but possibly also for pinpoint strikes against targets of military value. The assassination in Damascus of Hezbollah's military mastermind Imad Mughniye and Hezbollah's clear but open-ended vow for revenge, which naturally raised fears in Israel about the nature and extent of the promised retaliation, are part and parcel of the new struggle between Israel and Hezbollah. It is in this light that Israel's recent warning to Lebanon – to the effect that its government would be deemed

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel Siboni, "Disproportionate Force: Israel's Concept of Response in Light of the Second Lebanon War," *INSS Insight No. 74* (October 2, 2008): <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=2222> (last accessed: December 2008).

responsible for “any event that takes place in its sovereign territory or events for which Lebanese nationals are responsible” as well as for “Hezbollah attacks [on] Israel from inside Lebanese territory, [shooting] at Israel Air Force aircraft or ... a terror attack abroad as revenge for the Mughniyeh assassination” – must be read.¹¹⁰

4.9 Operation Cast Lead: Gaza and Hamas the Model for the “Third Lebanon War”?

The first test of Israel’s Dahiye Doctrine was in the Gaza Strip in late December 2008 in the dying days of the Bush administration. The assault, code-named Operation Cast Lead and initiated by Israel itself, was a surprise move facilitated by artful deception aimed at providing Hamas with a false sense of security. Ingenious and successful as that move was in catching Hamas off-guard, the operation itself achieved little for Israel. Indeed, while the “lessons of the Lebanon war” that had allegedly been learned emphasized the need for a quick war on enemy territory and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak promised that “unlike the performance of July 2006, the IDF will achieve the tasks entrusted to it, even if it incurred a large number of fatalities”,¹¹¹ Israel focused almost entirely on air power, avoiding as much as possible any military contact with Hamas. Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks from the air and artillery attacks with phosphorous shells against primarily civilian targets, caused an alarming civilian death toll, at the same time as they failed to coerce Hamas into

¹¹⁰ Barak Ravid, “Israel: Lebanon is responsible for Hezbollah’s actions,” *Ha’aretz*, 8 August 2008: <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/1009610.html> (last accessed: December 2008). See also “Isra’il ta’ish ‘phobia’ Mughniye bi’intizar al-radd” (Israel lives the phobia of Mughniye in waiting for the response), *al-Akhbar*, 16 February 2009: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/118752> (last accessed: March 2009); and Ibrahim al-Amin, “Isra’il wa-su’aluha al-muqliq: madha law asqata Hezbollah ta’iraatuna” (Israel and its worrying question: what if Hezbollah downs our airplanes?), *al-Akhbar*, 8 August 2008: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/85506> (last accessed: December 2008).

¹¹¹ Yehya Dabuq, “Suqut duroos harb Lubnan al-thaniya fi imtihan Gaza” (The demise of the lessons of the second Lebanon war in the Gaza exam), *al-Akhbar*, 26 January 2009: <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/115107> (last accessed: January 2009).

halting its rocket attacks which according to Israel had rendered an assault of that scope “inevitable.”

The Israeli conduct during the operation demonstrated the fact that it had not learned the lessons of the Lebanon war. Its ground operations were not only limited, but also confined, largely, to empty or sparsely populated areas and exposed and flat terrain that would have given its forces an immense advantage had Hamas fighters been lured into approaching. Hamas’ refusal to take the bait and its continuous firing of rockets – perhaps unexpected in Israel given the enormity of its attack and the advance belief that it would coerce Hamas into halting its fire – created a deadlock whereby Israel and Hamas continued to fire at each other’s territory while Israeli ground forces were mostly reduced to the role of observer awaiting an enemy that would not take its bait. The cost of such a situation was enormous and its benefits negligible. Israel had already lost much support worldwide for its murderous rage and was in a race against time due both to diplomatic pressure as well as operational considerations. Indeed, its unwillingness to carry out a large-scale invasion and the failure to achieve any of its goals in a short period of time forced it again into abandoning the concept of a quick war. Furthermore, the deadlock proved once more its impotence in the face of rockets; and instead of reflecting the image of a reformed army, its forces appeared deterred from entering Hamas strongholds by the fear of urban warfare despite regular leaks since the end of the July 2006 war to the effect that Israeli forces had been training in street-to-street combat in a “mock Arab town” built specifically for that purpose.¹¹² Clearly, its coercive capacity was rendered irrelevant. This, in turn, necessitated limited attempts at engaging Hamas forces through minor incursions on the outskirts of refugee camps and in the relatively sparsely-populated suburbs of densely-populated cities. As Yehya Dabuq observes,

¹¹² Shelly Paz, “IDF builds fake Muslim city to prepare for war.” *The Jerusalem Post*, 22 January 2007: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull&cid=1167467790418> (last accessed: December 2008). In reality, the publicization of the information about the mock city was a publicity stunt, for it was not the first time that such a city had been built for training purposes. See Deborah Sontag, “In Mock Palestinian Hill Town, Israeli Troops Prepare for Worst,” *The New York Times*, 24 June 2000, A1.

“the fear of incurring injuries in the ranks of the Israeli army, and this is the premonition that has been affirmed to have a hold on the crystallizers of military and political decision in Israel, pushed the Hebrew (sic) state to cut the ‘ground phase’ into phases and parts, with the purpose of distancing the Israeli ‘elite’ brigades from friction and confrontation with the Palestinians, and not enabling them [the Palestinians] to cause casualties in its ranks; having in mind that the elite forces are those same ones that Israel kept propagating messages and signals about throughout the past two and a half years, to the effect that they are training and conducting drills for engaging in similar confrontations, ‘and on more than one front.’”¹¹³

More importantly, the war was a “test run” of Israel’s warning that it would hold the Lebanese government responsible for any attacks emanating from the territories it exercised sovereignty over, even if it did not approve of the attacks. Hence, as the de facto ruler of the Gaza Strip, Hamas was held accountable for any and all attacks from the Gaza Strip, even those it was unaware or disapproved of. The policy did not achieve much except convince Hamas of the necessity of enforcing its monopoly on the “decision of war and peace”, for if it was to be held accountable for actions it had not necessarily approved of – such as the firing of rockets by other Palestinian factions without its approval – it was to its benefit to enforce its monopoly as it indeed should have in its capacity as the legitimate ruler of the PA.¹¹⁴ Thus, Israel’s actions may have inadvertently enhanced the Gaza Strip’s interests by underscoring the need for a single strategy of peace or war. Whether Hamas will be capable of enforcing that monopoly, however, is another matter altogether. Moreover, it is debateable whether this, and Hamas’ quest for a ceasefire in fact demonstrates Israeli success in boosting

¹¹³ Dabuq, “Suqut duroos harb Lubnan al-thaniya fi imtihan Gaza.” Yehuda Wegman, writing in *Yediot Ahronot*, echoes Dabuq’s sentiment, arguing that “Israeli leaders again wanted to create deterrence without the risk of casualties” and as a result failed again. Yehuda Wegman, “Failure in Gaza,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 3 February 2009: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3665887,00.html> (last accessed: February 2009).

¹¹⁴ For example, shortly after the war, it was reported that Hamas had arrested several militants from the Islamic Jihad for having fired rockets.

its deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas and diminishing its willingness to fight. While it is possible that Hamas has been deterred in the wake of the war, it is also likely that its decision to halt rocket fire stems from its strategic considerations and what it deems are the national interests of the Palestinian people, or at the very least, the interests of the Gazan population it rules.

In applying the lessons of the Gaza war to Lebanon, the equivalent of Hamas' willingness to enforce its monopoly on the decision to take action which might bring about Israeli retaliation, would be the insistence of the Lebanese government that Hezbollah cede that monopoly to it. It is likely that Hezbollah would refuse to cede its right to initiate attacks (especially in the Sheba'a Farms) or take unapproved action in response to Israeli attacks or violations of the rules of the game that are deemed to be damaging of its deterrence. Although it might be open to cooperation with the state and the Lebanese Armed Forces, its range of options for cooperation on such a level are naturally limited as a result of the secrecy that is required in formulating such decisions. Moreover, while Hamas might be able to effectively extend its authority over the entirety of the Gaza Strip, the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces possibly lack the ability to do so, due to regional considerations, the lack of a national consensus, and the absence of the necessary practical tools to make it a reality. It is also important to note that while the outcome of the Dahiye Doctrine applied on the Gaza Strip did not cause a popular uprising against Hamas – due to the massive support base it commands there combined with the lack of substantial horizontal societal cleavages of the sort that plague Lebanon – it is not inconceivable that a similar attack on Lebanon, especially on population centers (such as Tripoli) where support for Hezbollah is rare or hostility to it and its weapons intense, would have a different outcome.

Clearly, Operation Cast Lead was a failure, even if not as abysmal as the defeat the IDF had incurred in the July 2006 war. Although the vagueness of its objectives allowed the political and military echelons that had dispatched the IDF into the Gaza Strip to extricate it

from there without paying a political price as Olmert and Peretz had done in July 2006, the continuation of rocket fire until the last minute of Israel's unilaterally declared ceasefire demonstrated the failure to coerce Hamas into halting its rocket fire, indeed was intended by Hamas as a signal to that effect. Not only that, but the costs of the operation far outweighed its benefits: the price tag for Israel's intangible "achievements" was a major blow to its image worldwide.¹¹⁵ Moreover, that large portions of the Israeli public did not view the operation as a failure – primarily thanks to the effective media censorship campaign that not only prevented the portrayal of the reality on the ground in the Gaza Strip and the actual scale of IDF ground forces activity, but also provided a positive image of the preparedness on the Home Front – is not necessarily reflective of the outcome nor is it indicative of an increase or decrease in Israeli deterrence. What is even clearer is that the absence of a Winograd Committee to examine Israel's failures in the Gaza war is certainly not the yardstick by which Israel's performance in that war can be measured or its future performance, especially against Hezbollah, predicted.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter examined Israeli political and military elites' attitudes towards Hezbollah and their perceptions of the political and security threat posed by it, as well as the manner in which the challenges it has posed or continues to pose have been addressed. In the course of the chapter, all the indicators and variables discussed in the previous chapter were employed; however, in this chapter more emphasis was placed on security and military concepts than on political developments and processes due to the fact that the latter are more fitting in the Palestinian context where interaction (and confrontation) between Israel and the two

¹¹⁵ The only achievements of the war and arguably the main motivations for embarking on it was 1) the salvaging of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert from going down in the pages of Israeli history as the weakest and worst Prime Minister; 2) the provision of a boost to Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni's and Minister of Defense Ehud Barak's electoral prospects.

Palestinian non-state actors has been political as much as military especially since the early nineties.

Israel's strategy for dealing with Hezbollah has been far from constant. It has in fact oscillated between confrontation and containment. Whereas the period of the occupation of South Lebanon was characterized by confrontation, the post-withdrawal period was marked by a containment strategy which, while effective, nevertheless at best postponed collision. Notwithstanding the fact that Hezbollah's limited military arsenal combined with its guerilla tactics render it a defensive force (or at least one incapable of capture and control of territory), the party is nevertheless viewed with concern, for its missile capabilities pose a security threat to the Home Front and its possible acquisition of advanced anti-aircraft capabilities could pose challenges – possibly insurmountable – for Israel's offensive military and security doctrine. Thus, the collision was, and continues to be, inevitable, especially in light of the absence of a political process through which political differences could be channeled, and perceptions of threat or deliberate misrepresentations of intentions could be addressed. Nonetheless, the mere presence of a peace process as in the Palestinian case is not enough. To be truly effective, the process has to be accompanied by Israel's abandonment of its quest for total asymmetry that would allow it to pursue unilateral courses of action with little resistance, and its movement away from an offensive doctrine that relies on the sustained inferiority of its adversaries and their vulnerability to total subjugation. While such a dynamic could indeed ensure relative calm, it nevertheless provides a base from which the superior state could exploit the inferior one at its whim (as Israel's interaction with its surroundings has in fact demonstrated), and is a recipe for more insecurity rather than security.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Israel has consistently portrayed the non-state actors that have resisted its policies and practices as “terrorists.” The label has become all the more heavily emphasized since the September 11, 2001 attacks on U.S soil, given Israeli leaders’ realization that it provided them with the opportunity to “better explain” the causes and determinants of their policies, present as well as past, towards the Palestinians and the Lebanese. Beyond the public relations aspect, however, Israeli perceptions of and policies towards the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah have been far from uniform. Not only have they changed from one actor to another, they have also changed through time. The former has been the result of differing interests in each arena, whereas the latter has been the result of changing interests over time (itself a reaction, albeit not exclusively, to changing geopolitical realities). Thus, while Israeli policies towards the PLO and Hamas were and continue to be determined by its interest in maintaining its control over the OPT in its entirety and presence in all or most of it, its policies towards Hezbollah were determined by other interests, such as the desire for a political make-over in Lebanon or at the very least the maintenance of a proxy militia that would safeguard not only its security but also economic and hydrostrategic interests.

Israel has undergone much transformation over the years. Rapid turnover of power especially in recent years has not only weakened its ability to formulate a continuous and coherent policy – made all the more difficult in light of the daily challenges posed by the Palestinians of the OPT and of external political pressures – it has also weakened Israel’s image in the Arab world as a determined state and society walking steadily and fearlessly on the path it has paved for itself. While the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah did not single-handedly bring about such a turn of events, the PLO’s struggle from within Lebanon and the ideological shifts within it leading to its acceptance of negotiations, the rapid rise in Hamas’

popularity and the movement's unexpected ascent to power, and Hezbollah's transformation into one of the most potent, popular, and successful guerilla force in the region, had significant implications for the course of the Arab-Israeli conflict and, along with other factors – regional and extra-regional – changed its parameters. Crucially, despite the significant successes of the PLO especially in bringing the Palestinian cause to the international stage, its chief failure, not unexpectedly, lay in its inability to change the balance of military power between Israel and the Palestinians. In contrast, while Hamas has failed to advance the Palestinian cause on the diplomatic level, it has been more successful than the PLO in devising resistance strategies and military tactics (in part with the direct help of Hezbollah and the indirect aid of Iran) that have, despite its humble and limited capabilities, proven to be difficult for Israel to overcome. In contrast to the failures of the PLO and limited successes of Hamas, Hezbollah has registered tremendous success in its struggle against Israel, not only attaining the goal of liberation but also transforming itself from a liberation movement to a professional guerilla defense force. It was not within the scope of this thesis to delve in detail into the question of why such a disparity in outcomes has existed. However, it is important to note that the territorial “depth” (outside the control of the occupying Israeli forces) enjoyed by Hezbollah which allowed it to train and re-group, along with the fact that it was not a foreign actor operating from the territory of a “sanctuary” state, are factors (albeit not the only ones) that must be taken into consideration in any attempted explanation of the aforementioned disparity in outcomes.

While Hamas has made significant headway in terms of armed struggle compared to the PLO in the past, it has nevertheless failed to introduce a “balance of terror” in the same way that Hezbollah has done in recent years. The disparity could be explained partly by the fact that while Hezbollah has always had a territorial base outside the “battle zone” in which to train and from which to operate, until the disengagement Hamas operated under direct

occupation and after the withdrawal under a tight siege that made the smuggling of weapons and the training of fighters a task requiring extra logistical effort. While the PLO enjoyed relative freedom of activity in and from its sanctuary state, namely Lebanon, the very fact that unlike Hezbollah it was a foreign actor operating in spite of local grievances rather than with the support of the local population limited its ability to maneuver, involved it in the domestic politics of the host state and confrontations with local actors, and ultimately resulted in its decline. Thus, the continuing asymmetry between the Palestinians and Israel and Hamas' inability to significantly alter the rules of engagement, in addition to the asymmetry between Arab states and Israel and the former's pre-occupation with regime survival in the face of the growing threat of political Islam, has awarded Israel a free hand in shaping the contours of a final solution to, and even planning the dissolution of, Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

Despite their weaknesses, which can be attributed to their nature as non-state actors and their functioning under direct or indirect Israeli control or in the long shadow of Israel's military power and prowess, the PLO and Hamas have demonstrated remarkable ability (albeit not consistent in the case of the PLO) to adapt to changing geopolitical realities and regional arrangements, and to survive a number of violent crackdowns. This ability has, in turn, forced Israel to rethink its strategy toward the two organizations at specific junctures, though not the objectives and priorities vis-à-vis the Palestinians it had set out to pursue.

Paradoxically, in light of the results of the 2006 legislative elections, the PLO which throughout the early years of its existence had sought – and been denied by Israel and other states – recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, was branded and treated as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, this time against the wishes of the majority of Palestinians in the OPT. More importantly, to forestall any potential inroads by Hamas in the West Bank, the U.S has, with Israeli approval,

provided arms and training to Fateh forces. Such a move, however, has not been without conditions. Indeed, the PLO-led PA in the West Bank has been charged with the task of not only maintaining law and order in the areas under its control, but also cracking down on both political dissent – as was the case during the recent Israeli war on the Gaza Strip¹ – and more importantly militant activity. Such a turn of events would have been unimaginable to an observer of PLO activity and political positions in the 1970s and 1980s, and arguably even the 1990s at the height of the Palestinian setback marked by the Oslo Accords.

Concomitantly, the PLO has been awarded – by Israel and the U.S rather than by the Palestinian people – the “mandate” to negotiate a final status arrangement with Israel. Such an arrangement would supposedly give rise to a Palestinian state. Nonetheless, and notwithstanding Ehud Olmert’s belated emphasis on the dangers the non-realization of a two-state solution could pose to Israel’s very existence,² as the facts on the ground attest and as numerous observers have noted, a two-state solution is highly unlikely to emerge (in no small part due to Israeli reluctance to facilitate it), if not impossible to attain.³ With the transformation of the PLO itself from a liberation movement relying on armed struggle to a political authority seeking to negotiate with the enemy, Israeli leaders’ and generals’ views of the organization and their strategy towards it have also undergone change. Whereas in the past Israel viewed the PLO as a security nuisance and more importantly as a political threat to its agenda in the OPT, and relied on its coercive capacity and its ability to deter the organization and destroy or incapacitate its political, social, and military infrastructure, today it perceives it as a golden opportunity to continue expropriating Palestinian land by

¹ Ilene R. Prusher, “Fatah, Hamas split widens amid Gaza war,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 January 2009: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0115/p01s03-wome.htm> (last accessed: January 2009).

² Rory McCarthy, “Israel risks apartheid-like struggle if two-state solution fails, says Olmert,” *The Guardian*. 30 November 2007: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/nov/30/israel> (last accessed: January 2009).

³ See for example the remarks by Terje Roed-Larsen, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, made in 2002. “Middle East: UN envoy warns that two-state solution faces impending death,” UN News Centre, 17 October 2002: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/storyAr.asp?NewsID=5065&Cr=middle&Cr1=east> (last accessed: January 2009).

artificially keeping alive, for as long as possible, the comatose “peace process” and dangling the non-existent carrot of a two-state solution.

This, however, would arguably not have been possible if not for Hamas; for while Israel views the movement’s quest to change the rules of the game and establish a balance of terror not unlike that established by Hezbollah in recent years as a strategic threat, it also sees it as an opportunity to advance its political agenda. Hamas’ adherence to the military option and its positions – such as its refusal to recognize Israel and negotiate with it (notwithstanding Israel’s own refusal to recognize the movement as a legitimate political party and the representative of the Palestinian people, or negotiate with it) – have allowed Israel to portray itself, not unlike during the period of PLO intransigence, as the victim of Palestinian “extremists” refusal to negotiate a peaceful solution to the conflict. Making use of this opportunity, Israel has continued to unwaveringly draw the contours of a final solution; these contours will not necessarily be limited to the route of the separation wall, however – even as the wall may mark the “final” boundaries of the State of Israel – in much the same way that the contours of the “black homelands” did not curtail apartheid South Africa’s involvement and influence in, and economic domination over, them. What remains to be seen is whether the PLO may yet break out of its role as the docile guardian of Israeli colonialism, whether another non-state actor, namely Hamas, may be able to make a dent in this position, and what Israel’s reaction to a Palestinian national unity government might be.

Whereas variables such as domestic politics and perceptions of decision-makers have played intervening roles in determining Israel’s foreign policy choices, Israel’s relative material power, namely its asymmetric power relationship with the PLO and Hamas, and its preferences and objectives have been the main driving force of its foreign policy. The PLO’s behavior and activities impacted – but did not necessarily single-handedly change or determine – Israeli perceptions of and policies toward the countries that exercised sovereignty

over the areas from which the PLO conducted its military and political activities (Jordanian-controlled West Bank, Jordan-proper, and Lebanon). Hamas' ties to regional states has also been taken into consideration, albeit in a different context than that of the PLO, for while the latter was a creation of Arab states and for a good part of its existence operated either from Palestinian territories under their control or from neighboring host states, the former emerged as a grassroots movement from under the iron fist of Israeli occupation and despite a number of Israeli onslaughts aimed at destroying or exiling it, remained firmly rooted in the OPT. Consequently, Israel's perceptions of the movement's relations with its regional adversaries, chiefly Syria and Iran, are largely related to the fact that the former hosts the movement's politburo while the latter allegedly provides it not only generous financial aid but also training, weapons, and know-how.

The threat posed to Israel by the presence of Hamas' politburo in Damascus, while exaggerated, must nonetheless be seen in light of the movement's ability to survive previous onslaughts by transferring its decision-making powers abroad. The scope of Iranian aid to Hamas is exaggerated too. Nonetheless, limited as Hamas' capabilities are, the strategic threat they pose is not insignificant, for Israel has failed to find – and has arguably demonstrated an unwillingness to do so, in part due to its stubborn adherence to an “offensive defense” doctrine – a technological solution to the rocket fire on its southern communities,⁴ leaving it with only three possibilities: undertaking limited military incursions, aerial bombardment, or large-scale invasion and possibly re-occupation of the Gaza Strip. The first two, however, have proven ineffective to one extent or another, and more costly than beneficial. The third,

⁴Indeed, the Iron Dome defense system, which was alleged to have been designed to intercept short-range Qassam rockets, proved to be ineffective. See Reuven Pedatzur, “Iron Dome system found to be helpless against Qassams,” *Ha'aretz*, 22 February 2008: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/956859.html> (last accessed: December 2008). It was, moreover, highly costly. As Pedatzur notes, the cost of intercepting each home-made Qassam rocket is around \$100,000, in addition to the million-dollar system development cost. See Reuven Pedatzur, “Missiles vs. metal pipes,” *Ha'aretz*, 14 May 2007: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/859292.html> (last accessed: December 2008).

in contrast, has not been attempted due to political considerations, for re-occupation would entail the end of the strategy of separating the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The PLO's failure to significantly alter the balance of power between it and Israel – in no small part due to its inadequate attention to the importance of forging a *strong and lasting relationship* with a state willing to provide it with the wherewithal for a successful protracted liberation struggle – meant that it would be unable to deter Israel from militarily pursuing its security, and more so political, goals and therefore that it would be unable to safeguard its military viability and continuity – and by extension, political relevance – for long. In contrast, by virtue of the firm and strategic relationship it has cultivated with Syria and Iran (and just as importantly Hezbollah), Hamas has been spared the decline that befell the PLO. While the relationship has not deterred Israel from embarking on massive military assaults on the movement, it has nevertheless safeguarded its survival and allowed it to acquire not only more advanced and strategic weapons (such as rockets) – which the PLO did have access to during the period of its activities from Lebanon – but also the tactics of guerilla warfare that proved to be so effective against Israeli forces and its Lebanese proxies in South Lebanon.

Finally, the impact of the PLO as a non-state actor was two-pronged; not only did it capture Israeli attention as an actor in its own right and elicit reaction from it accordingly, it also served, inadvertently, as an instrument for the pursuit of Israel's broader, regional objectives. This it did by providing Israel, through its actions, with ample justification for direct or indirect military intervention in, or large-scale assault on, host states. Israel's utilization of such opportunities was, in turn, a function of its perception of relative material superiority over target states and its objectives vis-à-vis each. In contrast, the fact that Hamas' operative base has always been the OPT, and therefore that the relationship between it and Israel's adversarial states and the influence of the latter over the former have been indirect and often intangible, has given Israel less leeway to utilize the relationship as

justification for launching attacks, limited or wide-ranging, against enemy states, namely Syria and Iran. This is not to say, however, that the opportunity, had it been available, would have inevitably translated into a willingness to embark on such action. As demonstrated earlier, the willingness would have been a function of assessments of relative material power⁵ vis-à-vis each state or a combination of states, as well as Israel's objectives vis-à-vis each. Conversely, the fact that such justification is not easily serviceable does not mean Israel would refrain from embarking on action should its assessments and evaluations indicate that the benefits of acting outweigh both the price of acting and the cost of not doing so.

In contrast to its attitudes and policies vis-à-vis the previous two actors, Israeli views of Hezbollah and policies towards it have been more inconsistent. Indeed, Israel's adherence to the concept of the "security zone" was void of strategic logic and begs the question of whether its decision to stay in Lebanon beyond the date of the abrogation of the May 17 Accord was merely a show of stubbornness in what was perceived to be a clash of wills between it and Hezbollah. The growing sophistication of the latter's military abilities, which began in the mid-1990s and led, along with other factors, to the Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, alarmed Israeli security and military circles as well as politicians, who saw in Hezbollah a threat both to the IDF's dominance in the region and its prestige, as well as to Israel's ability to hold on to the OPT. The fear of the latter stemmed from the possibility that the Palestinians under occupation would emulate Hezbollah's tactics and benefit from its experiences. Indeed, the second *Intifada* and the alarming increase in Hamas' capabilities confirmed those fears. Hezbollah's expressed willingness to provide logistical, technical, and technological support to the Palestinians has done nothing to alleviate Israeli fears. Moreover, while neither the PLO's nor Hamas' relations with state actors were or are viewed with excessive concern, Hezbollah's strategic relationship with both Syria and Iran was (and is) a

⁵ Note that relative material power includes the ability of enemy states to deter and the extent of their deterrent power.

matter of great concern because of the dramatic increase in its capabilities over the years (aided by both countries) and the fact that unlike the besieged Hamas, it is capable of importing arms with little difficulty. Another factor was the Syrian presence in Lebanon, which as demonstrated in the previous chapter, was viewed as both a threat and an opportunity and which factored in the Israeli decision to withdraw from South Lebanon in 2000.

Not unlike the PLO and Hamas, Hezbollah has had to grapple with a host of challenges, both military and political, external as well as domestic; the external challenges, posed by Israel, have been in the form of military onslaughts, which the party has successfully weathered. The external, however, is naturally interconnected with the internal; thus, for example, the question of Hezbollah's weapons has been a bone of contention between the Lebanese, particularly since 2000, and the so-called "decision for war and peace" was brought to the fore especially in the wake of the July 2006 war. Indeed, Hezbollah's deeper involvement and embedding in Lebanese politics has arguably been primarily albeit not solely a function of its quest to prevent attempts at disarming it. Aware of the importance that Hezbollah attaches to domestic consensus on its weapons, Israel has in fact sought to transform the Lebanese public into a pressure valve against the party. This it has attempted to do, without success (or at best limited success), by applying, at various junctures, military pressure against civilians, as well as civilian infrastructure and property, a strategy that it first put into practice in Lebanon in dealing with the PLO. Behind the replication of this policy was the failure to grasp the fundamental differences in the PLO's and Hezbollah's respective positions within Lebanon. Not only that, but Israel has also demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of Lebanon's inherent weakness; thus, its expectations of and demands from the Lebanese government and the Lebanese Armed Forces were not only overblown but also misplaced. This misplacement was but one instance in an

overall pattern that marked Israel's occupation of South Lebanon as well as the war Israel waged in July 2006.

Although the nature and extent of ties between Hamas and Hezbollah are at best vague, they are nevertheless not insignificant, both because of their implications for Palestinian resistance, as well as for what Israel's pre-occupation with quelling Palestinian violence has meant for Hezbollah. Worse than the fact that until 2000 the ultimate objective of Israeli regular forces in South Lebanon had been self-defense, was the fact that Israel's quest to maintain its occupation of the OPT and its attempts to crack down on subsequent Palestinian violence and dissent, had rendered the IDF a heavily armed police force rather than an army capable of pursuing Israel's enemies and marching deep into enemy territory as had been the case in previous decades. The impact of the occupation of the OPT on the IDF and its performance was evident especially during the July 2006 war, which was the IDF's first major encounter outside the Palestinian arena since 2000.

Both domestic politics and perceptions of decision-makers have impacted Israel's foreign policy choices vis-a-vis Hezbollah. For example, Prime Minister Shimon Peres' decision to embark on an operation in 1996, was based on electoral considerations and personal interests as much as it was based on security concerns. In contrast to these intervening variables, Israel's relative material power and its preferences and objectives in the Lebanese arena have been the main driving force of its policies towards Hezbollah. This, however, is not to say that an increase or decrease in relative material power or a change in state objectives would bring about an immediate change in policy. As Israel's restraint in October 2000 and April 2002 demonstrated, a negative change in a state's relative material power does not necessarily prompt an immediate use of force to restore it to previous levels. However, the cumulative effect of steady decline in relative material power over a specific period of time could prompt change in policy as it indeed did.

Hezbollah's ties with Syria and Iran, while not prompting Israeli action against either of the two countries, have nevertheless increasingly come under the spotlight. It is difficult, however, to establish whether the focus is a matter of genuine perception of threat or a public relations feat inspired by Israeli interests and objectives vis-a-vis both countries, especially Iran. It is also difficult to establish whether the July 2006 war was inspired, at least in part, by Israeli objectives vis-à-vis Iran and concerns with the relationship between it and Hezbollah. What makes the first task difficult is the fact that public statements are not necessarily accurate portrayals of perceptions and intent; the difficulty of the second lies in the fact that while Israel's low relative material power vis-à-vis Iran coincides with its lack of action against the country, it also coincides with action against Hezbollah. Thus, it is difficult to tell whether or not Israel's low relative material power against Iran has prompted it to seek an alternative target which nevertheless enjoys ties with Iran. Suffice to say, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to unpack this causality-correlation dilemma.

The perceptions of Israeli decision-makers regarding the conflict have changed. These are a function of perceptions of one's own power and projections of the adversaries' power. Although Hezbollah scored a historic achievement by putting an end, unconditionally, through the force of arms and for the first time in the Arab-Israeli conflict, to Israeli occupation, and in doing so established itself as an adversary to be reckoned with, it nevertheless failed to make a dent in Israel's objectives vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Despite the fact that Hezbollah shattered the myth of Israeli invincibility and notwithstanding a decline at certain junctures in the Israeli public's confidence in the IDF, post-1967-victory feelings of mass-euphoria and invincibility remain dominant, buttressed by a growing trend of messianism. This, combined with the failure of Arab states to project both military power as well as willingness to engage in military action in pursuit of their territorial or other aspirations, has brought about an unwillingness to make compromises even if the outcome of

compromise would be peace. By virtue of its impenetrability, the Iron Wall, originally intended to bring Israel's enemies to the negotiations table, became an instrument of domination rather than a facilitator of compromise.

Threats to Israeli political interests have often been translated into statements of perception of security threats. These statements in turn have served as Israel's staging grounds for military adventures against militarily inferior non-state actors. Where military inferiority has given way to a "balance of terror" Israel has found itself inclined to, sooner or later, initiate further action to revert to the old rules of engagement. The failure to change the rules, however, has raised question marks about the future of Israeli military and security doctrines and indeed about the very viability of Israel in its current form in the face of continuing low-intensity irregular warfare for which it seems unable to find any solution.

The examination of Israeli strategy and tactics – and of the limited successes and failures thereof – vis-à-vis the PLO, Hamas, and Hezbollah underscores first and foremost the importance of non-state actors which, while lacking sufficient power to affect change in the same way that states may be capable of doing, are threatening and powerful enough to figure prominently in states' political and military calculations, if they are not the main driving force behind them. While not all non-state actors have registered success and while the fortunes of some have decreased over time, some non-state actors have succeeded in not only adapting to changing political circumstances, but also acquiring and deploying significant resources and building the capacity to mobilize both their fighting or membership base and the society from the collective experiences of which they have sprung.

The above conclusions also highlight the definitional dilemma of security. In other words, the question of what falls under the realm of security and what does not, and consequently, what actions can be considered security threats as opposed to threats to political and economic interests. The dilemma stems primarily from states' often deliberate

conflation of security and political interests for the sake of securing the latter under the guise of attempting to secure the former. Israel has been no stranger to this conflation. Thus, for example, the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which was allegedly an operation aimed at eliminating the security threat posed by the PLO, was in fact primarily if not almost completely inspired by political interests and objectives that necessitated the destruction of the PLO's political and social infrastructure.

The offensive realist emphasis on the dilemma of distinguishing between expansionism for security and expansionism for pure aggrandizement is important to take note of here. The dilemma is less relevant in the case where the struggle for territory is not between states but between a state and a non-state actor. Given that the non-state actor would have at its disposal far less resources and consequently that it would rely in its popular struggle on non-conventional means and hit-and-run tactics, the state's control over territory on security grounds is less convincing than it would be in a struggle involving regular armies and invasion routes. Thus, the state's public statements to the effect that the territorial expansion was for security rather than aggrandizement ends would stand little chance of being interpreted as such. This aside from the fact that neither state nor non-state adversaries of the occupying state would willingly abandon their claims to the occupied territory given the position it occupies in the national consciousness.

As argued in the second chapter, a threat is a function not only of capabilities but also intent. Access to resources alone does not provide a complete picture, even if the quest to acquire certain capabilities could serve as an indicator of intent. What is striking in Israel's behavior is its near-exclusive focus on its enemies' acquisition of capabilities and the failure to appreciate the actual nature of the intent behind their quest to acquire them and even the actual nature of the capabilities and the implications of successful acquisition. Thus, for example, Hezbollah's alleged quest to acquire anti-aircraft batteries is paradoxically

considered to be based on an offensive rather than defensive intent, due to Israel's offensive doctrine and aspirations for total asymmetry, which have narrowed down the range of actions by its enemies that could be considered defensive. The baseline against which a state measures threats is therefore not the nature of the capabilities themselves (defensive or offensive), but rather, the nature of a state's military doctrine, i.e. whether it is defensive or offensive.

Israel's failure to follow all the steps of the Iron Wall strategy devised by Jabotinsky confirms offensive realists' contention that states seek to gain power and aspire to achieve hegemony now rather than risk deficit in the future, because the anarchical international system provides them with incentives to do so. According to the same logic, a state would prefer to wage "preventive war" under favorable circumstances rather than postpone and risk fighting under unfavorable conditions. This, in fact, may be what Israeli leaders have in mind in their references to "wars of no choice" that they have *chosen* to embark on.

What the Israeli case demonstrates is that moderation of positions and policies is not the necessary outcome of a highly asymmetric power position vis-à-vis enemies. Rather than increasing the desire for compromise, the absence of serious threats to Israel at certain junctures rendered compromise unnecessary, serving instead as grounds for further exploitation. This, however, does not mean that a decline in the relative power of a powerful state (for example as a result of external pressures or a sanctions regime) would necessarily lead to moderation and compromise with its enemies (i.e. a change in state objectives towards them), although it is not impossible that it would do so. It is also unclear whether different causes of decline in a state's power would prompt different reactions by the state. Thus, for example, a decrease due to one's own actions or the actions of adversaries could prompt a different reaction than a decrease owing to sanctions. Likewise, a decrease due to one's own actions could elicit a different response than a decrease due to adversaries' actions. Finally, it

is far from clear if there is one formula that could work in different situations and conflicts, and the fact that not all possible formulae have been applied on different states makes it impossible to effectively compare and contrast and possibly also establish causality.

This thesis has presented a comparative analysis of Israel's attitudes, political and security interests, and policies vis-a-vis three non-state actors born of different experiences, adopting different ideologies, and operating under different circumstances. However, the differences between the three actors have not been total. Indeed, it is the similarities and overlapping indicators as much as the glaring differences that give this thesis solid methodological grounding and render its theoretical and empirical conclusions relevant to the literature on security, foreign policy, and non-state actors. The similarities and differences not only between the cases but also within each case have allowed for an analysis of the impact of certain factors on Israeli policy. Thus, for example, the PLO's presence in and launching of operations from two sanctuary states – Jordan and Lebanon – and the fact that the two other non-state actors did not operate from (foreign) sanctuary states, have allowed for the assessment of the impact that a non-state actor's activities from a sanctuary state may have on the policies, towards that non-state actor, of the target state. At the same time, while Jordan and Lebanon shared the characteristic of being sanctuary states, they differed in other respects, such as weakness/strength of the state,⁶ coercive capacity of its armed forces, and the degree of societal cohesion. The differences have in turn made possible the analysis of the influence of, for example, the weakness or strength of the sanctuary state on the targeted state's reaction to the hostile activities that emanate from its territories. At the same time, the fact that the PLO's activities from Jordan were fewer and much less sophisticated than the

⁶ Bassel Salloukh argues that Jordan, considered weak according to the Ibn Khaldunian definitional criterion is strong by the Neo-Weberian Migdalian criterion, while Lebanon is considered weak on both criteria. See Bassel F. Salloukh, "The King and the General: Survival Strategies in Jordan and Lebanon," (Master's thesis, McGill University, 1994), 120-121.

attacks launched from Lebanon, and the fact that they ceased in 1970 prior to the PLO's rise to international prominence and long before Israel's formulation of the objective of destroying it in order to advance its autonomy agenda, have made it difficult to establish a causal link between the weakness of the sanctuary state and the willingness of the state to embark on wideranging military action against it.

What this thesis has demonstrated is that both relative material power and state objectives have been the driving force behind Israel's policies vis-à-vis the three non-state actors. At the same time, domestic politics as well as perceptions and interests of decision-makers have had an intervening role to play. Despite the difficulty of establishing the degree of their impact, relations between Israel's adversaries – whether an alliance between states, alignment between a state and non-state actor(s), or relations between two or more non-state actors – also have an intervening role to play, if only due to their effect on the balance of power (or balance of terror). The success or failure of a state in its protracted struggle against a non-state actor is a function not only of the power relations between the two, but also the state objectives at any particular juncture that go along with the application of the state's coercive or destructive power. The formulation of a broad set of objectives some of which transcend the coercive capabilities of the state not only will result in the failure to meet the ambitious goals, but may also bring about the failure of the realistic ones. This is not to say, however, that the non-state actor has no role to play in the success or failure of its adversary's campaign against it. Indeed, the choices a non-state actor makes bear directly on the ability of the state to coerce or even destroy it. Recent events in Sri Lanka prove that unnoticed and seemingly minor strategic mistakes by the non-state actor, and tactical failures by its military wing, could offset its decades-long experience in irregular warfare, and have broad repercussions for its struggle, eventually leading to its decline – as was in fact the case with the PLO – or, even worse, its demise, as in the case of the LTTE.

Where such an opportunity does not present itself to the state, it might wager on its ability to coopt some segments of the target actor's society or a disgruntled rival party that seeks to expand its influence (e.g. the PLO today, the Inkatha in South Africa during the apartheid era). This may be possible to the extent that the target society does not enjoy high levels of political cohesion as in the case of the Palestinians of the OPT and the black South Africans during apartheid, or suffers from broad vertical societal cleavages as in the case of Lebanon. Nonetheless, a meaningful level of cooption is possible only if the state has direct territorial control and can therefore maintain regular direct contact with and possibly even supply arms to the coopted party. Moreover, the cooption might not yield significant results especially that the militarily targeted or politically marginalized non-state actor might assume the role of a spoiler. In the absence of a solution to get rid of it, the state can at best pit the coopted actor against the spoiler in an attempt to drain its resources and/or divert its attention, while the state proceeds with its plans. Indeed, as Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated, it is precisely this strategy that Israel has in recent years – especially since the death of 'Arafat – put into practice in the OPT (albeit with little success in the Gaza Strip), and attempted (but failed at) during the occupation of South Lebanon. It remains to be seen whether explicit cooption would give way to clandestine cooperation (on the basis of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”) if it has not already. One final remark should be made regarding the recent conflict in Sri Lanka. The success of the Sri Lankan army in defeating the LTTE is highly significant and deserves to be examined thoroughly. Indeed, so rare is success against non-state actors engaged in guerilla warfare that it did not take long for observers to note the enormous significance of the achievement and underscore the necessity of drawing lessons from it. Although each non-state actor is unique and each conflict has its specifics, a number of generalizations can still be made. It remains to be seen whether Israel will draw any

lessons from the Sri Lankan experience and if it does, to what extent it would impact its policies towards both Hamas and Hezbollah.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Main parties and lists in Israel¹

Left	Center	Religious	Right
Ahdut Ha'avoda	Center Party	Agudat Yisrael	Herut
Alignment	Dash	Degel HaTorah	Likud
Labor	General Zionists	Habayit Hayehudi (New Mafdal)	Moledet
Mapai	Independent Liberals	Hapo'el HaMizrahi	Tehiya
Mapam	Kadima	National Religious Party (Mafdal)	Tsomet
Meretz	The Progressive Party	Po'alei Agudat Yisrael	Ichud Leumi
One Israel	Shinui	Shas	Yisrael Beitenu
Rafi	Telem	Tami	
Ratz	The Third Way	United Religious Front	
	Yahad	United Torah Judaism	
	Yisrael B'Aliya		

¹ Adapted from "The Governments of Israel – Coalitions 1949 to the present," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Previous+governments/The%20Governments%20of%20Israel> (last accessed: December 2008).

Appendix B: Coalition governments and Prime Ministers of Israel 1948-2009²

Gov.	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Prime Minister	Knesset	Coalition Government
1	10/03/1949 to 30/10/1950	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	1st	Left, Center, Religious: Mapai, United Religious Front, The Progressive Party, The National Unity List of Sephardim and Oriental Communities, Democratic List of Nazareth
2	01/11/1950 to 08/10/1951	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	1st	Left, Center, Religious: Same coalition government
3	08/10/1951 to 22/12/1952	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	2nd	Left, Religious: Mapai, HaMizrahi, Hapo'el HaMizrahi, Agudat Yisrael, Po'alei Agudat Yisrael, minority lists
4	22/12/1952 to 26/01/1954	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	2nd	Left, Center: Mapai, General Zionists, HaMizrahi, Hapo'el HaMizrahi, The Progressive Party, minority lists
5	26/01/1954 to 29/06/1955	Moshe Sharett (Mapai)	2nd	Left, Center: Same coalition government
6	29/06/1955 to 03/11/1955	Moshe Sharett (Mapai)	2nd	Left, Center, Religious: Mapai, HaMizrahi, Hapo'el HaMizrahi, minority lists
7	03/11/1955 to 07/01/1958	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	3rd	Left, Center: Mapai, HaMizrahi, Hapo'el HaMizrahi, Mapam, Ahdut Ha'avoda, The Progressive Party, minority lists
8	07/01/1958 to 17/12/1959	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	3rd	Left, Center: Mapai, HaMizrahi, Hapo'el HaMizrahi, Mapam, Ahdut Ha'avoda, The Progressive Party, minority lists
9	17/12/1959 to 02/11/1961	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	4th	Left, Center, Religious: Mapai, National Religious Party, Mapam, Ahdut Ha'avoda, The Progressive Party, minority lists

² Adapted from "The Governments of Israel – Coalitions 1949 to the present," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Previous+governments/The%20Governments%20of%20Israel> (last accessed: December 2008); and "All Parliamentary Groups – By Knesset," The Knesset: http://www.knesset.gov.il/faction/eng/FactionListAll_eng.asp?view=1 (last accessed: December 2008).

Gov.	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Prime Minister	Knesset	Coalition Government
10	02/11/1961 to 26/06/1963	David Ben- Gurion (Mapai)	5th	Left, Religious: Mapai, National Religious Party, Ahdut Ha'avoda, Po'alei Agudat Yisrael, minority lists
11	26/06/1963 to 22/12/1964	Levi Eshkol (Mapai)	5th	Left, Religious: Same coalition government
12	22/12/1964 to 12/01/1966	Levi Eshkol (Mapai)	5th	Left, Religious: Same coalition government
13	12/01/1966 to 17/03/1969	Levi Eshkol (Mapai)	6th	Left, Religious: <i>Pre-June 4, 1967:</i> Alignment (Mapai + Ahdut Ha'avoda-Po'alei Zion), National Religious Party, Mapam, Independent Liberals, Po'alei Agudat Yisreal, minority lists <i>Post-June 4, 1967:</i> Same coalition government + Gahal, Rafi
14	17/03/1969 to 15/12/1969	Golda Meir (Mapai)	6th	Left, Religious: Alignment (Israel Labor Party + Mapam), Gahal, National Religious Party, Independent Liberals, minority lists
15	15/12/1969 to 10/03/1974	Golda Meir (Mapai)	7th	Left, Religious: Same coalition government
16	10/03/1974 to 03/06/1974	Golda Meir (Labor)	8th	Left, Religious: Alignment, National Religious Party, Independent Liberals
17	03/06/1974 to 20/06/1977	Yitzhak Rabin (Labor)	8th	Left, Religious: Alignment, Ratz (left November 1974), Independent Liberals, National Religious Party (joined October 1974), minority lists
18	20/06/1977 to 05/08/1981	Menachem Begin (Likud)	9th	Right, Center, Religious: Likud, National Religious Party, Agudat Yisrael, Democratic Movement for Change (joined October 1977)
19	05/08/1981 to 10/10/1983	Menachem Begin (Likud)	10th	Right, Center, Religious: Likud, National Religious Party, Agudat Yisrael, Tami, Telem, Tehiya (joined July 1982)
20	10/10/1983 to 13/09/1984	Yitzhak Shamir (Likud)	10th	Right, Center, Religious: Same coalition government

Gov.	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Prime Minister	Knesset	Coalition Government
21	13/09/1984 to 20/10/1986	Shimon Peres (Labor)	11th	Left, Right, Religious: Alignment, Likud, National Religious Party, Agudat Yisrael, Shas, Morasha, Shinui, Ometz
22	20/10/1986 to 22/12/1988	Yitzhak Shamir (Likud)	11th	Right, Left, Religious: Alignment, Likud, National Religious Party, Agudat Yisrael, Shas, Shinui (left May 1987), Ometz
23	22/12/1988 to 11/06/1990	Yitzhak Shamir (Likud)	12th	Right, Left, Religious: Likud, Alignment, National Religious Party, Shas, Agudat Yisrael, Degel HaTorah
24	11/06/1990 to 13/07/1992	Yitzhak Shamir (Likud)	12th	Right, Religious: Likud, National Religious Party, Shas, Agudat Yisrael, Degel HaTorah, Party for the Advancement of the Zionist Idea, Tehiya (left January 1992), Tsomet (left December 1991), Moledet (left January 1992)
25	13/07/1992 to 22/11/1995	Yitzhak Rabin (Labor)	13th	Left, Religious: Labor, Meretz, Shas (left September 1993), Yi'ud (joined January 1995)
26	22/11/1995 to 18/06/1996	Shimon Peres (Labor)	13th	Left: Labor, Meretz, Yi'ud
27	18/06/1996 to 18/05/1999	Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud)	14th	Right, Religious: Likud-Gesher-Tsomet, Shas, National Religious Party, Yisrael B'Aliya, United Torah Judaism, The Third Way.
28	18/05/1999 to 07/03/2001	Ehud Barak (One Israel)	15th	Left, Center, Religious: One Israel (Labor + Gesher + Meimad), Shas, Meretz, Center Party, Mafdal, Yahadut HaTorah (left September 1999), Yisrael B'Aliya
29	07/03/2001 to 28/02/2003	Ariel Sharon (Likud)	15th	Right, Left, Center, Religious: Likud, Labor-Meimad, Shas, Center Party, Mafdal, Yahadut HaTorah, Yisrael B'Aliya, Ichud Leumi-Yisrael Beitenu
30	28/02/2003 to 04/05/2006	Ariel Sharon (Likud/Achrayut Leumit), Ehud Olmert (Kadima)	16th	Right, Center, Religious: Likud (left January 2006), Shinui (left December 2004), Ichud Leumi (left June 2004), National Religious Party (joined March 2003, left November 2004), Labor-Meimad (joined January 2005, left November 2005), Agudat Yisrael (joined March 2005)
31	04/05/2006 – 31/03/2009	Ehud Olmert (Kadima)	17th	Center, Left, Religious: Kadima, Labor-Meimad, Shas, Yisrael Beitenu (left January 2008), Gil Pensioners Party
32	31/03/2009 –	Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud)	18th	Right, Religious, Left: Likud, Yisrael Beitenu, Shas, Habayit Hayehudi (previously National Religious Party), Labor

Appendix C: Israeli Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Ministers of Defense 1948-2009, by faction³

Gov.	Years	Prime Minister	Faction	Foreign Minister	Faction	Minister of Defense	Faction
1	1949-1950	David Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Moshe Sharett	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
2	1950-1951	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Sharett	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
3	1951-1952	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Sharett	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
4	1952-1954	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Sharett	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
5	1954-1955	Sharett	Mapai	Sharett	Mapai	Pinhas Lavon, Ben-Gurion	Mapai, Mapai
6	1955	Sharett	Mapai	Sharett	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
7	1955-1958	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Sharett, Golda Meir	Mapai, Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
8	1958-1959	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Meir	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
9	1959-1961	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Meir	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
10	1961-1963	Ben-Gurion	Mapai	Meir	Mapai	Ben-Gurion	Mapai
11	1963-1964	Levi Eshkol	Mapai	Meir	Mapai	Eshkol	Mapai
12	1964-1966	Eshkol	Mapai	Meir	Mapai	Eshkol	Mapai
13	1966-1969	Eshkol	Alignment	Abba Eban	Alignment	Eshkol, Moshe Dayan	Alignment, Rafi
14	1969	Meir	Alignment	Eban	Alignment	Dayan	Alignment
15	1969-1974	Meir	Alignment	Eban	Alignment	Dayan	Alignment
16	1974	Meir	Alignment	Eban	Alignment	Dayan	Alignment
17	1974-1977	Yitzhak Rabin	Alignment	Yigal Allon	Alignment	Shimon Peres	Alignment
18	1977-1981	Menachem Begin	Likud	Dayan, Begin, Yitzhak Shamir	--, Likud, Likud	Ezer Weizman, Begin	Likud, Likud
19	1981-1983	Begin	Likud	Shamir	Likud	Ariel Sharon, Begin, Moshe Arens	Likud, Likud, --
20	1983-1984	Shamir	Likud	Shamir	Likud	Arens	--
21	1984-1986	Peres	Alignment	Shamir	Likud	Rabin	Alignment
22	1986-1988	Shamir	Likud	Peres	Alignment	Rabin	Alignment
23	1988-1990	Shamir	Likud	Arens	Likud	Rabin	Alignment
24	1990-1992	Shamir	Likud	David Levy	Likud	Arens	Likud
25	1992-1995	Rabin	Labor	Peres	Labor	Rabin, Peres	Labor, Labor

³ Adapted from "All Governments of Israel," The Knesset: http://www.knesset.gov.il/govt/eng/GovtByNumber_eng.asp (last accessed: December 2008).

Gov.	Years	Prime Minister	Faction	Foreign Minister	Faction	Minister of Defense	Faction
26	1995-1996	Peres	Labor	Ehud Barak	--	Peres	Labor
27	1996-1999	Benjamin Netanyahu	Likud	Levy, Sharon	Likud, Likud	Itzhak Mordechai, Arens	Likud, --
28	1999-2001	Barak	One Israel	Levy, Shlomo Ben-Ami	One Israel, One Israel	Barak	One Israel
29	2001-2003	Sharon	Likud	Peres, Sharon, Netanyahu	One Israel, Likud, --	Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, Shaul Mofaz	One Israel, --
30	2003-2006	Sharon	Likud	Silvan Shalom, Tzipi Livni	Likud, Kadima	Mofaz	--
31	2006-2009	Ehud Olmert	Kadima	Tzipi Livni	Kadima	Amir Peretz, Barak	Labor-Meimad, --
32	2009-	Netanyahu	Likud	Avigdor Lieberman	Yisrael Beitenu	Barak	Labor